

The Economic Benefits of Community - Based Rural Tourism on Rural Development: A Case Study of Tra Que Village, Vietnam

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to indicate the main benefits to the economy of community-based rural tourism (CBRT) in Vietnam. A case study in Tra Que Village as a significant CBRT representative was selected for investigation. The study used a quantitative research approach with a case study sample. Ninety-seven households including members and non-members of CBRT were interviewed via the instrument consisting of a questionnaire. Research findings indicated that households joining CBRT received a greater income than households choosing not to join tourism activities. Additionally, findings revealed the main benefits of CBRT to be in the economic aspect, i.e. income and overall economic development of the area, improved employment opportunities, and standard of living. Consequently, the contribution of this research was to enhance the understanding of the economic benefits brought about by CBRT in Vietnam.

Keywords: *Community-based rural tourism; rural development; economic benefits; case study*

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Introduction

Community-based Rural Tourism (CBRT) is a kind of community-based tourism that applies in rural places. It was introduced as a set of new tourism-type products from the 1990s in Vietnam (VTA, 2014). CBRT is a novel form of tourism product in many countries in which residents are directly involved in implementation and management (Satarat, 2010). Moreover, *“local communities are trusted to be fully responsible for every aspect of their tourism management i.e. decision making, planning, evaluation, and control”* (Kaur, Jawaid, & Othman, 2016).

CBRT brings a plethora of opportunities to local communities by enhancing economic status and bringing about poverty reduction in some cases (Kayat, 2014). Moreover, CBRT programs are considered as a source of empowerment - especially among the youth and women in rural areas. However, *“although rural tourism can become a tool towards sustainable development, it can also be a source of conflict and potential harm to the environment such as creating adverse impacts on local communities which can be avoided with careful planning and development”* (Ertuna & Kirbas, 2012).

CBRT in Vietnam has created many positive impacts that have improved the quality of life of local people. As mentioned, the main contributions from CBRT are increased income and quality of life for rural communities - particularly in remote provinces. What's more, improvements to public services, infrastructure, electricity, and, fresh water supplies are mentioned as CBRT impacts. CBRT has created many job opportunities for locals, including women, the elderly, and disabled persons (MOVT, 2015). Nevertheless, there have not been a great deal of success stories in terms of CBRT projects in Vietnam. Such reasons for this failing relate to management, participation, government policies and poor awareness among the local populace. In many cases, a low level of awareness is the main reason leading to poor tourism participation - which notably is the main element of community tourism (Tosun, 2000). Accordingly, studies regarding the impacts of CBRT need conducting to show the impacts of CBRT, whereby developing positive impacts and reducing negative impacts during tourism conduction. Meanwhile, few research studies have focused on the impacts of CBRT on rural development in Vietnam. Additionally, few studies have focused on CBRT in Tra Que Village: most studies are theoretical researches - not empirical base (Hoian, 2018). This research is one of the cutting edge investigation concentrating on CBRT which will satisfy the research gap in central Vietnam. The study also answers certain questions concerning the needs of research about the impacts of CBRT development.

The purpose of this research is to reveal the economic benefits of CBRT to determine its contribution to rural development. In order to reach these objectives, the research question designed for this study is as follows: What are the main benefits of CBRT on the economic aspect at Tra Que Tourism Village?

Literature review

CBRT

CBRT is an approach which relies on community-based tourism that takes place in a rural area (Kayat, 2014). Also, CBRT is developed based on a rural tourism model which requires the local community to get involved and participate in tourism activities - including direct and indirect activities within their community. Tourism activities are managed and owned by the community with funding and assistance from government and non-government who support methods and tools for community development with the goal of increasing tourist- knowledge about a community's culture (Aref, 2011; Suansri, 2003 in Dunn, 2007:14). The main outcome of CBRT is to create end-goals, improve well-being, and indirectly promote culture to the world. Hence, (Kamarudin, (2013) noted that CBRT goals cover the following:

- To encourage local empowerment and participation in decision-making and leadership.
- To be owned and managed by a formal community group (not individuals).
- To support the (local economy i.e. sources of income and jobs, and infrastructure) development and improvement of life-quality.
- To provide tools for conservation (of nature, culture, biological diversity, water, forests, etc.)
- To create activities based on local attractions and resources.
- To encourage knowledge and experience sharing (increased awareness).
- To respect local cultures and their environment (ethical responsibilities and code of conduct).
- To recognize the important role of women in tourism development.

