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## Craft villages and tourism development, a case study in Phu Quoc island of Vietnam

### 1. Introduction

With effect of the globalization and the international economic integration, regional economic development is one of the important issues of many developed and developing countries. In developing countries in Asia like China, Thailand and Vietnam, industrialization and modernization is accelerating national economies. Reported by Ministry of Agriculture and rural development (MARD) to 31st December 2014, about 5096 craft villages are existing in Vietnam and many of them have the history over 500 years to 1000 years, and that really is "tourism resource mine" (<http://www.tuyengiao.vn /Home/khoagiao/75534/Lang-nghe-Viet-Nam-Truyen-thong-thuc-trang-va-giai-phap-phat-trien-trong-thoi-ky-hoi-nhap>).

Phu Quoc - a 593 km<sup>2</sup> area island district of Kien Giang Province is located in the Gulf of Thailand. Kien Giang's islands and coastal areas including Phu Quoc island were recognized by UNESCO as a World Biosphere Reserve (<http://phuquocisland.gov.vn/vi-vn/chinhquyen/gioithieu/tongquanvphuquoc.aspx>) in 2006. Phu Quoc island also has other name as Pearl Island by its mysterious beauty.

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There are many tourism activities in land, ocean and aerial scopes such as hiking, scuba diving, fishing, trekking and snorkelling. Besides, in Phu Quoc Island, a large amusement park, safari zoo and world class golf courses are also existed. Phu Quoc also owns the most beautiful beaches, historic prisons, scared temples, etc. Phu Quoc is known undeniably one of the most attractive destinations not only in Vietnam but also in the Asian region. Also, in Phu Quoc, "crafts" and craft villages on fields of fishing, fish sauce production, dog feeding, pearl culture and peppers growing are also presence with a long history. Some craft villages are doing the tourism but they are not equivalence with their potentials and development opportunities for the tourism endeavour and also face numerous challenges including the product competitiveness and the changing market tendency. Therefore, rational policies should be generated to attract resources for their developments. This paper aims to review concepts of craft villages and their endeavour in tourism development with their important existing influences of craft villages in Vietnam, and to recommend on how to address limitations/ influences and methods on how to develop their tourism abilities and sustainability in tourism industry.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Concepts of the craft village**

The term 'craft village' is widely used in Vietnam, at present, its definition is in the argument. B. V. Vuong (2002) defined traditional craft villages as the centre of craft production with master artisans and many households of traditional craft, in addition, they have the same craft progenitor and rules in production management to keep and inherit professional secrecy to cooperate in producing and selling their products in small and medium scope. MARD (2006) defined as a place where participates at least 30% of households in handicraft production activities, at least two years static business operations; and legal compliance. And a handicraft can be defined as a traditional one when it gains three criteria of the existence for at least 50 years, production of the goods with regional cultural identities and sustaining at least one well-known artisan or the village's name (MARD 2006). However, there are 2 different kinds of craft villages: the traditional and the non-traditional or the "new". The new craft village is established to meet the new market demand and the availability of input materials (MONRE 2008). The differentiation does not exist between traditional and new craft villages relating to policies or regulations. And to support the

retention of artisanal knowledge in traditional craft villages, the traditional craft village label appears to primarily be used for reasons of 'branding' traditional craft products. In Vietnam, craft villages normally do businesses in small scales (Konstadakopulo 2008). Traditional handicraft villages are often exotic destinations with cultural spaces and with many authentic things for tourists to see and do. Not only international tourists but also domestic travellers are interested in tours to visit craft villages.

## **2.2. Craft village tourism (craft tourism) and its roles in Vietnam's socio-economic and cultural development**

In recent years, in some countries, traditional handicrafts have been promoting as a tool to overcome difficulties in producing and selling traditional handicraft products, especially export markets. "Craft tourism" term is for activities of tourism being taken place mainly in craft villages. The villages and their cultures are considered as tourism resources. The specific definition of craft tourism is yet defined and sometimes it is considered as a kind of rural tourism (Vu Nam 2009). Particularly, craft tourism is seen to be a popular tourism activity in developing countries. T. H. Lee and J. Crompton (1992), the novelty search is importantly as a motive for tourism and it is also encompassed in craft tourism. City inhabitants with the modern life and work feel stress and pressure. They need to refresh in quiet and peaceful settings and return to traditional values (Vu Nam 2009). Along with other kinds of the rural tourism, that demand can be satisfied by craft tourism. In addition, the outstanding craft tourism characteristic is not affected by the tourism seasonality like others and tourists can visit there all year round.

