

# COMMUNITY TOURISM IN THE CENTRAL PROVINCES OF VIETNAM

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## ABSTRACT

*Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is a tourism model initiated, operated, organized, managed, and owned by local people; it is based on indigenous cultural values, natural landscapes, and distinctive local products. With its diverse characteristics and rich cultural identity, many rural areas in Vietnam, especially in Central Vietnam, have great potential for developing this model. If properly guided and managed, community-based tourism can become a strategic strength, contributing to enhancing Vietnam's tourism standing and creating a stable and sustainable path for Central Vietnamese farmers on the international stage. This article is based on fieldwork, practical surveys, and community interviews at several community-based tourism destinations in Central Vietnam. such as Tay Giang, Dong Giang (Quang Nam), Hoa Bac (Da Nang), Sa Huynh (Quang Ngai), Quang Binh..., aiming to analyze the current situation and suggest some recommendations. To enhance attractiveness while maintaining and promoting local identity in a globalized tourism environment.*

**Keyword:** *Community tourism, Central Vietnam, Sustainable development.*

## 1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the context of increasingly fierce international competition and deep and comprehensive international integration, globalization and localization have become major development trends influencing the global tourism industry. These trends directly and strongly impact the tourism development strategies of all countries and localities, especially in developing countries like Vietnam.

The Central provinces have implemented numerous activities to develop community-based tourism models, identifying community-based tourism development as a solution to promote sustainable rural development, while also recognizing rural development as a foundation for the diverse, high-quality, and stable development of tourist destinations. Effective tourism development will contribute to achieving both economic development and the national goal of sustainable rural development. Developing a comprehensive strategy, investing in infrastructure, providing information and guidance to the community and potential tourists, implementing promotional programs, providing financial support, establishing a legal framework, and applying relevant standards for community-based tourism are all crucial aspects that deserve

attention. However, the Central provinces are also facing numerous challenges in exploiting this model within their territories: such as a lack of diverse rural tourism products to attract tourists; and insufficient skills in welcoming and serving tourists. There has been insufficient focus on brand development and creating a unique identity compared to neighboring localities; tourism promotion activities have not been well organized... These practical difficulties and concerns of the people and the government highlight the need for solutions to the problem of establishing an effective community tourism model that harmonizes tourism potential with sustainable economic development.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

The research results are based on the following methods:

### ***2.1. Methods for collecting, processing, analyzing, and synthesizing documents and data***

The process involves collecting data, documents, and information from various sources such as research papers, books, articles, magazines, websites both domestic and international, and documents and reports from central and local tourism management agencies in the Central

provinces. The collected information is then analyzed and synthesized to assess the current state and potential for community-based tourism development, providing a scientific basis for proposing development solutions.

## **2.2. Field survey and sociological research methods**

### **2.2.1. Field survey method**

The research and survey were conducted in the following areas: Da Nang City, Hue, Quang Binh, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, Ninh Thuan... to understand the current state and potential of community-based tourism in the period of 2024 and 2025. Through field trips, the team observed and interviewed local people/communities in these areas to obtain objective community opinions on tourism development; this will serve to assess the potential and development of community-based tourism in the context of international integration.

### **2.2.2. Sociological research methods (in-depth interviews, focus group discussions)**

This method is implemented through interviews with several stakeholders involved in community tourism development, such as households and cultural experts, to gather their opinions and assessments on the advantages and disadvantages of developing community tourism in the locality. Based on this, recommendations are offered to enhance the region's tourism potential and create a stable and sustainable economic development direction for farmers in Central Vietnam.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1. Thinking from the perspective of real-life experience**

3.1.1. Recently, "community tourism" has become a familiar keyword in the media and in tourism products. However, instead of only looking from the tourist's perspective, this article asks: what do local people – the main subjects of this model – think about community tourism? Are they truly at the center of the process of building and implementing tourism activities?

When discussing community-based tourism (CBT), some common keywords used to describe local communities are "ethnic minority tourism,"

"ethnic minority communities," "Co Tu people," "Ta Oi people," "Cor people," "Bru Van Kieu people," etc. However, behind these general terms lie diverse specific ethnic groups with distinct cultural practices, lifestyles, and customs.

