



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Research on Vietnamese Community Tourism

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Received: Nov 24, 2024	<p>Vietnam has a long history of development in both political and cultural aspects; localities of Vietnam are divided by terrain stretching over 3000 km along the country with cultural characteristics according to regions, ethnic groups... creating advantages and potential for community tourism development in each locality. On the basis of exploiting and promoting the values of cultural heritage, traditional products, scenic spots..., many localities of Vietnam have been forming and developing community tourism quite successfully and making important contributions to socio-economic development. This study focuses on analyzing the practice of community tourism development in Vietnam based on a survey of localities with unique features and diversity in cultural heritage, ethnicity, and traditional products, that is Tuyen Quang province. Besides studying the core content of community tourism development, the author surveys and evaluates the factors affecting the development of community tourism in Tuyen Quang province, thereby discussing policy issues for reference and application to many localities in Vietnam.</p>
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## INTRODUCTION

Vietnam is a country with many ethnic groups (54 ethnic groups) and each ethnic group has its own unique culture with customs, practices, traditional products... which are valuable topics for research and exploitation to serve cultural management, tourism and socio-economic development of the country and each locality. The diversity of ethnic groups and indigenous cultures is also a great advantage for localities in Vietnam to develop various types of tourism, including community tourism.

Among the 63 localities of Vietnam, Tuyen Quang province is a locality with a long history of development with 22 ethnic groups living there, along with the diversity of culture, customs, traditions, heritages... is a locality with favorable conditions for the development of community tourism of the country in general and of the province in particular. Besides these advantages, Tuyen Quang is a mountainous province located in the North, far from border gates, ports, major economic centers of the country; income is still low, the consumer market is not developed; the inherent potential has not been fully exploited to develop effective community tourism in the locality.

The cultural diversity of ethnic minorities along with many valuable historical and cultural heritages in Tuyen Quang province are strengths, creating many opportunities but also many challenges for leaders of government agencies in developing local community tourism. This is also an issue that

attracts the attention of many researchers and is also the reason that attracts the author's attention in this study.

## 2. Theory of community tourism

The term "community tourism" appeared in the 1970s from the trend of tourists organizing tours to visit villages, learn about customs, festivals or explore the wildlife, a diverse ecosystem, a rugged terrain... of a residential area, often an ethnic minority area with unique cultural features. Today, community tourism is of interest to many countries and is becoming an official form of tourism, serving the socio-economic development of the country.

Discussing the content of community tourism, many researchers have defined it based on the characteristics of community-based tourism activities. According to Hausler, N. et al (2000), community tourism is a form of tourism in which local people are mainly responsible for development and management; economic benefits from community tourism will remain in the local economy. Similar to the above viewpoint, Dinh, N.V. (2009) defines community tourism as a method of organizing tourism that emphasizes the environment, social culture; owned and managed by local communities, for the community and allows tourists to raise awareness and learn about the community, about their daily lives. Based on the characteristics of community tourism, the above researchers have identified the following forms of community tourism: Ecotourism; agricultural and rural tourism; village tourism; ethnic tourism; cultural tourism... and the common point is that these forms of tourism are owned and managed by local communities.

In some other related studies, researchers also mentioned the concept of community tourism and explained that it is a type of tourism organized, managed and owned by the local community to bring economic benefits and protect the common environment by introducing tourists to local characteristics such as landscapes, culture, heritage, etc. (Anh, T.T. et al. 2014). Or as Sau, D.V. (2017) affirmed that community tourism is based on the curiosity and desire of tourists to learn more about the daily life of local people from different cultures; community tourism often connects urban people to rural areas to enjoy life there for a certain period of time.

In management activities in Vietnam, current laws clearly stipulate that "community tourism is a type of tourism developed on the basis of cultural values of the community, managed, organized, exploited and benefited by the community" (VNA, 2017). And so, many researchers and managers emphasize the role of local people in organizing, managing and developing community tourism right in their area. In this study, the author supports the above approach and viewpoint and affirms: Community tourism is a form of tourism managed, exploited, developed and benefited by local people based on the cultural values of their own community.