CBRT and rural development

Vietnam is an agricultural country with vast rural areas. Nowadays, Vietnam's economy is changing from agricultural to industry and services based in the economic field. At present, *"the per capita income in rural areas is approximately two times lower than in urban areas (GSO, 2012) with the income gap becoming wider"*. Meanwhile, urban areas present greater investment and employment opportunities. In such a context, there will be a demographic structural change, expanding from urban to rural areas. Some researchers have argued that *"it would ruin the social fabric of rural areas, encourage deforestation and augment pressure on the economy, society, and environment in urban areas"*. Hence, sustainable development for rural areas is necessary over the long term.

There are many challenges that exist during the process of structural

transformation from agricultural to industry-based. For this reason, many researchers and policymakers believe that changes to some parts of agricultural, rural tourism and CBRT leads to support in rural places, allows for sustainable development, and reduces development related risk. What's more, *“the development of CBRT will also contribute to increased reinvestment in the agricultural sector”*. CBRT creates a significant contribution to poverty reduction in rural areas - especially in remote places. Following Mitchell and Le (2007), the poor can receive at least 26% of tourism expenditure. Thus, CBRT creates opportunities for paid employment in the CBRT enterprise. Based on this advantage, many developing countries have adopted CBRT as a tool to improve life-quality and to support the economic level (Anuar & Sood, 2017).

Economic benefits and the impacts of CBRT

Economic impact studies in tourism and CBRT *“are undertaken to determine the effects of specific activities in a given geographical area on the income, wealth and employment of that area's residents.”* (Anna Davtyan, 2017). Especially in some developing countries, CBRT's economic impact can support poverty reduction, economic motivation, and human development. Many studies have indicated that CBRT creates both direct and indirect impacts on a community's economy.

There are three benefits to CBRT in terms of local economic development. Firstly, rural communities can receive large tourism spending from visitors. Therefore, money can be retained within communities. Secondly, from tourist expenditure, rural communities can gain revenue and divide it between households within the community. So, the economic condition of rural households can be improved, thus generating linkages in the local economy in that area. Thirdly, the empowerment and sense of ownership in regards the managerial capacity of a community when they are more involved in CBRT activities (Lapeyre, 2010). On the other hand, *“tourism and CBRT might lead to negative effects such as the demand for land and property - especially from individuals outside the community”* (Sukkasem, 2013).

CBRT in Tra Que tourism village

Tra Que Village is one village where community tourism by the Hoi An Local Government has been developed. Located 3 km from the center of Hoi An with 100,2 ha of total area, Tra Que is well-known as the freshest and cleanest vegetable supplier for Hoi An (Justgola, 2016). *“Established 300 years ago and close to the De Vong River, the first citizens of Tra Que initially lived on fish. Gradually, they took advantage of the river seaweed using it as vegetable manure. Since that time, Tra Que locals have spent their lives growing the best vegetables which are delivered to Hoi An's restaurants and households”* (Réhahn). Based on the advantageous location (near an ancient town) of this traditional vegetable producing village, the Hoi An government has listed Tra Que Village as a tourism destination since 2003. Currently, agriculture and tourism are the two main sectors for Tra Que community development. There is a total of 270

households in that area, including 207 households focused on vegetable production - accounting for 75.66% of the population. Vegetable farming serves tourism both directly and indirectly by supplying produce to restaurants, and by presenting traditional vegetable grows for tourists. In 2018, vegetable production reached 792 tons or 10.73 billion Vietnamese Dong. Moreover, Tra Que Village residents have used their local culture to build many kinds of tourism activities.

