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**Research on Community Based Tourism in Phu Thuong Commune, Vo Nhai District, Thai Nguyen Province**

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**Abstract**

Community tourism is understood as local communities participating in spontaneous business activities in places with attractive natural and human tourism resources, available local tourist routes and destinations, without paying attention to the interests of local communities and attracting them to participate in tourism activities. Community-based tourism aims to conserve tourism resources at the reception point. For long-term sustainable tourism development, Community-based tourism encourages local community participation in tourism and has a mechanism to create opportunities for the community. This study aims to assess the current status of community tourism development in Phu Thuong commune, Vo Nhai district, Thai Nguyen province. The research results are based on the analysis of historical documents that have been recorded and compiled from local community tourism development activities. The research results will help to objectively assess the current status, thereby pointing out the strengths, weaknesses, and potential opportunities for the development of community tourism, especially with the participation of people, local authorities, tourism cooperatives, and tourism enterprises in the development linkage process. From there, the author proposes important solutions to attract tourists to visit in the coming years.

**Keywords:** research, development, community based tourism, Phu Thuong commune, Thai Nguyen province.

**1. Introduction**

Vietnam Tourism Development Strategy 2030 determined CBT as a key tourism model that needs to be promoted. By providing tourism local services, CBT offers unique and appealing tourism products, meeting the growing demands of tourists.

Phu Thuong is a mountainous commune located 2 km east of Vo Nhai district and 39 km from Thai Nguyen province. It also is the first place in Vo Nhai district to achieve the New Rural Standards in 2015 and the Advanced New Rural Standards in 2020. Currently, Phu Thuong is striving to become a model new rural commune during the 2023–2025 period. Blessed with rich natural resources, picturesque landscapes, and fertile land suitable for high-quality agricultural cultivation, Phu Thuong is also home of nine ethnic groups, including the Kinh, Tay, Nung, Dao,

Cao Lan, Muong, San Diu, Thai, and San Chi, with the Tay and Nung being the largest populations.

There has been a growing interest among academics and practitioners regarding community-based tourism (CBT) since it emerged as an alternative to conventional tourism. This interest has been particularly significant in developing countries where natural and cultural resources for CBT abound. CBT has been presented as a form of tourism where the local community has substantial control over, and involvement in its development and management, and a major proportion of the benefits remain within the community (WWF, 2001).

Based on these concept, Noni Lela Hayati and Ayob Zuraida Yaacob believe that CBT should follows 6 key principles that guide the development and implementation:

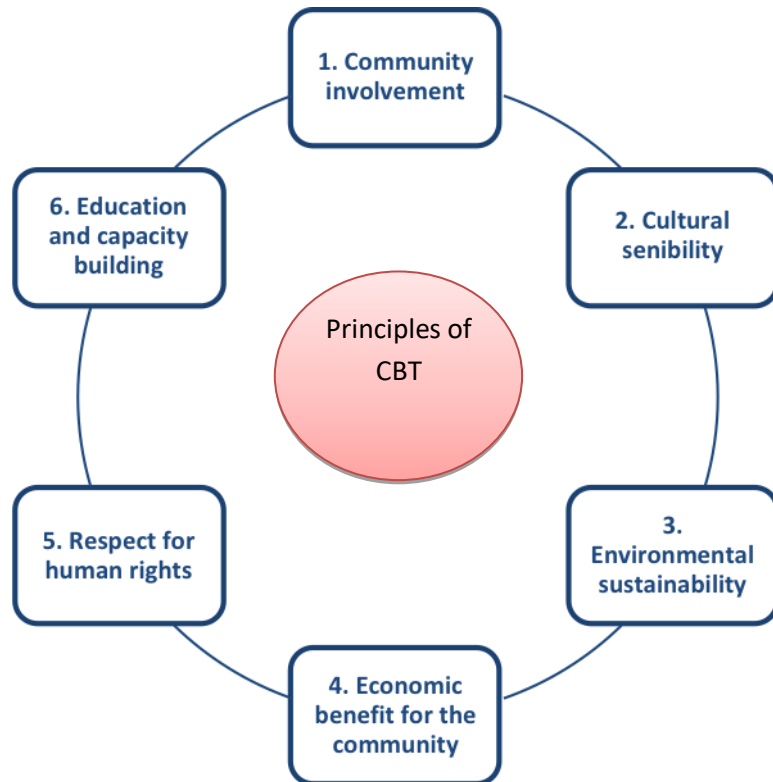


Figure 1: Principles for implementing community tourism development (Source:[3])