With the above definition, the author emphasizes some basic characteristics of community tourism. Firstly, the subject of community tourism is the local community: Local residents, based on their cultural values and on the general regulations of the law on tourism, organize specific forms of community tourism, suitable to the needs of tourists and associated with their inherent advantages. Secondly, community tourism is often associated with areas with unique indigenous cultures and this is the basic factor, creating the difference and attracting tourists to be interested, learn and research, explore, and experience.

And so, localities that want to develop community tourism need to encourage and support the development of local human resources (residents) and promote the development of local cultural products to aim at the goal of general socio-economic development of the locality. Policy measures to encourage and support people are often training in knowledge about community tourism; supporting resources (finance, infrastructure) for community tourism development; propagating, promoting, and promoting investment in community tourism; preserving, exploiting, and promoting local cultural and heritage values. With that meaning, the author builds the "Community Tourism Development" (CTD) scale for this study, implying the requirements for localities to promote the development of factors forming community tourism, including: Localities disseminate, popularize, and foster knowledge about culture and tourism for people to know and orient the development of

community tourism based on cultural values and cultural exploitation advantages of people and communities (CTD1); Localities encourage and support financial resources and infrastructure for people to develop community tourism based on cultural values and cultural exploitation advantages of people and communities (CTD2); Localities effectively preserve, exploit, and promote cultural values, heritages, and promote and promote investment in culture and tourism to create favorable conditions for people to develop community tourism (CTD3).

Community tourism development, like other socio-economic activities, is affected by many factors, including both subjective and objective factors. Hung, N.P. (2017) mentioned cultural heritage, cultural institutions (policies) as cultural resources that have an impact on tourism development, including cultural tourism and community tourism. According to Hanh, D.T.H. (2018), factors such as human resources, cultural institutions, cultural products, cultural values (customs, traditions, etc.) also play a role as cultural resources and have an impact on cultural development and related issues, including cultural tourism and community tourism. The author also agrees with the above views and contents, but emphasizes that determining this influencing factor needs to come from the characteristics of community tourism activities. In fact, community tourism development is carried out by local people themselves on the basis of promoting the advantages of natural conditions, terrain, characteristics of the community and on the basis of general provisions of law, specific policies of local authorities. Therefore, it is possible to clearly see some basic factors affecting community tourism, including: Natural conditions and local cultural heritage; Characteristics in culture, customs, and practices of indigenous people; local policies. Eliminating administrative and management factors such as local policies, the author focuses on studying the key content including two factors of natural resource nature, which are: Natural conditions and local cultural heritage; (2) Characteristics in culture, customs, and practices of indigenous people.

- Firstly, natural conditions and local cultural heritage are the first factors that attract tourists, which can be considered as capital for developing all tourism sectors in general, and community tourism in particular. Natural conditions can be specific climates or climates that are in contrast to the environment where potential tourists live, natural landscapes, ecosystems, rivers, mountains, etc. Cultural heritage can be historical and cultural relics that remind of milestones in the history of the people or all of humanity, or intangible cultural forms such as ca tru, Vietnamese royal court music, music and dance performances, plays, films, etc. in places around the world. The more specific the natural conditions, the more cultural heritage, the more associated with famous events and characters, the more it attracts people to travel. With that interpretation, the author builds the scale "Natural conditions and local cultural heritage" (CH) to express the implications of the actual conditions of the research area to survey and empirically research in this study, including the following contents: The locality has unique natural conditions (climate, landscape, rivers, mountains, etc.), attracting tourists, favorable for developing community tourism (CH1); The locality has many unique historical and cultural relics, attracting tourists, favorable for developing community tourism (CH2); The locality has many unique intangible cultural heritages, cultural and artistic heritages, attracting tourists, favorable for developing community tourism (CH3).