The Tra Que community has preserved its traditional lifestyle and individual's livelihoods, leading to the village becoming a well-known destination in Quangnam province. Moreover, the local people of Tra Que want to preserve, protect, and continue their traditional vegetable growing. They believe that sustainable development is the only possible way to gaining maximum benefit for their community. From 2012 to 2018, community tourism developed in the area with the attraction of international and domestic tourists. Consequently, there have been many changes within the community as addressed in numerous studies, for instance, the change of income in each household and certain characteristics of the community. Therefore, agro-tourism and eco-tourism were introduced as a catalyst for rural development. Many tourism programs in Tra Que Village such as *"become a farmer in one day"* or *"cooking classes"* or *"lantern-making"* have served tourists as a way to increase household income and conserve the village's traditions. Many rural families have practiced tourism activities through sightseeing tours, product-making, homestays etc. That is the aim of CBRT: not only is it a development instrument for locals, but also something for sustaining livelihoods (TTXVN, 2012). Currently, there are 12 restaurants, six homestays, and five tourism villas in Tra Que Village. Much research has indicated that the demand from foreign tourists for CBRT models is a lot higher than that from domestic tourists. *"Social change in tourism is what makes cultural tourism popular among tourists from Japan, Korea, United Kingdom and other countries"* (Kayat, 2009).

The results reported that tourism activities initially appeared during the 2000s in Tra Que Village. These tourism activities were made to serve foreign tourist's needs regarding rural and agricultural experiences. In 2003, the provincial government decided to conduct the 1st Zone Tourism Plan of Tra Que Village; this included:

- Accumulate agricultural land: the farmers' agricultural land was redeveloped in an area in the village totaling about 20 ha. Farmer's houses surrounded the vegetable land area. The purpose of this land plan was to create common space for vegetable growing and beautiful views of rural areas. After land dividing, the villagers are not allowed to sell their land to others by law in order to preserve the traditional space in that area.

- Build tourism programs: the local government cooperated with travel agencies and farmers' groups to design tourism programs based on agricultural

activities at the village. There is a myriad of tourism activities as already mentioned; villagers participate as guides for tourists with translated support from tour guides.

- Support to set up restaurants and homestays: local government supported some households to improve their restroom conditions which was an issue at that time in the area. The restaurants and homestays just needed to improve sanitation with little investment needed to maintain the traditional lifestyle in that village.

- Knowledge transfer: the tourism farmer group was established to include farmers involved in tourism activities, restaurants, and homestays. Supported by local government and some NGOs, training encompassed community tourism implementation skills, management skills, environment preservation, and English skills.

The effective implementation of CBRT in the beginning years helped Tra Que Tourism Village become better known, and the number of tourists increased year by year - especially foreign tourists. Consequently, the 2nd Zone Tourism Plan was conducted in 2010 to expand the rural tourism space for tourism demand.

Roles of local government concerning CBRT activities in Tra Que Village:

- Coordinate with travel agencies to design tourism programs following national policies.

- Coordinate with NGOs to conduct training providing knowledge about CBRT for locals.

- Provide loans with low-interest for households to support initial investment in tourism activities.

- Control ticket selling and the use of revenue from ticket sales.

- Control the quality of tourism services and agricultural activities.

Roles for members who join tourism activities in Tra Que Village:

- Directly participate in tourism programs.

- Create tourism activities in their own fields, such as farming presentations, cooking classes, buffalo-riding, fishing, etc.

- Manage their businesses themselves: restaurants, homestays, souvenir shops, etc.

- Ensure service procedures and tourism services follow quality standards under the rules and policies of local government.

In terms of CBRT revenue management, there is a closed combine between local government, local populace and travel agencies. Most tourists book tourism programs for Tra Que Village through travel agencies. With total revenue divided into three parts: (1) tickets or entrance fees for local government, (2) tourism service

for locals providing homestays, restaurants, farming presentations, etc., and (3) tourism service revenue for travel agencies. In some cases, the tourist directly books tourism services through a homestay or restaurant depending on their demand; some tourists just purchase tickets to walk around the village to sightsee.