For example, although they all belong to the Co Tu ethnic group, the cultural practices of the Co Tu communities in Tay Giang, Dong Giang, and Nam Giang (Quang Nam) are different. Even the Co Tu people (in the two villages of Ta Lang and Gian Bi, Hoa Bac commune, Hoa Vang district, Da Nang) have distinct differences: weaving, lullabies, call-and-response singing, and some dishes also differ in ingredients and taste compared to other Co Tu groups...

Although they share the same ethnic name, the Cor people living in Tra Bong (in northwestern Quang Ngai province) and the Cor people residing in Tra Mi (southwestern Quang Nam province) have distinct cultural characteristics and practices.

The Ta Oi people, residing in a strip from western Quang Tri (Dak Rong and Huong Hoa) to A Luoi and Huong Tra (Hue), also exhibit diverse cultural characteristics among local groups such as Ta Oi, Pa Co, Ta Uot, Pa Hy, etc.

ii. We had many opportunities to interact with members of community tourism cooperatives and associations from Cam Kim, Hoa Bac, Lo Gach Cu (Duy Xuyen, Quang Nam), Dong Muoi Sa Huynh, My Khe mangrove forest, Xom Cay Gao (Duc Tan, Quang Ngai)... The local people participated in training to improve the quality of human resources in community tourism, focusing on research skills, identifying and developing sustainable development ideas in their localities! There were many interesting and simple stories about how the members told the stories of the land, the river, and the forest! The story of Ms. Tham's Quang noodles (from Hoa Bac community tourism village, Da Nang): "The rice grains are milled, molded into sheets, then cut, then mixed... But the rice grains in our village are sown on paddy fields, receiving silt from the river, and the river flows from the forest!" <sup>1</sup>Simple like rural life itself. Simple like the people of Central Vietnam.

iii. We experienced participating with the Cham community in Ninh Thuan province during the

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<sup>1</sup>Teamwork and hands-on experience on March 8, 2025

Kate festival (October 2024) at the famous local temples, Po Rome Tower, Po Inu Nugar Tower, and Po Klong Garai Tower. There were quite a lot of tourists visiting the Cham temples. Although there are no dress code regulations for visiting the temples, many tourists wearing shorts, tank tops, or short skirts are inappropriate in this sacred space; however, offensive behavior and inappropriate attire frequently occur. Mr. Truong Tinh, a Cham cultural officer working and living in Ninh Thuan, said that the Cham temples are sacred places – they are not only architectural structures but also sacred spaces, the dwelling places of the gods. The Cham people stipulate that only monks and those serving at ceremonies are allowed to enter the temple area during the four annual Cham festivals; Furthermore, normally no one dares to go up to the temple. It is inappropriate/unpleasant/unsuitable for tourists who don't understand the culture to wear clothing that shows disrespect to the community.

iv. We witnessed the ingenuity of the water-retaining hill model, which provides guidance for cultivation and natural forest restoration, enriching water resources, and building a sustainable future for the people of the Hoa Bac Community Ecological Agriculture and Tourism Cooperative. This model both protects the natural landscape and promotes community tourism. According to the Hoa Bac residents, we learned that in the water-retaining hill model, at least one-third of the hill's surface area is preserved intact for the natural restoration of multi-species forest trees. The remaining area, from one-third downwards, is cultivated in order, starting with perennial crops, then fruit trees, vegetable gardens, fish ponds, rice paddies, and finally, a river. The water-retaining hill model helps to expand the area of natural forest.