- Second, the unique features in the culture, customs and practices of indigenous people are factors that strongly attract tourists to learn, explore and experience. According to tourism experts, the development of community tourism products is in line with the trend of the times, meeting the exploration needs of a large number of tourists who want to learn about unique ethnic cultures. However, tourism experts also recommend that if community tourism is to develop, it is necessary to preserve the original, pristine, simple and authentic indigenous culture - the core value of the community, not to lose it, which is also the responsibility of developing community tourism to society. To develop the local economy, respecting indigenous values and community values, responsible tourism will be the solution to develop community tourism in the right direction and sustainably. In a sustainable tourism, people must benefit from the development of local tourism. With that meaning, the author builds the scale "Characteristics in culture, customs, and practices of indigenous people" (CC) to express the implications of the actual conditions of the research area to survey and empirically research in this study, including the following contents: The locality has many

culturally distinctive areas associated with pristine and unique ecosystems, attracting tourists, favorable for the development of community tourism (CC1); The locality has many customs and practices of residential communities that are still preserved, promoting unique features, attracting tourists, favorable for the development of community tourism (CC2); The locality has many traditional products of residential communities that are still preserved, promoting unique features, attracting tourists, favorable for the development of community tourism (CC3).

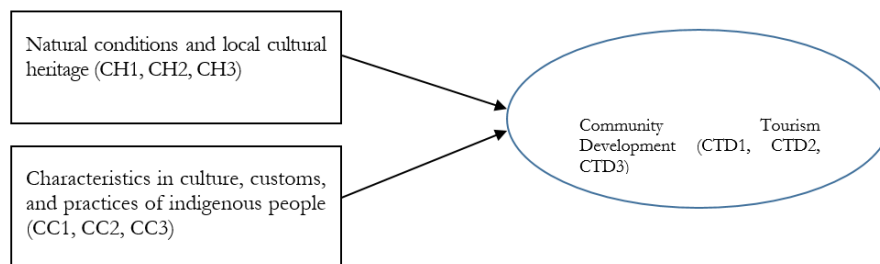
From the above overview research content, the author has built a theoretical research framework, a research model including 02 independent variables and 01 dependent variable with a total of 09 observed variables when researching community tourism. The author designed a survey with 09 questions, which are the 09 observed variables mentioned above 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 of community tourism development in Vietnam**

No	Scales	Encode	Rating levels				
			1	2	3	4	5
<b>I</b>	<b>Natural conditions and local cultural heritage</b>	<b>CH</b>					
1	The locality has unique natural conditions (climate, landscape, rivers, mountains, etc.), attracting tourists, favorable for developing community tourism.	CH1					
2	The locality has many unique historical and cultural relics, attracting tourists, favorable for developing community tourism.	CH2					
3	The locality has many unique intangible cultural heritages, cultural and artistic heritages, attracting tourists, favorable for developing community tourism.	CH3					
<b>II</b>	<b>Characteristics in culture, customs, and practices of indigenous people</b>	<b>CC</b>					
4	The locality has many culturally distinctive areas associated with pristine and unique ecosystems, attracting tourists, favorable for the development of community tourism.	CC1					
5	The locality has many customs and practices of residential communities that are still preserved, promoting unique features, attracting tourists, favorable for the development of community tourism.	CC2					
6	The locality has many traditional products of residential communities that are still preserved, promoting unique features, attracting tourists, favorable for the development of community tourism.	CC3					
<b>III</b>	<b>Community Tourism Development</b>	<b>CTD</b>					
7	Localities disseminate, popularize, and foster knowledge about culture and tourism for people to know and orient the development of community tourism based on cultural values and cultural exploitation advantages of people and communities.	CTD1					
8	Localities encourage and support financial resources and infrastructure for people to develop community tourism based on cultural values and cultural exploitation advantages of people and communities.	CTD2					
9	Localities effectively preserve, exploit, and promote cultural values, heritages, and promote and promote investment in culture and tourism to create favorable conditions for people to develop community tourism.	CTD3					

Source: Compiled by the author through the review

## Research model



**Figure 1. Research model**

The theoretical research model was built to demonstrate the impact of the factors "Natural conditions and local cultural heritage" (CH) and the factor "Characteristics in culture, customs, and practices of indigenous people" (CC) on "Community tourism development" (CTD). The author conducted an empirical study in Tuyen Quang province with the hypothesis that: *Natural conditions and local cultural heritage (H1) and Characteristics in culture, customs, and practices of indigenous people (H2) have a positive impact on Community tourism development in Tuyen Quang province.*

## 3. RESEARCH METHODS

In this study, the author uses two main methods: Qualitative method; Quantitative method.