Methodology

Research design

For the research design, a quantitative approach and purposive selection was employed for this study. The questionnaire was designed as a tool in order to collect data. This research also utilised secondary data to support the findings. The research took the form of a survey at Tra Que tourism village in during the first two weeks of April 2018.

Population and sampling

The target population included members and non-members associated with tourism activities. Participation related to the services previously mentioned. According to the quantitative method, the researcher conducted the survey face to face at individuals' homes. The research incorporated a limited population with purposive selection in Tra Que Village comprising of 56 members with indirect and direct involvement in CBRT. According to the research limitation, the study explores the data from member groups for economic benefits rendered by CBRT. This research applied solely income information from the non-member group for income comparison.

Data analysis

SPSS was used to analyze data from the questionnaires along with T-test to compare member and non-member monthly income. The well-being of a household is normally measured by its income; meanwhile the income of members and non-members in regards tourism exhibits different contributions depending on the job-type. By measuring income between members and non-members we can evaluate the economic effects of tourism amid this community. Also, for members, the research utilised frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation to analyze the economic impacts of CBRT, and allow us to clearly understand the economic impacts on income, living standards, and job opportunities. Statistical analysis was used to describe information leading to conclusion.

Additionally, the economic impacts were assessed via four elements related to the economic aspect of participants at Tra Que Village. Descriptive analysis shows the results of the economic impact on CBRT in the questionnaire through mean and frequency. Accordingly, mean and frequency were applied to summarize the data collected based on the variables. According to reliability analysis, Cronbach's alpha is

0.761 > 0.6 meaning that the items employed in this research were reliable (Table 1).

Tables 1. Variable items reliability test on the economic impacts of CBRT

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
CBRT improves the development of the overall economy	0.761
CBRT increases household income	
CBRT improves household living standards	
CBRT increases the number of job opportunities for local people	

Results

General information of members joining tourism activities in Tra Que Village

Table 2 shows that most households involved in other tourism activities are highest at 33.9%; those activities include part-time massage staff, part-time vegetable-grow presenters and part-time cycle drivers. Activities related to restaurants covered 21.4% of local participants. Meanwhile, transportation activities exhibited the lowest participation (8.9%). According to years working amid tourism activities, the time of 2-5 years, and less than two years were most prevalent at 53.6% and 33.9%, respectively. In terms of additional income from tourism, 32.1% of households obtained an extra income of around 3-6 million VND. Following that, less than 3 million VND in tourism generated income at 23.2%, and an income of 3 million to 6 million was highest at 32.1%. Moreover, an income level at 7-9 million VND and more than 13 million similar stood at 17.9%. The income from 10 million to 13 million VND was lowest at 8.9%.

Table 2. General information of respondents regarding tourism activities

Variable	Frequency	Percentage	
Tourism activity involvement	Accommodation	6	10.7
	Restaurant	12	21.4
	Transportation	5	8.9
	Souvenir shop	6	10.7
	Travel service company	8	14.3
	Others	19	33.9
	Total	56	100
Years of working in tourism activity	< 2	19	33.9
	2 – 5	30	53.6
	6 – 9	5	8.9
	> 9	2	3.6
	Total	56	100
Income from tourism Unit: Vietnam dong	< 3,000,000	13	23.2
	3,000,000 – 6,000,000	18	32.1
	7,000,000 – 9,000,000	10	17.9
	10,000,000 – 13,000,000	5	8.9
	> 13,000,000	10	17.9
	Total	56	100

Economic benefits rendered by CBRT at Tra Que Tourism Village regarding rural development

Household income and overall economic development

The research hypothesis was that the average income of member households would be more than the average income of non-member households.