Located more than two hours' drive from Dong Hoi city (Quang Binh province), Rum Ho village (Kim Thuy commune, Le Thuy district) has over 100 households, mostly belonging to the Bru - Van Kieu ethnic group. The community's living space is surrounded by forests and streams. Duong Cam Waterfall, part of the Dong Chau - Khe Nuoc Trong Nature Reserve, is a highlight attracting tourists with its natural beauty. To capitalize on the

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<sup>2</sup>With the support of ILO and UNESCO, Thanh Toan Community-Based Tourism Village (Huong Thuy town, Thua Thien Hue province) has been offering community-based tourism tours to visitors since 2015. Significant

strengths of community-based tourism, the Bru - Van Kieu people in Rum Ho village have designed homestay models, forming a "tourism ecosystem" with sustainable tourism products and services such as: local cuisine, herbal foot baths, stream bathing, stream fishing, and Ayoh cake making...

The examples above lead us to conclude that the richness of cultural practices, the organization of tourism models, and the preservation and renewal of indigenous values within each community are crucial. From small activities like weaving, cooking, and folk storytelling to projects for forest conservation, water management, and the development of agricultural economies combined with tourism, all demonstrate the great potential of community-based tourism (CBT) if invested in the right direction. In other words, most localities in Central Vietnam have the conditions to create/build/participate in this model. With long-term guidance and strict management, the provinces of Central Vietnam could become world-leading destinations for CBT.

3.1.2 . Behind each story in the central provinces is the message we want to convey when implementing the community tourism model.

From the perspective of scientists to date, the research hypothesis has often been that tourism can be considered an essential or supplementary activity, primarily occurring in three areas: economic, socio-cultural, and environmental. Through our research, we believe that:

3.1.2.1 . From a benefits perspective, community tourism brings:

- Potential for economic, cultural, and social development in the locality <sup>2</sup>, contributing to the stability of national security and defense, especially in remote and disadvantaged areas. "The tourism industry makes a significant contribution to GDP growth, creates millions of jobs and is considered one of the fastest-growing sectors globally today" (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2012 [14]; Hassan, 2008 [7]). The tourism industry increases state and local revenue, creating conditions for the development

improvements in service quality and diversification of tourism products have brought substantial income to the local community.

of social infrastructure (transportation, markets, service facilities, telecommunications, etc.).

- Natural landscape, environmental protection, and public hygiene will be improved according to the general regulations of community tourism. "From an environmental perspective, tourists are increasingly aware of protecting the ecosystem, minimizing pollution, and preserving the living environment – not only for humans but also for other living organisms that share the living space with us" (Coathup, 1999) [3]. "It is the new needs, tastes, and consumption trends of tourists that will become the driving force for local authorities to strengthen the implementation of environmental protection policies and aim towards sustainable development goals" (Leonard Barnett & Edward GL Carter, 2013) [8]. At least, tourists also contribute to spreading positive awareness about environmental protection to the community at the places they visit.

- It helps preserve the traditional cultural identity of the locality, especially by restoring beautiful festivals, cultural practices, and humane religious rituals that are almost impossible to preserve. In addition, community-based tourism provides opportunities for access to education, contributing to broadening multi-dimensional thinking for the community and tourists, while raising awareness of cultural rights and the importance of preserving local cultural heritage.

- It doesn't require a large upfront investment, yet it can still yield high returns because the local people will participate in the tourism community. The investment capital will be divided equally among the participating households.

- Enhancing community knowledge, thereby improving the quality of life for local people. Tourism creates opportunities for communities to create and develop local cultural products (activities). Expanding intercultural

contact/dialogue, enabling local residents and tourists to better understand each other's cultures. The ultimate goal remains to foster a lifestyle of sharing, respect, empathy, and understanding.

- When a locality develops an effective community-based tourism model, it becomes a reference destination for other regions, thereby enhancing its status and image. In other words, geocultural factors, historical and contemporary context, and traditional and contemporary social spaces play a key role in shaping the impression and reputation of a locality on the tourism map.

- Community cohesion and neighborly bonds are strengthened, and mutual support and solidarity are further developed.<sup>3</sup>

- Local authorities are implementing the State's directives on the national green growth strategy for the period 2021-2030, with a vision to 2050, as directed by the Prime Minister.

3.1.2.2. From the perspective of diversifying tourism types/models, community tourism currently takes on various forms.

- Ecotourism: This is a form of experiential tourism in natural areas, involving environmental protection activities and the exploration of the local socio-cultural identity. This type of tourism creates a sustainable ecosystem with the participation of all stakeholders<sup>4</sup>.