According to Vietnam Tourism Law 2017, CBT is a type of tourism based on the cultural values of the community and it is managed, organized, and benefited by the local community. In Vietnam, developing CBT in ethnic minority and mountainous regions not only helps preserve and promote cultural heritage but also creates sustainable livelihoods for local people. It is considered one of the most sustainable economic development models for indigenous

communities, as it enables locals to protect ecological resources while preserving and enhancing unique local cultural features.

Master's thesis on Community Tourism in the Northern Mountainous Region of Vietnam (case study of Sa Seng, Ta Phin, Sa Pa Lao Cai and Lac, Mai Chau (Hoa Binh) in 2011 by Nguyen Thi Huong, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, introduced the formation of community tourism destinations in the Northern mountainous region of Vietnam, the conditions of their appearance and their development characteristics in Vietnam. The study analyzed and clarified the role of the community in participating in organizing tourism exploitation and development, protecting natural resources and preserving indigenous culture. Studying the impact of community tourism on economic, environmental, socio-cultural activities at community tourism destinations. [1]

The article Developing community tourism to solve employment and ensure livelihoods for the San Diu ethnic group in Vinh Phuc by Nguyen Duc Khiem in the Tan Trao University Science Journal, March 2021, studying the conditions for exploiting community tourism of the San Diu people in Vinh Phuc, such as: cuisine, costumes, folk literature, folk games... To develop sustainable and effective community tourism to ensure livelihoods for the San Diu people, actively contributing to hunger eradication and poverty reduction, Vinh Phuc needs to: upgrade infrastructure, focus on points and villages on the main tours and tourist routes of the province; train human resources to serve tourism development, especially the tour guides and service staff in the villages; raise awareness for the San Diu people through support, training in communication skills, establishing art troupes in villages and hamlets, ready to perform for tourists; preserve and restore the unique cultural features of each ethnic group, contributing to creating jobs, increasing income, and improving the lives of the people. [2]

This article will examine the prospects and challenges of CBT as a tool for community development. It further outlines and sets the tone for the article.

## **2. Method**

The research team is familiar with the tourist destination and has a good relationship with the local people through the survey trips. During the implementation of the topic, the team directly participated in the cultural and artistic activities and the tourism practices of the local people and the behavior of tourists at the destination to collect qualitative information. The team also listened to the thoughts, aspirations and opinions of the local community in the tourism process. From there, the team has a basis to propose solutions to attract more tourists to visit.

The team also created a questionnaire to collect quantitative information on the participation of the local community in community tourism activities to see the impact of tourism on the local economy, culture and society.

The team conducting in-depth interviews were representatives of local authorities, travel companies, prestigious people in the community and tourists.

This article is based on data collected conducted by the research team and reports from the People's Committee of Phu Thuong commune and Vo Nhai district. The research used the following methods:

- **Secondary Data Collection:** Data was gathered from reference books, articles, and reports related to the research topic to establish a theoretical framework. The research team then analyzed, synthesized, and objectively and accurately evaluated the scientific content.
- **Fieldwork:** The research team conducted field trips to observe and survey the community tourism site at Mo Ga Hamlet, Phu Thuong Commune. These field visits provided an overview of the potential for community tourism development in the area.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Potential resources for Developing CBT in Phu Thuong