μ_1 signifies average income of participating households, and μ_2 , income of non-participating households.

$$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2$$

$$H_1: \mu_1 > \mu_2$$

Table 3. Independent Samples Test relating to monthly income

Item	Member		Non-member		t	sig
	\bar{X}	S. D	\bar{X}	S. D		
Income	2.61	1.186	1.71	0.642	4.79*	0.0

From table 3, $p = 0.00/2 < 0.05$, H_0 is rejected at a significance level of 0.05 and H_1 is acceptable ($p < 0.05$). Based on the results, we can state the following: There was a significant difference in mean income between member, and non-member households ($t = 4.79$, $p < .001$). Thus, average income of member households was greater than that of non-member households.

Notably, the majority of tourism participants contributed through restaurants, homestays, acting as tour guides, souvenir-selling, etc. 98.2% of respondents indicated “somewhat agree, highly agree and strongly agree” that CBRT has increased household income over the previous 10 years, ($\bar{X} = 4.16$) (Table 4). Just 1.8% of respondents disagreed that CBRT increases household income. In addition, respondents who joined tourism activities reported that the occupations related to tourism did not depend so much on the agricultural sector which is under the weather’s influence in Vietnam’s central areas. Although the participants faced initial difficulties when joining tourism activities such as a low volume of tourists, service inadequacies, human capacity etc.; with the support of stakeholders, they gradually improved. CBRT generated revenue in Tra Que Village has, on average, increased annually.

Following the participants, the income from tourism activities in Table 4 indicates the highest percentage of 32.1% or 18 families with an income of 3 million VND to 6 million VND. 13 families, or 23.2% earned income from tourism activities at an amount of less than 3 million VND. The groups bringing in 7-9 million VND, and more than 10 million VND covered 10 households. The households obtaining an income from 9-13 million VND, (the lowest percentage) was indicated by five families, or 8.9%. For part-time jobs in the tourism sector, 5-6 hours per day was allotted to agricultural development, therefore, individuals were able to work as massage staff or cycle drivers during their down time so as to receive a greater income from tourism. Hence, locals could earn 10-100 US dollars per day from tourism activities, besides agricultural income. Besides that, benefit-sharing mentions that although the profits from tourism activities must be distributed to stakeholders (travel agencies, government and farmers), farmers deserve fair profit resultant of their workload.

According to the research of Stephen and Smith (1989), tourism development is the main factor supporting the development of rural and under-developed areas. Likewise, a study by Jammu and Kashmir mentioned that tourism development contributes to rural development – particularly in remote and under-developed

regions (Mir, 2014). Also, a research by Neumeier and Pollermann (2014) discussed community tourism as the promoter of rural development - particularly in terms of the economic aspect. In Tra Que Village's case, CBRT has brought opportunities for business and employment. The local people are not completely dependent on agriculture; however, they can utilise agriculture for the service industry. Notably, agriculture has had an important role in CBRT development in Tra Que Village. Tourism activities utilising farm space included homestays, restaurants, vegetable-grow presentations, and so forth. In-turn this caused the reputation of local agricultural products to increase in the village. This finding relates to the development of local product reputation - which is also mentioned as a tourism impact - as it creates competition between areas and regions (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011). Although vegetable production relates to traditional culture, the vegetable product itself remains locally bound. Previously, vegetable products were mostly reserved for household consumption with little income generated from sales. CBRT has benefitted from television advertising, and with it brought cultural and product value awareness of the village to the wider community. Vegetable products are currently not only supplied to local restaurants and local markets, but also to large supermarkets and restaurants country-wide including Big C, Coop Mart, Metro, and others. The impact of tourism has contributed to the vegetable value increasing with roughly two tons of produce harvested and supplied each day by Tra Que Village. In 2015, the profit from vegetable sales was over 19 billion VND, creating an average income of 4.5 million VND/year/person. This means the income from vegetable sales has significantly increased compared with the years prior.

