

Community Based Tourism Application; Lessons from Ethnic Minority Areas in Vietnam

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1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Over the past decades, the impacts of tourism have received considerable attention in related fields such as anthropology, sociology, development studies, etc. On one hand, tourism industry has tremendous capability for generating influences and drastic changes on destination areas in the form of so-called Mass Tourism; however on the other hand, its increasing impacts have led to a range of evident problems in environmental, social, cultural, economic, and political aspect of tourism applied areas. However, it was also realized that these negative impacts are merely one side of a coin, and there is an assumption that proper tourism applications can generate positive impacts as much as it generated negatives in the past. In this context, it is generally agreed today that the major challenge of tourism applications is to maximize the positive impacts while minimizing the negative impacts. Thereafter, series of new types of tourism to replace Mass Tourism began to be proposed recently known as Alternative Tourism which has the basic concept to contribute to more fruitful consequences of tourism application in reflection to the past negative effects. As one of the forms of Alternative Tourism, concept of Community Based Tourism was presented with the central objective to realize holistic development of a community with the ownership and management in the hands of local community people.

2. PURPOSE OF THE THESIS

Tourism impacts are not of single-dimensional, but tourism impacts are of highly multifaceted phenomenon. The fact makes tourism study very complex, and many tourism researchers focus on one aspect of tourism impacts to deeply comprehend the issue. However, rather than focusing on certain aspect of tourism impacts, this thesis aims to comprehend the holistic picture of tourism impacts. Hence, one of the purposes is to grasp the holistic vision of tourism impacts by classifying those impacts into certain categories. Another purpose comes from the major challenge of tourism application to maximize the positive impacts while minimizing negative impacts of tourism application. It needs to be questioned if it is possible to increase all the positive impacts and decrease all the negative impacts at the same time. Moreover, this leads to the further questions that if it is possible, through what kind of process can it be realized, and if it is not possible, then what are the factors which plays as obstacles against realization of the ideal process of tourism development.

3. CONCLUSION

As the conclusion of the thesis, two following implications were made. The first one suggests that the holistic approach which takes all the aspects of tourism impacts into account is indispensable in order to maximize the positive impacts and minimize the negative impacts from tourism application. Since tourism impacts are generated as a multifaceted phenomenon, it is essential to grasp the whole picture of tourism impacts in the applied areas. In this context, it was confirmed that Community Based Tourism, with its central principle to emphasize holistic development, can serve as an effective strategy in tourism application and development process. The second implication can be stated as that the enhancement of the roles of local authorities in association with NGOs in the process of tourism application to a community is significant for equitable participation of people of host communities. In the process of tourism application and development, political aspect which includes community participation in tourism development needs to be paid special attention at first hand in order for Community Based Tourism to fully operate its functions. The lack of political intervention at the first stage of tourism application will likely lead to the situation which makes it difficult to achieve equitable distribution of profit if controls of tourism fall into the hands of outside investors or local elites with affluent capital to invest.