##### 3.1.1. Natural potentials

Phu Thuong Commune has limestone mountains topography stretching from the northwest to the southeast, interspersed with underground water streams. This stream also serves as a vital water source for the whole residents use and agricultural production; moreover, Phu Thuong lies within a tropical monsoon climate zone, with distinct seasons: a hot, humid, and rainy summer, and a cold, dry winter with little rain and frequent frost that creates favorable soil conditions and is well-suited for growing fruit trees such as custard apples, longans, guavas, grapefruits, oranges, and dragon fruit. This area boasts 114 hectares of agricultural land dedicated to fruit cultivation, providing favorable conditions for developing eco-agriculture combined with community tourism. [5]



Figure 2: Image of the gate to Mo Ga eco-tourism area  
(Source: Research Group, 2024)

Mo Ga Community Tourism Site has been put into operation to provide tourism services since August 2022. After 3 years of construction and development, the Community Tourism Site in

Mo Ga hamlet has attracted a large number of visitors. Total revenue for 3 years reached about 2 billion VND.

### *3.1.2. Cultural potentials*

Phu Thuong Commune is home to the Tay and Nung ethnic groups, who have preserved their distinctive cultural identity. This is reflected in their stilt house architecture, traditional clothing, cuisine, livelihood activities, bamboo weaving crafts, and folk performing arts.



Figure 3: Mo Ga Eco-tourism Area  
(Source: Research Group, 2024)

Additionally, Mo Ga (Chicken Beak) Temple, a provincial-level historical site built in 1920 honors the revered figures Thanh Hoang Cao Minh Chinh Truc, Nguyen Su Khiem Tri Gia, Dao Quan Son Hoang Minh, and God of Agriculture, a deity associated with agricultural production. The temple is designed in a rectangular shape with three main compartments and two annexes, featuring solid end walls. It faces west, overlooking lush rice fields. The temple serves not only as a center for traditional spiritual activities but also as a venue for local cultural and tourism events.

The annual Mo Ga Temple Festival, held on the 18th day of the first lunar month, features spring rituals, blessings, prayers for a bountiful harvest, and communal harmony. Festival activities include pounding sticky rice cakes, cultural performances, and traditional games like *nem con* (throwing a cloth ball), blindfolded pot-breaking, bamboo walking, and crossbow shooting. Other annual ceremonies take place on specific lunar dates, including the Ha Dien festival (March 20), Thuong Dien festival (June 26), New Rice festival (August 15), and Year-End festival (December 15). There is a communal house built in the traditional Tay stilt-house style

in Phu Thuong. It exhibits household items, clothing, bamboo and rattan crafts, and seasonal agricultural products.

The local ethnic groups retain many traditional dishes, including black sticky rice cakes (*Banh chung den*), sweet roasted rice bars (*Khau sli*), sticky rice cakes (*Banh day*), five-colored sticky rice (*Xoi ngu sac*), and braised pork (*Khau nhuc*). They also incorporate new dishes that cater to tourists' preferences, such as honey-grilled chicken, stuffed bamboo shoots, and mountain rock snails. Coming here, visitors can participate in activities like pounding and making sticky rice cakes and enjoy their creations. They can also purchase local products such as roasted rice bars, rice noodles, dried vermicelli, bamboo shoots, honey, and locally grown fruits like guavas, custard apples, longans, grapefruits, and dragon fruits as souvenirs.



Figure 4: Making sticky rice cakes  
(Source: Research Group, 2024)

To preserve traditional culture, there is a traditional Tay cultural arts club with 22 members. The club showcases unique performances of Tay and Nung folk songs, including *hat then*, *va sli*, and *hat luon*, offering visitors a glimpse into the rich cultural heritage of these ethnic groups. [5]

### 3.2. Stakeholders involve in CBT model

#### 3.2.1. Local Community

CBT model in Phu Thuong is managed and operated under a cooperative model called the Phu Thuong Agro-Forestry Services Cooperative. This cooperative holds Business Registration

Certificate No. 4601523347, with its first amendment registered on July 23, 2022. Currently, the cooperative comprises 78 members engaged in tourism and food service activities.

Within the cooperative, there are 16 members, focuses on providing community tourism services, including accommodation, cuisine, and cultural performances. The service delivery at Mo Ga village involves direct participation from local households and members of the village.