Job opportunities

Employment has been found to be one of the main benefits of tourism (Inskeep, 1991); just as in the case of Tra Que Village ($\bar{X} = 4.25$) (Table 4). Preceding tourism implementation residents stated that before, most farmers were women and the elderly; while the men and youth moved elsewhere or to the city in order to gain employment. At present following the information provided by local government officers and other reports, there is high employment in the area (Hoian, 2018). Employment can be described as an individual benefit; notwithstanding, those employed in community tourism and other tourism enterprises financially support their families, thereby raising the standard of living of a household. This is mentioned in a study by Holloway (2004), whereby local people can earn money in their locale from tourism. Hence, CBRT is a method to generate income on multiple occasions from tourists. *"A tourist makes an initial expenditure in the society which is received as income by local tour operators, shopkeepers, hotels, taxi drivers and so on"* (Zaei & Zaei, 2013). In Tra Que Village, following household participation in tourism activities amid a total of 56 surveys (figure 1), 33.9% or 19 respondents encompassed activities including part-time massage, part-time vegetable presenting, housekeeping and part-time cycle driving. Ranked second were activities related to restaurants

i.e.21.4% or 12 local participants. Eight respondents or 14.3% had jobs connected with travel service companies. Six households or 10.7% of respondents worked in accommodation or were owners of villas and homestays. Finally, 8.9% of respondents worked in transportation. This demonstrates a variety of available employment and advantages in terms of local employment. The representative of the farmer group reported that the people working in tourism-related jobs have a better life than those working in other sectors. Tourism-related jobs in hotels, restaurants, tour operators and transportation provide greater financial rewards, and other benefits. Moreover, employment in tourism also increases social status as it is considered as “*gentlemen’s work*”. They also mentioned that jobs in tourism provide additional advantages such as tips and that they are not so physically demanding. Hence, community tourism offers a wide range of employment opportunities for local groups.