- Cultural tourism: is one of the most important components of community-based tourism, especially historical culture, ethnic culture, clan culture, archaeological culture, religious culture, etc.<sup>5</sup>

- Agritourism: This is a form of tourism in agricultural areas such as orchards, agroforestry farms, herbal farms, and animal farms, which have been prepared to serve tourists. Through

medical examinations and treatment, culinary experiences, and creating eco-tourism products/check-in points associated with rivers, lakes, streams, waterfalls and lagoons.

<sup>5</sup>Quang Binh: the "green diamond" of Vietnam's tourism industry, boasting exceptionally unique green resources. Many businesses have implemented responsible tourism practices, guiding tourists to protect the environment when participating in forest and mountain climbing tours, such as cave exploration tours in Phong Nha-Ke Bang.

<sup>3</sup>In Bờ Hồ Community-Based Tourism Village (Dong Giang District, Quang Nam Province), the greatest success of tourism has been the increase in income and the strengthening of community bonds through regular cooperation in welcoming guests. Annually, the village receives over 1,000 overnight visitors, generating high revenue. The village also benefits from a 15% share of tourism revenue collected by service organizations, which greatly contributes to the villagers' well-being.

<sup>4</sup>Hue is developing garden tourism; green tourism such as health and wellness tourism, tourism combined with

experiential services like "a day/an hour as a farmer," participating in cultivation, production, and harvesting... without affecting the ecosystem or the productivity of the host family.

- Local tourism/experiential tourism: Tourists will eat, live, and interact with the local people; the inherent traditional culture of the locality is the main factor attracting tourists.<sup>6</sup>

- Village tourism <sup>7</sup>: This is a form of tourism where tourists live, experience firsthand, and share in the daily activities of village life; thereby providing farmers with a stable source of income from services such as accommodation and guesthouses for overnight stays.

- Art and handicraft tourism is a form of tourism closely linked to the history of localities with long-standing traditional craft villages. Although it only plays a role as a part of the overall tourism activities, this field opens up many economic opportunities for the handicraft industry in experiential/tourist areas visiting traditional craft villages. Through the consumption of handicraft products, local people not only increase their income but also have the opportunity to learn more deeply and widely promote the unique cultural and artistic heritage values of their community to domestic and international tourists.

Therefore, localities in Central Vietnam should carefully research and survey their strengths to identify which community-based tourism models are truly effective, providing a stable source of income for the people and connecting domestic and international tourists.

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<sup>6</sup>Cu Lao Cham was the first place in the country to successfully implement the "say no to plastic bags" campaign in 2009 and committed to saying no to plastic straws from 2021, persistently pursuing a "Zero Waste" life. The island's residents and authorities signed a commitment to not use plastic straws and disposable plastic cups, aiming for a plastic-waste-free marine protected area.

<sup>7</sup>Tra Que Vegetable Village: has become a favorite tourist destination, included in the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. Community-based tourism in Da Le conical hat village (Huong Thuy district), Phuoc Tich pottery village (Phong Dien district), Thuy Thanh commune (Huong Thuy town), experiencing the culture of Ta Oi and Pa Co ethnic groups in A Luoi...Hue. Community-based tourism in Ta Lang - Gian Bi village (Hoa Vang), Da Nang city. Community-based

3.1.2.3. *Viewed as a system, community* -based tourism (CBT) demonstrates a two-way relationship between owners and guests. Each local resident participating in tourism acts as an owner, and everyone cooperates to treat guests with sincerity, kindness, and friendliness. Upon returning, tourists carry with them a heart full of emotion and valuable lessons! These are memories, stories, ideas, shared happiness, or faith, love, and hope! To achieve this, owners must strive to transform their tourism resources into diverse products for tourists. Like bees creating honey, the owners of a community are diligent and hardworking. They learn together, work together, and create together. Their hands, minds, and hearts build what they desire. That's what community-based tourism is all about! When the experiences, love, and happiness of the community are shared among the people. Therefore, CBT must first and foremost bring happiness to the people involved in tourism. That fulfilling life, filled with love, wisdom, and shared responsibility, will be the most precious things that travelers wish to take home. And that is sustainable development!