In 2022, the Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism organized two training courses on community tourism development skills and rural tourism operations. Additionally, many household representatives joined study tours to gain experience in community tourism development in Hoa Binh, Son La, and Lao Cai provinces. These tours, facilitated by the Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of Thai Nguyen Province, allowed residents to apply practical insights into hosting and serving tourists more professionally, enhancing visitor satisfaction. As the result, local business owners have been educated on safety protocols and trained to use fire safety equipment. They are equipped with fire extinguishers, safety rules, and instructions, and maintain these resources per regulations.

### 3.2.2. Tour operators

Currently, most community tourism sites rely on networks of tour guides or drivers for promotion and operations. Tourism programs are often organized independently by companies, which directly collect payments from tourists without supporting the local community tourism sites. The relationships between tourism companies and homestay owners are mainly informal and seasonal, based on introductions, phone calls, verbal agreements, or messaging platforms like Zalo or Facebook. These arrangements lack formal contracts, profit-sharing mechanisms, or commission agreements.

Consequently, the majority of the profits are retained by tourism businesses, while local residents receive a significantly smaller portion compared to the fees tourists pay to the companies. This has limited contributions from tourism businesses toward enhancing the tourism capacity of local residents, investing in infrastructure, or preserving the surrounding environment.

### 3.2.3. Local authorities

The Thai Nguyen Provincial Government has issued a Tourism Development Plan for 2021–2025, with a vision toward 2030. This plan includes policies supporting the development of five community tourism sites in the province, including Mo Ga Hamlet in Phu Thuong Commune, Vo Nhai District, for the 2022–2025 period [6]

On April 4, 2022, the People's Committee of Thai Nguyen Province issued Decision No. 05/2022/QĐ-UBND, outlining the implementation of policies to support community tourism development. This decision specifies the support levels and eligibility conditions for community tourism sites in the province, including:

*Units: Million dong*

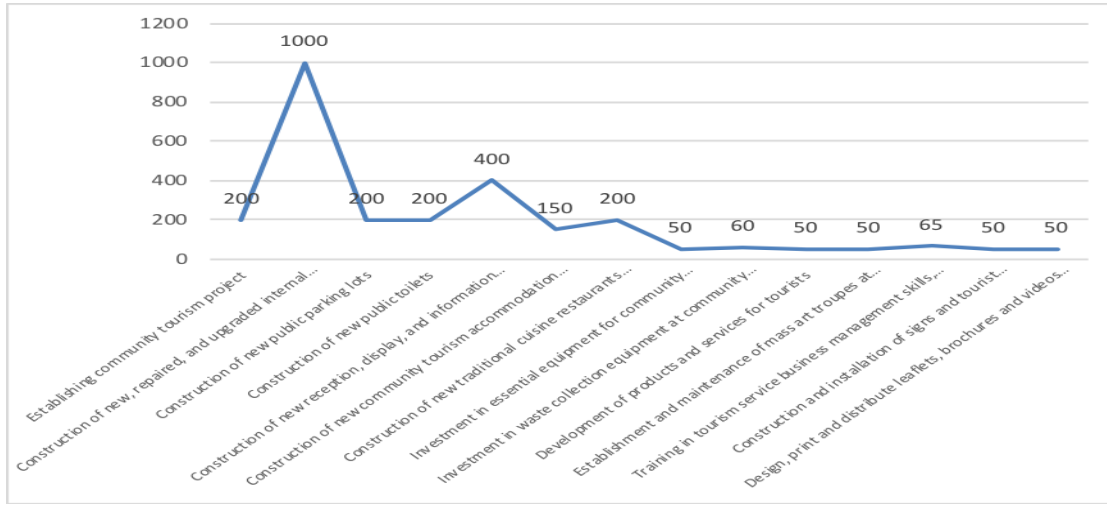


Figure 5: Policy to support community tourism development in Thai Nguyen province in 2024  
(Source: Department of Culture and Sports of Vo Nhai district)

The People's Committee of Vo Nhai District has implemented its Tourism Development Plan for 2021–2025, aligned with the provincial plan, under Decision No. 68 issued on January 14, 2021. The plan focuses on public awareness campaigns, building a sustainable tourism environment, developing local tourism products, investing in infrastructure, and providing tourism training for local sites.