The qualitative method is implemented through the collection and analysis of secondary data. The author synthesizes and distills relevant research content from published documents and builds a theoretical research framework with 3 scales: "Natural conditions and local cultural heritage" (CH), "Characteristics in culture, customs and practices of indigenous people" (CC) and "Community tourism development" (CTD) [Table 1, Figure 1].

The quantitative method was implemented through the collection and analysis of primary data by surveying 150 managers of 90 cultural agencies, organizations and community tourism businesses in Tuyen Quang province, Vietnam. The survey was conducted in two steps: Preliminary survey and official survey.

- Preliminary survey: This study conducted a multivariate regression analysis to test the research model and hypothesis. According to Hair, J.F. et al. (2009), the minimum sample size required for regression analysis for the 3-scale model and 9 observed variables of this study is  $N = 9 \times 5 = 45$ . The author designed, completed the survey design and conducted a preliminary survey at 40 agencies, cultural organizations and community tourism businesses in Tuyen Quang province with a sample size of  $N = 65$  managers ( $N > 45$ ). The preliminary survey results showed that all 3 scales and 9 observed variables achieved reliability to be used in an official survey on a larger scale..

- Official survey: The author conducted an official survey at 90 cultural agencies, organizations and community tourism businesses in Tuyen Quang province with a sample of  $N = 150$  managers. The respondents were selected, those who had experience in management in the field of culture and tourism for 3 years or more. The survey was conducted with the consent of the respondents after the author conducted a preliminary interview. The survey results were: 150/150 people agreed to answer and 150/150 valid responses, achieving a valid response rate of 100%.

## 3. RESEARCH RESULTS ON COMMUNITY TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN TUYEN QUANG PROVINCE

Although it is a poor province, Tuyen Quang is a province with many heritages, attracting the attention of tourists and is a necessary condition for the development of community tourism. In the province, there are currently over 30 ancient pagodas, some of which date back to the Ly Dynasty (1009-1225), the Tran Dynasty (1225-1400); there are many historical and revolutionary relics associated with the resistance war of Vietnam in the 20th century; there are many natural and eco-tourism destinations associated with rivers, streams, waterfalls, mountains and forests. Tuyen Quang

province has many ethnic minorities (22 ethnic groups) living stably with unique cultural features, attracting the attention of tourists (IPC, 2017). The above ethnic minorities have a long history of stable and stable living and development; have their own cultural features and strong identity; have typical farming practices and customs. The cultural diversity of ethnic minorities along with many valuable historical and cultural heritages in the province is the basic foundation for developing ethnic tourism - a type of community tourism in the province in the present and future. These are strengths, creating many opportunities for developing community tourism in Tuyen Quang province, explained below.

- Firstly, with many ethnic minorities and unique cultural features, the government and people of Tuyen Quang province have favorable conditions to develop community tourism through indigenous tourism forms: ethnic tourism, village tourism. The characteristic of indigenous tourism in recent years is expressed through the form of organizing accommodations for guests with host families (homestay), where visitors come and experience the life of indigenous people at a reasonable cost, live the life of a local, participate in their daily production and labor, with the unique characteristics of a midland locality with many attractive and unique features. When homestay services develop, people not only benefit economically, but also have many opportunities to exchange culture and share practical knowledge with the outside world.