3.1.2.4 . From a motivational perspective, to maintain community-based tourism activities in the locality.

Everyone shared that tourism helps create additional livelihoods for their families, but it's not the main reason for the joy and motivation behind families engaging in tourism. The opportunity to express cultural pride (we emphasize this); sharing their culture with others, and guiding

tourism in Thanh Ha pottery village, Tra Que Vegetable Village, Bay Mau coconut forest, Kim Bong wood carving village, Cham Island (Hoi An city); Tam Thanh mural village (Tam Ky city); Triem Tay ecological community-based tourism village (Dien Ban town); Tra Nheu community-based tourism village, My Son community-based tourism village (Duy Xuyen district); Bho Hoong community-based tourism village, Dhroong community-based tourism village (Dong Giang district); Co Tu community-based tourism village, Zara craft village (Nam Giang district)...Quang Nam. Community-based tourism in the orchards of Tan Lap village (Nghia Hanh district), An Binh (Ly Son island district), Bui Hui (Ba To district), Go Co village (Duc Pho district)... Quang Ngai province. - Community-based tourism in Ly Huong commune; Bai Xep area - Ghenh Rang ward (Quy Nhon city); Bau Da wine-making village (An Nhon town)... Binh Dinh province.

others on community practices are the great joys that collaborative tourism brings them.

Listening to the Bru Van Kieu group recount their journey to rediscover cultural practices that had faded from their daily lives; how the Cor group promoted their culture in community-based tourism; and how the Co Tu group recited and sang folk songs... we clearly felt the enthusiasm of the people/communities. They also saw that tourism development had the potential to open up opportunities for the community to revive and practice cultural aspects that were deeply ingrained but were gradually disappearing.

Tourism development can be seen as a reason, an entry point, for people to try again the things they did as children but which gradually disappeared as they grew up. At the end of the cultural sharing and exchange session, while chatting with attendees of various ages, we also heard them express their desire to continue maintaining, practicing, and learning more about their own culture and sharing it with visitors. A Co Tu person from Quang Nam shared with us: "Here, people rarely sing or recite folk songs anymore, and there are fewer opportunities to do so than before. If visitors are interested in singing and reciting folk songs, then we have more opportunities to sing and explain their meaning to them."

3.1.2.5. Viewed from the perspective of respecting cultural subjects and practicing traditional cultural values.

Regarding visits to the Cham towers in Ninh Thuan, we believe that the temple management could remind/exchange/provide guidelines on dress code and behavior so that tourists understand and adjust their actions and attire. This would also help tourists better understand the local culture and ethnic culture. Local tourism professionals (tour guides, monument management, and the community) should also explain the meaning of festivals and taboos according to the beliefs of the ethnic groups.

Besides the voices and participation of local people, the Provincial Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism has implemented activities to promote and disseminate regulations to service businesses as well as domestic and foreign tourists visiting the temple complex. Specifically, tourists are required to wear respectful attire that is appropriate to the cultural beliefs of the Cham people; failure to comply may result in being

denied permission to visit or take photos in the temple area. These regulations play an important role in changing the awareness and attitudes of the community in general when interacting with different cultures, while emphasizing responsible tourism behavior from both tourists and the local community.

#### **4. PROPOSE SOME SOLUTIONS FOR DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY TOURISM MODEL IN CENTRAL VIETNAM.**

***4.1. It is necessary to affirm that community-based tourism is a form of sustainable/responsible tourism that the world is moving towards.***

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines sustainable tourism as an activity that must meet the needs of tourists and local communities providing services in the present, while protecting and enhancing development opportunities for future generations. According to Tribe (2006) [13], ethical behavior in tourism is a key factor, and he believes that sustainable tourism will become the main trend in the future. Eber (1992) [5] conceives of sustainable tourism as a type of tourism that combines infrastructure and the sustainable use of resources to create long-term productivity for both present and future generations, with the important contribution of local people and communities, customs and lifestyles to the development of tourism experiences. Eber also emphasizes the fair sharing of economic benefits among participating parties, including tourists, local people and communities.