In rural areas, villages for tourism have been developed as tourist attractions and become a model of community-based tourism. A tourism village offers the natural atmosphere with its social, cultural life, own customs, etc. and also accommodation, food and beverages, and other tourist needs. The development of a tourism village does make inhabitants' life change. In general, a tourism village requires to own good conditions in terms of the economy, social, cultural, physical, natural surroundings, non-urbanization and possess uniqueness in tradition (Ahmad 2005). As for the developed tourism villages, traditional handicraft products are the most important and the main attraction factors of the village and of course, those are the cultural identities of the village. In Vietnam, some traditional handicraft villages are now becoming famous like Bat Trang ceramic and porcelain, Doi Drum, Non Nuoc Stone carving,

etc. (<http://vhnthcm.edu.vn/nhung-lang-nghe-truyen-thong-noi-tieng-o-vietnam/>).

From an economic perspective, the development of craft tourism can create more employment, increase local community income, contribute to poverty alleviation and play the essential role with local communities to face difficulties in product sales as tourists will buy products when visiting villages. In recent decades, the product development in Vietnam's handicraft villages has been the cultural pride and the income earning tool for the local communities, especially in rural areas, more of that, their products are exported to more than 100 markets in the world (Hien 2012). The average annual growth rate in handicraft export turnover increased and reached US\$ 4.5 billion in 2011 (GSO 2012). For this sector, millions of jobs for local workers and their living standards have been created and enhanced. Also, ancient traditions have been especially preserved. MoNRE (2008) reported that, in general, handicraft villages account for 11 million employees; handicrafts are produced at the household level, whereas product finishing, packaging and trading are undertaken by SMEs with several types of entrepreneurs; and the individual economy accounts for 72% of the labour force, the collective economy for 18%, and private business is 10% for the whole of Vietnam. The strengthening of linkages between tourism and traditional handicrafts is critically important to poverty alleviation in the rural areas (Mitchell 2012; Trau 2012). Craft village tourism development contributes actively to preserve traditional craft villages and increases product exports (Luong 2006). Craft tourism is considered an effective channel for marketing because tourists will be able to buy products even in their home countries (Suzuki 2006).

Craft tourism facilitates and promotes the development of the gift and souvenir industry. In travel, tourists do shopping as one of the habits/activities. For most tourists, in fact, a vacation experience would become incomplete without opportunities to shop (Keown 1989; Reisinger, Turner 2001). Most tourists do shopping and buy souvenirs, artworks, etc. ... during their travels, not only for reminding them of their visit but also for their relatives and friends. The products tourists buy most for gifts and souvenirs are local handicrafts even if the purpose of their travel is not craft tourism. For tourists, one of the reasons to buy locally made handicrafts as souvenirs is for its indigenous cultures or symbols of local culture (Tosun et al. 2007). Therefore, the development of the tourism industry without promoting traditional handicraft will be a loss to the national economy. Although the handicraft sales volume is not able to compare with the export market,

handicraft plays an integral and supportive role to performance arts which are naturally importance to tourism. Crafts become important factor to raise ethnic pride and maintain and protect cultural practices or vice versa (Kerr 1995). For tourists, spending money on locally made craft products is also considered as leisure tourism. In addition, the effect of craft tourism may not be limited to economic gains for the local, regional and national economies. Many different reasons make tourists buy products. As a consequence, the destination image will become favourable in the mind of tourists and their friends and relatives because people in general and tourists in particular, tend to share their experiences through photos, videos and purchased items (Kim, Littrell 2001). For this reason, craft tourism also has functions of culture and tourism promotion of the host countries. Many international scholars have pointed out cultural tourism is also a root of handicraft benefits. They provide income and job opportunities to communities; and it will fluctuate varying on the country (Mairna 2011; Swanson, Timothy 2012). The benefits of handicraft village development are not just economic; such development also contributes to the preservation of cultural values. Tourism can help to create new jobs and income-earning opportunities for some of the poorest people, while at the same time provide opportunities for them to practice once again important cultural traditions of song, dance and handicrafts, which were being eroded as a result of the pressures of poverty (Hainsworth 2009). Tourists visiting the handicraft villages can experience on how crafts are produced and used in rituals or in daily life as well as purchasing opportunity (UNWTO 2008). Tourists can gain their experiences to participate in cultural activities in craft villages in Vietnam.