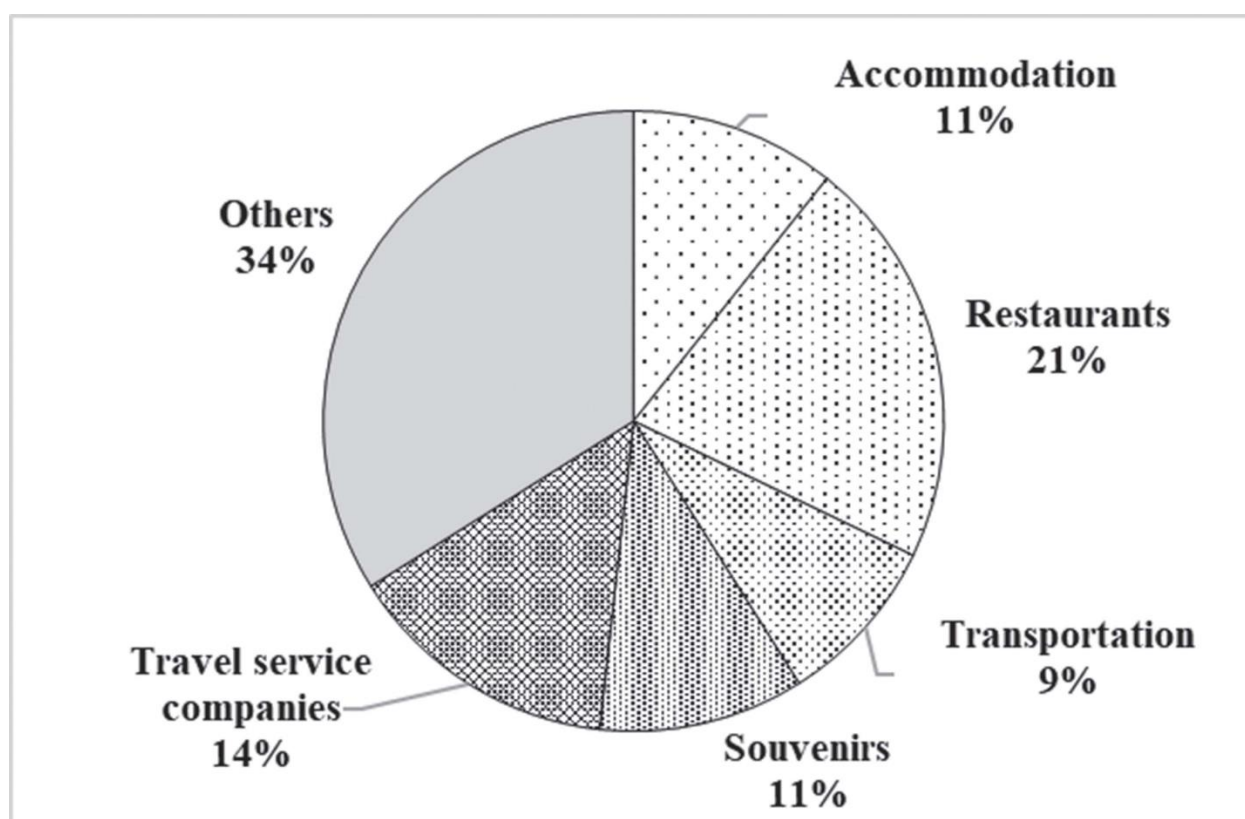


Figure 1. Tourism employment group percentages in Tra Que Village

Living standards

Most respondents strongly agreed that CBRT improves household living standards ($\bar{X} = 3.48$) (Table 4). According to UNDP (2001) “*standard of living*” is defined as “*the notion of human welfare (well-being) measured by social indicators rather than by quantitative measures of income and production*”. Thus, it can be argued that the standard of living can be measured on the basis of the quality of life a person enjoys in such areas as housing, food, education, clothing, transportation, and employment

opportunities. These outcomes are similar to the findings of Zaei and Zaei (2013), whereby the creation of job opportunities for the local populace leads to an improved income, which in-turn enhances living standards. In accordance with numerous respondents; tourism-related jobs accord a relatively high status and augment one's standard of living. Consequently, residents said that they purchased food higher in nutritional value when earning more money from tourism activities. Besides that, water systems, electricity supplies and infrastructure are developed and improved. Accordingly, this was mentioned by Mathieson and Wall (1982), whereby tourism makes a significant contribution to infrastructure systems.

Table 4. Community opinion toward economic impacts of CBRT

Economic benefits	\bar{X}	S. D	Response
CBRT improves the development of the local economy	3.68	0.971	Strongly agree
CBRT increases household income	4.16	0.757	Strongly agree
CBRT improves household living standards	3.48	0.972	Strongly agree
CBRT increases employment opportunities for local people	4.25	0.919	Vehemently agree

Conclusion

Based on the data concerning CBRT activities, most households were involved in CBRT in the form of part-time jobs including those mentioned. Most were farmers joining tourism related job opportunities as an additional source of income during their down-time. The second most involved in CBRT were restaurants. Hence, locals utilised their homes with ease as restaurants, along with vegetables predominantly grown in their own gardens. For years working in tourism, the highest percentage was 2 – 5 years. Tourism is subject to a seasonal format in the area, thus, income generated from tourism is not fixed. Nevertheless, in terms of additional income from tourism, most earned 3-6 million VND per month.

The outcomes of this research highlight that CBRT offers much potential in regards to rural development amid the economic aspect of a village's community. As a consequence, households involved in tourism activities received a greater income compared with non-participating households.

After several years of CBRT conduction, the local populace has consequently gained numerous economic benefits which in-turn are considered to have assisted in poverty reduction. First and foremost, CBRT has increased household income and enhanced the area's overall economy. What's more, tourism activities have helped local farmers earn more once they have finished their harvest. The difference in this research finding was that the development of community tourism promoted the

reputation of local produce to the point of becoming well known nation-wide, as compared with previously. The government developed a certification process for local products which encouraged visitors to buy local products, whereby further promoting the quality reputation of locally produced vegetable products nation-wide. This also led to agricultural development: the main livelihood in the area. Secondly, CBRT increased the amount of job opportunities for residents. Preceding CBRT conduction, households in the area only had a narrow range of on-farm undertakings to carry out. Notably, tourism development led to the opening of many kinds of jobs which resolved the issue of a lack of employment among multiple population groups - especially women and the elderly. Lastly, with the local community directly involved in tourism development, the area benefits from employment opportunities, greater earnings, and enhanced living standards.

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