Perionova (2005) [12] introduced the concept of responsible tourism as a form of tourism in which limiting the number of tourists is seen as a strategy to maximize benefits and efficiency for local people and the environment. Choibamroong (2003) [4] noted that responsible tourism often targets tourists with a high level of education, i.e., knowledgeable and conscious tourists. Haanpaa (2005) [6] noted that the dominant trend in responsible tourism is hedonism (fordism), associated with responsibility for ecology and social ethics. Tepalus (2000) [11] argued that many tourists, especially the intellectual and upper classes, are increasingly interested in sustainability in tourism activities. They focus on experiences rather than consuming tourism products, seeking destinations that offer cultural value, a community living environment, security,

entertainment, tranquility, learning opportunities, or adventurous activities.

MacCannell (1999) [9] describes responsible travelers as “pilgrims” seeking authentic experiences and even a distinct lifestyle. Yeoman (2008) [15] adds that these travelers are deeply concerned with the environment, a healthy and happy lifestyle, and a desire to experience local culture authentically...

Modern tourism theories emphasize the role and responsibility of each individual in promoting ethical values and fostering sustainable choices in tourism. This involves not only the behavior of tourists but also the responsibility of stakeholders such as local communities, managers, and tourism businesses in ensuring harmonious and sustainable development.

On the other hand, studies warn that tourism exploitation exceeding the carrying capacity of the local environment and society can lead to serious consequences. Not only does it negatively impact natural ecosystems, but environmental resource degradation also weakens essential ecosystem services, thereby directly affecting community life and long-term economic development (Butler, 1999) [2]. Furthermore, uncontrolled tourism development can cause social problems such as loss of cultural identity, increased pressure on infrastructure, and increased economic inequality in local communities. This impact is not limited to the national or regional level but can also affect biodiversity and global stability, as tourism is closely linked to global supply chains and networks. Therefore, implementing sustainable tourism management and development strategies, while raising awareness of social and environmental responsibility among all stakeholders, is a prerequisite for ensuring harmonious and sustainable long-term development.

#### ***4.2. Following the adjustment of administrative boundaries, localities in Central Vietnam need to restructure their community tourism development strategies to adapt promptly to new growth requirements.***

After the administrative boundary merger, the central provinces need Restructuring the community-based tourism development strategy is not just about adjusting plans to new administrative boundaries, but also a comprehensive adaptation process in terms of

organizational management, inter-regional coordination methods, and enhanced community participation. This includes:

- i. Reassess the potential of each locality, develop unique tourism products and diversify inter-regional experiences, while innovating management mechanisms, enhancing community capacity, and building effective support policies.
- ii. The review and adjustment of tourism spatial planning must be closely linked to the preservation of cultural identity and the promotion of the role of the community. Each locality should choose one of its most promising destinations to serve as the "spearhead" for investment and development.
- iii. Launching a movement for entrepreneurship and innovation in tourism to, together with Resolution No. 68-NQ/TW dated May 4, 2025 of the Politburo on the development of private economy [16], encourage young people to contribute their intellect, capital, labor... to enrich their homeland and contribute to preserving local cultural values.
- iv. Promote the role of associations, clubs, and non-governmental organizations to provide support and advice, as well as to help connect and ensure sustainable development for these destinations.
- v. Prioritize policies that invest in environmentally friendly tourism infrastructure, support sustainable livelihood development associated with community-based tourism models, and enhance social awareness and community governance capacity in the new administrative context, in order to ensure that community-based tourism development is both effective and sustainable, while increasing economic, cultural, and environmental value for the region.

Timely adaptation to new growth demands not only helps localities promote their unique cultural and ecological values, but also boosts economic growth, improves community living standards, and contributes to the comprehensive sustainable development of the Central region.