According to the Institute for Tourism Development Research (ITDR 2012), just 7.3% of the 6.8 million international arrivals to Vietnam and 2.8% of the 32.5 million domestic arrivals visited handicraft villages (equivalent to 0.5 million and 0.9 million arrivals, respectively). Therefore, craft villages and their products are fulfilled with deeply cultural characters. Craft tourism development is necessarily for three reasons. The first is to contribute the introduction of craft village trademarks and products to the world. The second is to motivate and foster social and economic development of rural areas and the third is to generate social and economic benefits to individuals and organizations in villages. Thus, craft tourism is an interesting tourism form if there are sound development strategies, completely craft villages will attract domestic and international tourists.

### 3. Methodology

The study aims to present the findings from interviews. The data used in this research come from the two sources: the secondary and the primary. Secondary data employs a vast literature, papers and researches. Primary data is from interviews/survey through 100 collected questionnaires to tourists (including international tourists); tour guides and leaders from the five biggest tourist corporates organizing tours to Phu Quoc island like Vietravel, Peace Tour, Saigontourist, Fiditour and BenThanh Tourist. In addition, direct interviews were also done with officers from local authorities and village owners. The interviews were done as follows:

1. 100 tourists to seek reasons, expectations and feelings for travelling to villages. 267 questionnaires were sent and collected right after they had paid their visits on sites (craft villages). The 165 out of 267 responses were collected, later, they were eliminated and filtered the unsatisfactory data and finally 100 samples which met requirements were remained. The tourists chosen to delivery questionnaire are adults.
2. 10 tour guides and leaders to find the volume of the tourists, rate of tourist returns, tourists' opinions and feelings after travel (for crosscheck), business relationship with villages. All tour guides and leaders gained experienced from 4 years and above with their professional employment and specialized for Phu Quoc island tour.
3. 10 village owners as of 3 from fish-sauce production, 3 from fishing profession, 2 from pepper growing, 1 from dog feeding and 1 from pearl culturing which were directly interviewed based on the semi-structured questionnaires to understand the product sales revenue and market, tourism and environment perceptions, capital investment, human resources, local government supports.
4. 2 officers which are in charge of tourism sector in the governmental offices in the Phu Quoc island district and in the Kien Giang province (higher) to have a holistic view and crucial issues as any present development plan or supportive policy applying to villages and conception of craft (village) tourism.

### 4. Findings and discussions

#### 4.1. Overview of craft villages of Phu Quoc Island

**Fishing villages:** Fishing villages in Phu Quoc are hundreds of years old. There are many fishing villages but the most famous is Ham Ninh fishing

village locating on the east coast of the island. It is known as a home for fishing and pearl growing. This is a hereditary village for years. Ham Ninh is one of the places to provide cheap and qualified seafood, which almost tourists are eager looking to enjoy.

**Fish sauce production:** Fish sauce in Phu Quoc is one of the most popular not only in Vietnam but in the world as well. The fish sauce craft has a history of over 200 years. There are presently about 200 producers. Fish sauce of this island is well recognized and different with other by high protein level, smelling, colour, etc. Specially, only produced in Phu Quoc island, it will own special smell and taste.

**Dog feeding:** In the Larousse French dictionary, Phu Quoc dogs (Greyhound) are classified as a rare and the world's most astute. This dog is one of the three kinds of dogs with swirling feathers on the back in the world. They become well-known by its intelligence, loyalty, excellence in hunting, etc. Phu Quoc has many farms which can attract visitors. The selling price reaches to 2000-3000 USD for a dog (<http://www.phuquocislandguide.com/vn/cho-phu-quoc/>).

**Pearl culture:** Sea is surrounding Phu Quoc and the nature is favour for culturing pearls. Pearls are one of the most prominent. Pearls are with different colours, sizes and various shapes. Pearls prices are quite high, depending on the quality, colour, shape, etc. Some pearls cost to many thousand dollars.

**Pepper growing:** Phu Quoc island is also named as kingdom of pepper. Pepper is a local specialty and unique gift for tourists. Pepper plants are always including in the destination list for Phu Quoc tours. Phu Quoc peppers are known for hard grains, spicy and tangy. Pepper cultivation conservation is not only for economic purposes but also for high value on culture and tourism. In order to increase profitability for farmers, the state encouraged farmers to plant pepper combined with tourism.