- Second, heritages and relics with historical and spiritual values are not only the highlights attracting tourists to Tuyen Quang, but also the comparative advantage of Tuyen Quang province compared to other localities in the country in developing community tourism. These heritages and relics can be used as a springboard for tourism development with a core role, from which local leaders can build many satellites revolving around the development of service and support industries, contributing to creating jobs and income for local people, while also paying taxes to the budget. In addition, the diversity of ethnic groups is a highlight to attract tourists to come and experience different cultures and lives in the same area. This can be considered a strength and opportunity of the province; in particular, this characteristic can be used to attract foreign visitors who want to experience a different culture.

- Third, tourism infrastructure is an issue that needs to be given priority to develop community tourism, while Tuyen Quang is a poor province, lacking state budget resources to solve this problem. To solve this problem, in addition to state budget investment, Tuyen Quang province needs to increase calling for social capital for investment in developing community tourism: Roads, ethnic tourism projects, eco-tourism, spiritual tourism, etc. At the same time, there should be policies to support and encourage local people to invest and exploit community tourism activities. Next, preserving and promoting the diversity of indigenous culture in ethnic minority areas is an issue that needs attention and poses many requirements for leaders of authorities at all levels of Tuyen Quang province. When community tourism develops, cultural and economic exchange is a very strong factor that causes the loss of diversity and uniqueness of indigenous culture. When the diversity and uniqueness of indigenous culture are no longer there, the foundation of community tourism will also be lost. Therefore, it can be said that this is a big challenge for local government leaders of Tuyen Quang province in managing and developing community tourism in the coming time.

Thus, with many advantages in natural conditions, local cultural heritage and unique features in culture, customs and practices of indigenous people, Tuyen Quang province has proactively developed community tourism, creating many jobs and incomes for local people, contributing to promoting local socio-economic development. In 2021, it attracted 1,605,000 tourists (Huyen, T.T.T., 2022; Helaudho et al., 2024). In the first 8 months of 2024, Tuyen Quang province attracted 2,407,000 arrivals, reaching 88% of the annual plan and an increase of 5% over the same period last year; total social revenue from tourists in 9 months reached 3,058 billion VND, an increase of 14% over the same period, reaching 85% of the plan (PC, 2024; Jam et al., 2017). However, the development of society towards integration is reducing the uniqueness of indigenous culture, creating challenges for government leaders in developing local community tourism. The author's survey results with the

established theoretical framework, also show similarities with the above assessment, summarized 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 and local cultural heritage (CH)	CH1	150	1	5	4.16	.595	.726	CH1 = .391
	CH2	150	1	5	4.11	.614		CH2 = .408
	CH3	150	1	5	4.05	.622		CH3 = .389
2. Characteristics in culture, customs, and practices of indigenous people (CC)	CC1	150	1	5	3.95	.665	.685	CC1 = .452
	CC2	150	1	5	3.98	.658		CC2 = .464
	CC3	150	1	5	4.01	.632		CC3 = .427
3. Community Tourism Development (CTD)	CTD1	150	1	5	4.02	.623	.661	CTD1 = .518
	CTD2	150	1	5	4.01	.618		CTD2 = .397
	CTD3	150	1	5	3.96	.624		CTD3 = .405
Valid N (listwise)		150						

*Source: Author's survey results*

With the established theoretical framework, the author conducted a survey of 150 managers of 90 cultural agencies, organizations and community tourism businesses in Tuyen Quang province. From the collected survey data, the author conducted Cronbach' Alpha testing to identify the reliability of the scales and observed variables in the research model. The test results showed that all 3 scales and 9 observed variables were reliable when meeting the standard conditions: Cronbach' alpha > 0.6; Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3 (Hair, J.F. et al., 2009; Jam et al., 2011) [Table 2]. Specifically:

- Observations on the scale "Natural conditions and local cultural heritage" (CH), "Characteristics in culture, customs and practices of indigenous people" (CC), "Community tourism development" (CTD) were all evaluated at an average level of Mean > 3.95, statistically significant according to the determined Likert scale (1-5).