#### ***4.3. Central Vietnam localities need to be creative/build brands for community-based tourism products.***

In the development of community-based tourism, it is crucial to design/build a brand and tourism

symbol for the product or region. A symbol is understood as the embodiment of the unique characteristics and strengths of a region's culture. In the development of craft village tourism, selecting a quintessential product as a symbol for the craft village is essential to create distinctive identity and attract tourists. In our opinion, the Central provinces can design/build/create a system of symbols for craft village tourism in the following direction:

- i. Research, evaluate, and select a distinctive symbol based on criteria such as representativeness, cultural value, recognizability, and commercial potential. The symbol should clearly reflect the traditional craft while also containing profound cultural meaning and aligning with the perceptions and feelings of the local community.
- ii. Develop diverse and environmentally friendly logo designs, contributing to enhancing sustainable value and creating a positive impression in tourists' awareness of green tourism development.
- iii. Develop a brand identity for the craft village area, including a logo, colors, and communication imagery. This will enhance professionalism, improve promotional effectiveness, and create consistency in tourism development activities.
- iv. Strengthen communication and community education, such as organizing communication activities, training, and raising awareness among residents and businesses about the importance of symbolic systems in sustainable tourism development. Simultaneously, encourage community participation in the development and maintenance of these symbols to ensure cohesion and promote local cultural values.
- v. Inter-sectoral cooperation and mobilization of resources such as financial, technical, and human resources from multiple sources to ensure the feasibility and sustainability of the project.

Each locality should design a tourism model encompassing both central and peripheral areas. The peripheral area should feature cultural products, traditional crafts, and cultural spaces of traditional villages, while the central area should embody the soul of historical and cultural relics, village communal houses, and ancient streets, reflecting the local tradition. Upon arrival, visitors should be captivated and eager to explore. All

these elements combine to create a system of brand identity and create lasting memories for each visitor. All these elements can be implemented in Quang Binh, Quang Tri, Hue, Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, and other provinces.

**4.4. A community-centered approach** is a useful method that can encourage communities to re-establish familiar cultural patterns; strengthen the community's own confidence in showcasing its culture, and build viable community tourism models. This method emphasizes the community's central role in identifying local problems and participating in solving practical issues. Issues such as green environment, green tourism, rural tourism, cultural diversity protection, biodiversity, and environmental diversity require community sharing of experiences.

i. For example, experiential community-based tourism (CBT) greatly needs clean agricultural products and clean farms. Regarding this topic, we found that communities in Central Vietnam possess knowledge about natural pesticides. However, when working in groups, initially, the people... demanded the participation and consensus of the local government before implementing anything. Later, when we integrated the long-term benefits for the people regarding a green environment and the advantages of sustainable tourism, the community... "shifted positively" and argued that applying biological pesticides requires pioneering individuals to implement and demonstrate practical effectiveness first, thereby building trust and encouraging other community members to learn and adopt new knowledge. With the goal of preserving indigenous knowledge and maintaining natural resources, local communities are now showing positive interest in the use of natural pesticides. This process is driven by community members actively exploring, restoring, and sharing effective pest-controlling plants, while also contributing to the protection of land, water resources, air, and the surrounding environment. A prime example of a sustainable agricultural development model linked to community tourism can be observed in Tra Que vegetable village (Quang Nam province), where residents primarily rely on traditional vegetable farming. With nearly 200 households participating in cultivation, the community has built a brand of clean vegetables based on the principle of "saying no to chemical

fertilizers." Instead, the villagers use a type of seaweed harvested from the De Vong River (the river flowing through the village) as a natural organic fertilizer, contributing to the distinctive, delicious flavor of Tra Que vegetables.

Environmentally friendly farming methods have become the foundation for shaping the image of a "green" destination in the eyes of tourists. In recent years, the vegetable village has not only attracted visitors but also developed experiential tourism activities such as tilling the soil, carrying water, and planting vegetables, thereby raising tourists' awareness of clean agriculture and increasing income for local people. The combination of preserving traditional crafts and developing community-based ecotourism not only brings economic value but also acts as an incentive to encourage people to stay committed to and continue maintaining sustainable clean vegetable farming methods.