## 4.2. Findings and discussions

### **Limitations of the villages and factors impacting to the sustainable development of the villages**

The most crucial limit to villages is in relation with the image of villages. Tourist feedbacks showed 95% of the domestic and 50% of the international feel nothing is interesting and exciting village because there is nothing to see and also the craft destination is always included in the tour program. Their purpose is coming there for purchasing products and shooting pictures as souvenirs and memories in villages. In case of owning opportunities, they

will return to villages. The following is for products and market. According to village owners on sales revenue, it is only at 5 - 10% of the total upon to the seasonality and domestic tourists are normally their customers. And for craft tourism perception, they express their limits on tourism knowledge even they are now doing "tourism business". With them, they simply open shops and sell their products. They also recognized that products are not diverse and simple design which make uncompetitive in market. Fake products are also a concern to villages. Fish sauce is the leading product to be faked. Up to 92% of fish sauce product in the market is not real from Phu Quoc. (<http://www.nuocmamphuquoc.org/index.php>). Pepper and pearl are the second and third most to be faked. In addition, by households' nature and characteristic, village owners are limiting with management and marketing skills for their products such as product brand, trademark registration, etc. In term of the labour/ human resource: Many villages have reduced their production, and many of the old skills and products are in danger of being lost (GSO 2009). This is also happening in this island. The negative impacts of income disparity between non-agricultural activity and traditional agricultural employment has encouraged many young people to move to urban areas; this has resulted in labour shortages back in the villages, which can create challenges in sustaining traditional handicrafts, especially in rural areas (Tsuji, Van 2002). Phu Quoc villages are not outside of that trend. The young are going to mainland like Can Tho, Ho Chi Minh City or others to find jobs. The high qualified craftsmen are lack and old. Training in handicraft production has traditionally been done through household secrets, a unique production method that has been kept and passed from generation to generation in the same household. Nowadays, young people are not interested in its maintenance.

Also, for issue of the raw materials, with the severe competition from backward technologies, and a lack of investment capital and shortage of resources, many traditional handicraft villages have reduced their production, and many of the old skills and products are in danger of being lost (GSO 2009). The sustainability is also come from the procurement of raw input materials, which is important if the villages are to maintain the authentic quality of their traditional handicraft products (Ngoc 2012). This is right with the case of Phu Quoc. The production capacity is decreasing. (<http://www.vaas.org.vn/hoi-sinh-tieu-phu-quoc-a6888.html>). (<http://www.nuocmamphuquoc.info/2014/04/gin-giu-truyen-thong-nuoc-mam-phu-quoc.html>). The raw materials are also a factor of the difficulties to villages because it is upon to the weather/ climate of the nature and also by the long-time unplanned harvests. With

the fish sauce production, the price fluctuations and shortage of resources sometimes result difficulties. Furthermore, the capital, environment and new technology adaption skill are problems to the Phu Quoc island's craft villages. As stated, they are normally in small and household scale, the traditional method of business and production is still applied. Around 80% of owners of dog feeding, fishing and pepper growing crafts said they can be adapted with new technology. However, capital is a considerable factor to them. Thus, to widen the business, many issues like capital, infrastructure, technology, etc. should be concentrated. The threats of environmental pollution caused by haphazard development that the villages must be faced due to their location in rural areas (MoNRE, 2008). Most of villages in Phu Quoc do discharges wastes directly into the sea and the smell is not proceeded in fish sauce production which is influenced to the around. For the stakeholder-related supports, associations of Phu Quoc Greyhound, fish sauce and pepper have been established to help village owners as their members face with difficulties settlement and development. As the aspect of state and local authorities, there are some of plans and supportive policies being conducted but the results are still limited. In addition, Phu Quoc is known as a splendid and wonderful destination and the tourists are increasing. The multi-stakeholder relations and linkages (village owners - tourism agencies - local authorities) are also limited. However, 100% of tourist businesses hope to build up relations with villages for tourism development. This is an exciting signal.