On December 30, 2023, the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Thai Nguyen province issued Decision No. 1802/QD-SVHTTDL on funding support for the contents entitled to support policies for community tourism development in 2023 in Thai Nguyen province, in which the Mo Ga hamlet community tourism site, Phu Thuong commune was approved for 07 implementation contents with a total support budget of: 705,450,000 VND. Up to now, the total support budget has been disbursed and settled at 100% of the total support level.

According to statistics from the People's Committee of Phu Thuong Commune, Mo Ga Hamlet has a total of 177 households, of which only 2 are the poor. These are 2 households of single elderly people with no children. The average total income per capita of the hamlet in 2023 is: 63 million/person/year.

At the commune level, the People's Committee of Phu Thuong Commune has established a Steering Committee for community tourism development in Mo Ga Hamlet and related documents. Initiatives include forming a traditional cultural club for the Tay ethnic group in Mo Ga Hamlet, directing the Phu Thuong Agro-Forestry Cooperative to expand business activities, and assisting with legal procedures for official recognition as a community tourism site.

Additionally, the commune disseminates information about the importance of community tourism development through electronic platforms and public address systems. This aims to raise public awareness of its role in the region's socio-economic and cultural development.



Efforts to maintain public order are also evident. Contact details for the village head and the director of the Phu Thuong Agro-Forestry Cooperative are prominently displayed in reception areas for tourists to report concerns or provide feedback.

Infrastructure to support both residents and tourists has been enhanced. All households have access to safe, reliable electricity from the national grid, with 4.2 km of street lighting installed in residential areas and village roads. To improve visitor experience, the hamlet has installed interpretive panels and directional signs at key locations, such as the village entrance, Mo Ga Temple reception area, craft workshops, dining establishments, and homestays.

### 3.2.4. Tourists

According to data from the Phu Thuong Agricultural and Forestry Cooperative, as of November 2024, it has welcomed about 16,000 domestic visitors, primarily from Hanoi, Thai Nguyen, and other provinces. Notably, in 2024, it hosted 30 tourists from Denmark through Hanoi Tourist, along with a few individual visitors from Germany, France, and South Korea. However, foreign tourists typically visit for only one day to experience traditional games and local cuisine. They do not stay overnight as the local stilt houses currently only accommodate communal sleeping arrangements, not private room.

*Unit: Visitors*

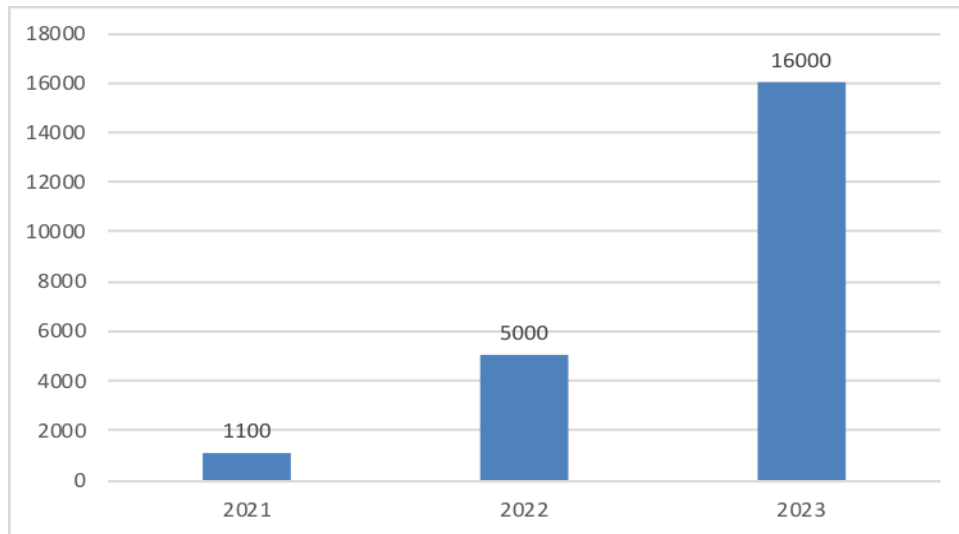


Figure 6: Tourists come to Mo Ga tourist area  
(Source: Research Group, 2024)