We also advise/recommend that the community should pay special attention to the role of the elderly – individuals who possess a vast amount of traditional knowledge accumulated over generations. They can be seen as intergenerational knowledge "transit points," acting as a bridge between the past and the present in the process of preserving and transmitting socio-cultural values. This not only contributes to preserving local cultural identity but also affirms the social value and position of the elderly in the process of sustainable development.

ii. An example of community creativity in developing tourism products. During a discussion among tourism communities in Hoa Bac, Da Nang, we heard locals share their experiences about the impact of tourism on their lives and how they are adapting to these changes. For homestay families, people have begun to change the way they arrange their living spaces to integrate functional areas suitable for both living and community tourism; they are also changing their food preparation methods to meet the needs and tastes of guests while still preserving the distinctive features of Co Tu culture (spices, cooking methods, traditional dishes). In addition, they are discussing aspects of their culture that they still respect and will not change. It is clear that the process of developing tourism within the community is not simply about copying existing models, steps, or templates, but also about discovering and creating something new. The products created may not follow a pre-

existing "standard" considered beautiful or attractive, but they are products where homeowners express their personal touch, so that houses used for tourism still remain "homes" with the unique imprint of the homeowner.

Therefore, we recommend that, in order to develop community-based tourism, attention must be paid to a community-centered approach. The voices of stakeholders should be valued when the community receives and processes information; new scenarios/plans for potential issues in tourism should be created to encourage further thought and discussion, leading to feasible choices. All of this should be done based on mutual respect and trust. This approach is one of the most effective ways to achieve positive interaction, enhance autonomy, and ensure sustainability in community development.

#### ***4.5. Research and develop/supplement/improve comprehensive, long-term policies to support community tourism development.***

First and foremost, policies need to focus on building institutions and legal frameworks to protect and sustainably manage tourism spaces. Specifically, clear regulations are needed regarding the management of traditional architecture, landscapes, cultural heritage preservation, and the conservation of local ecosystems. Simultaneously, the governance model at community-based tourism sites should be reorganized through the establishment of management boards, cooperatives, or collaborative groups to coordinate tourism activities, ensuring democracy, transparency, and efficiency in community management.

Secondly, there is a need to further improve policies for training and capacity building for the people, especially in areas such as tourism communication skills, destination management, basic financial management, cultural etiquette, and preservation of indigenous knowledge. These training programs should be designed based on the practical needs of each locality and involve vocational education institutions, social organizations, and state management agencies.

Thirdly, policies supporting investment, preferential loans, and low interest rates for households/individuals/businesses investing in accommodation, food services, traditional craft experiences, heritage preservation, etc., are key

factors in promoting community-based tourism development. In addition, support is needed for designing packaging and standardizing handicraft products to ensure both cultural value and suitability to tourist tastes, while also supporting the establishment of showrooms, display areas, and sales points for OCOP products at community-based tourism destinations.

Fourth, to ensure policy effectiveness, it is necessary to establish mechanisms for monitoring, feedback, and policy adjustments based on practical experience, with the participation of all three parties: the state, scientists, the community, and businesses. This participation not only ensures democracy and fairness in the distribution of benefits but also helps policies be adjusted promptly according to market fluctuations and the needs of the local community.

## 5. CONCLUDE

Community-based tourism is considered a strategic direction for sustainable development in the future. In Central Vietnam, many community-based tourism models have been and are being effectively implemented, contributing to creating an attractive destination image for both domestic and international tourists. In this study, we research community-based tourism in Central Vietnam with the aim of proposing sustainable development strategies for the region in the context of globalization, climate change, and complex shifts in global politics and technology. Vietnam – especially the central provinces – is facing a great opportunity to assert its role as a unique center for community-based tourism development in the region. Integrating tourism exploitation with local resources not only opens up new channels for economic growth but also contributes positively to the conservation of ecosystems, cultural heritage, and promotes comprehensive community development.

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