- The observed values of the "Community Tourism Development" (CTD) scale show that managers assess that community tourism development is carried out proactively, creating many jobs and incomes for local people, contributing to promoting local socio-economic development. This initiative is demonstrated through local actions: Propagating, disseminating, and fostering knowledge about culture and tourism for people to know and orienting community tourism development; encouraging and supporting financial resources and infrastructure for people to develop community tourism based on cultural values and cultural exploitation advantages of people and communities; doing a good job of preserving, exploiting, and promoting cultural values, heritages and promoting and promoting investment in culture and tourism to create favorable conditions for people to develop community tourism.

- The observed variables of the scale "Natural conditions and local cultural heritage" (CH) are rated at a high level compared to the scale "Characteristics in culture, customs, and practices of indigenous people" (CC). This shows that some characteristics in culture, customs, and practices of indigenous people due to the impact of the development of modern society are showing signs of fading away. This poses a new challenge for local leaders in preserving and conserving customs and practices; preserving and promoting traditional products... to create a foundation for sustainable development for the local community tourism sector.

With the reliability of the scales and observed variables confirmed, the author has the basis to conduct regression analysis to test the relationship between the variables in the model. The results of the regression analysis are shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3. Multivariate regression results**

<b>Coefficients<sup>a</sup></b>						
Model		<b>Unstandardized Coefficients</b>		<b>Standardized Coefficients</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
		<b>B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>Beta</b>		
1	(Constant)	.966	.212		10.354	.000
	Natural conditions and local cultural heritage (CH)	.578	.302	.547	16.757	.000
	Characteristics in culture, customs, and practices of indigenous people (CC)	.368	.264	.432	8.895	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Phát triển du lịch cộng đồng (DL) Adjusted R Square: 0.686; Durbin-Watson: 2.002						VIF

*Source: Author's survey results*

The data in Table 3 shows that:

+ R Square = 0.686, confirming that the scales "Natural conditions and local cultural heritage" (CH), "Characteristics in culture, customs, and practices of indigenous people" (CC) explain 68.6% of the variation in the scale "Community tourism development" (CTD); VIF = 1.753 ( $1 < VIF < 2$ ), showing that the regression model does not have multicollinearity; Durbin-Watson = 2.002 ( $1 < d < 3$ ), showing that the regression model does not have autocorrelation, confirming that the scales "Natural conditions and local cultural heritage" (CH), "Characteristics in culture, customs, and practices of indigenous people" (CC) are independent and have an impact on the scale "Community tourism development" (CTD), confirming the suitability of the theoretical research model with the survey data set.

+ The regression coefficients of the two independent variables "Natural conditions and local cultural heritage" (CH), "Characteristics in culture, customs, and practices of indigenous people" (CC) are both statistically significant Sig. = 0.000 (Sig. < 0.05) and have positive values: B(CH) = 0.671 and B(CC) = 0.436, confirming the positive relationship between the two independent variables "Natural conditions and local cultural heritage" (CH), "Characteristics in culture, customs, and practices of indigenous people" (CC) and 01 dependent variable "Community tourism development" (CTD); hypotheses H1, H2 are accepted; the initial research model continues to be confirmed for its suitability.

Based on the generalized regression model of Hair, J.F. et al. (2009):  $Y = B_0 + B_1X_1 + B_2X_2 + \dots + B_iX_i$ , the author determined the multivariate regression model of this study as follows:

$$CTD = 0.966 + 0.578*CH + 0.368*CC$$

Based on the standardized regression coefficient (Beta), it can be seen that the correlation level of the independent variables and the dependent variable in decreasing order is: "Natural conditions and local cultural heritage" (CH), "Characteristics in culture, customs, and practices of indigenous people" (CC). That contributes to further affirming the results of empirical research in Vietnam: Under the impact of modern social development, some characteristics in culture, customs, and practices of indigenous people are showing signs of fading; local leaders need to implement appropriate and timely policies to preserve and conserve customs and practices; preserve and promote traditional products... to create a foundation for sustainable development for the local community tourism sector.

The above content is not only the author's policy implication for Tuyen Quang province, but also the policy implication for many other localities of Vietnam in the context of integration. That has the meaning of development to both integrate and preserve the unique cultural identity and heritage conservation to serve the goal of sustainable development for the field of community tourism.



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