Visitors to the community tourism site can participate in activities such as weaving family items and handicrafts, engaging in folk games (walking on a wooden bridge, tossing rice cakes, blindfolded duck catching, blindfolded pot smashing, tug-of-war, crossbow shooting, and bamboo pole dancing), preparing traditional local dishes (such as *khâu sli*, black rice cake, and

bánh chưng đen), taking photographs at orchards, stilt houses, and the village's flower-lined streets, as well as participating in cultural exchanges with local communities.

### 3.2.5. Marketing and tourism promotion

Images and videos of the Mỏ Gà community tourism site have been featured on the Thái Nguyên Province's official website, the Thái Nguyên Tourism Portal, as well as on VTV3, VTV24 – Vietnam Television, and social media platforms to attract tourists. Through activities such as the “Võ Nhại Origins Festival,” the “Agricultural and Rural Tourism Supply and Demand Connection Day,” and the “2024 Thái Nguyên Tourism Opening Ceremony,” both the village's images and agricultural products have gained visibility among visitors.

However, promotional activities have been seasonal and not continuous, which has limited their ability to attract tourists as much as expected.

## 4. Discussion

Phu Thuong is a has both natural and social potentials for developing CBT. As the demand for tourism continues to rise, with an increasing interest in experiencing and understanding the distinctive cultures of ethnic minorities, Phu Thuong needs to adopt practical and effective solutions. This requires the collective efforts of all stakeholders involved in community tourism development. If these solutions are implemented successfully, Mỏ Gà will attract more tourists, contributing to improving the livelihoods of ethnic minorities and promoting local economic development.

***For local authorities:*** Increase public awareness about the community tourism development program to help local people understand that tourism development will contribute to the economic, cultural, and social development of the area, improving the material and spiritual life of the people while ensuring sustainable development for future generations. Enhance the recruitment of skilled and professional staff for the community tourism site, providing reasonable support policies to ensure a basic standard of living. Support training for ethnic minority youth and local communities at vocational schools and universities specializing in tourism, encouraging them to return home to contribute to the development of community tourism. Support local tourism services that are closely linked to cultural preservation and tourism exploitation. Improve the quality of tourism services such as food, accommodation, and experiential activities. Local authorities should work alongside the people, especially in managing large groups of tourists. Provide training and updates on new tourism standards for the local community. Coordinate administrative units such as commerce, tourism, culture, and agriculture to discuss community tourism matters.

***For the local community:*** Every resident should unite in building a clean and green village to develop community tourism. Collaborate closely with cooperatives in tourism development, especially in registering guest numbers for homestays. Establish a community tourism fund for building common infrastructure and amenities for tourism activities. Learn from the experience

of other successful community tourism sites. Preserve ethnic cultural heritage through tourism activities.

**For tourism operators:** Strengthen the management capacity of the Phu Thuong Agricultural and Forestry Cooperative in providing tourism services. Increase capital for the cooperative. Promote the Mỏ Gà community tourism site through domestic and international tourism programs. Create additional tourism products that the community has yet to provide, ensuring diversity and quality for visitors. Transportation companies should provide services to transport tourists to the local community tourism model. Tourism businesses should employ local labor to contribute to job creation and income generation in the community. Contribute to the local economy by purchasing agricultural products and supporting local producers.

**For tourists:** They should appreciate nature and the cultural values of ethnic minorities, recognizing their role in conservation and being willing to pay for the protection of environmental resources at the community tourism site. Tourists should be responsible for the environment and participate in poverty reduction efforts at the tourism site.

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