#### **4.3. Recommendations for craft tourism development and its sustainability**

As for the market expansion: Villages also need detailed planning of the parking area, dining area, public toilets, the exhibition and souvenir sales, etc. accordingly to create a full supply chain in tourism. Villages need to find ways to improve and innovate their product qualities in accordance with tastes and requirements of markets. The logical combination of tradition and modern technology are also required in the production process. Besides, registered trademarks, intellectual property protection to products should be done to prevent counterfeiting, unauthorized copying and ect. Villages should find the modern distribution channels such as supermarkets, malls, etc. and need to focus on promoting their brands to consumers through various channels such as websites (to introduce products), trade-fair participation. Triple relationships among village owners, tourism businesses/ agencies and local authorities should be built up urgently to bring and promote benefits not only

for their businesses but also for tourism industry. It is a value chain cycle in craft tourism in Phu Quoc island of Vietnam. In relation with the material settlement: The important method to prevent the present unplanned and destructive fishing of seafood should be done urgently. The local authorities should have training courses to inhabitants on how to have a good harvest and culture fishes and apply good control to the sea areas, etc. Also, concerning to issues of the capital and technology and environment, developing traditional craft villages in a sustainable manner should be associated with the protection of the ecological environment. Related authorities should have support programs on the construction of environmental/ waste pollution processing in villages, low-rate credit to widen businesses and apply new technology to the production. More of that, training courses of management skills, environment protection, and technical application should also be provided. Developing craft villages with tourism is also to preserve and promote villages in a sustainable way because it will not only help the market expand and gain favourable opportunities to promote the production development but more importantly preserve and promote traditional cultural values in each village as well. (<http://admin.tuyengiao.vn/Home/khoagiao/75534/Lang-nghe-Viet-Nam-Truyen-thong-thuc-trang-va-giai-phap-phat-trien-trong-thoi-ky-hoi-nhap>). With the human resource development, as known, human resources are vital for all organizations and it becomes especially for villages. The concern relates to quality and quantity sides of the human resources. The quality of human resources directly affects the product competitiveness. To attract young workers with talent and locality with craft villages, they require having combination between villages and local authorities on finding product markets, increasing and stabilizing workers' incomes and the training policy should also be provided to them to enhance and promote their craft, businesses and management skills. Furthermore, for the stakeholder-related supports, a master plan should be established as its urgent requirement. This helps to orient and develop the suitability for each village of which is planed just for production and which is planned for both production and tourism activities. This plan is also associated/ included with the transport planning, infrastructure planning, rural planning, residential areas, and supportive policies and especially for the implementation measures to redress environmental pollution. State and local authorities need to build up stable material zones, seeking markets for their products, taxation incentives, capital support, etc.

## 5. Conclusion

Craft tourism brings not only economic benefits but also socio-cultural benefits. It also contributes to preserve and conserve cultural values in Vietnam in general and in Phu Quoc in particular. Craft tourism gains great potentials, attracts many domestic and foreign tourists. In recent years, by different causes, craft tourism development exists but its desired results are not reachable. In some ways, craft tourism has increasingly contributed positively to tourism development.

Craft tourism development contributes the preservation and the development of craft villages in a sustainable way because it helps not only market expansion and favourable opportunities production development the but also the preservation and the promotion of cultural values of villages. To gain much development of the craft tourism in Phu Quoc island, some above mentioned recommendations should be applied as guidelines.

The study is conducted in Phu Quoc island. This is a limitation but it can be a further research for the same conducting in other places. Additionally, the first is on study scope and the second is on the sample. Samples were collected by the convenience method and at the small size. Respondents are not distinguished between groups or ages, etc. such as the young and the elderly, the domestic and the international, etc. which have different experiences, opinions and can lead to different result. Hence, the study does not show up the overall evaluation and recommendations are only in general. Last but not least, the study can be conducted with larger sample size, the broader/ deeper scope of research and applications.

## Summary

### **Craft villages and tourism development, a case study in Phu Quoc island of Vietnam**

Craft tourism is attracting many domestic and foreign tourists. In recent years in Vietnam, craft villages have exploited their potentials in tourism industry. For many different causes, tourism activities have yet reached expectations and their potentials for tourism development. This paper is to review their currents, tourism potentials and limitations and then formulate recommendations to the tourism development in Phu Quoc island. The data for this paper are from two sources. Secondary data were collected from the vast literature and journals. Primary data were

from interviews with village owners, related authorities, tourists, tourism corporate, etc. and results serve as guidelines to develop the tourism industry and management.

**Key words:** *Vietnam (Phu Quoc), island, craft villages, tourism development.*

### **Streszczenie**

#### **Wioski rzemieślnicze i rozwój turystyki, studium przypadku na wyspie Phu Quoc w Wietnamie**

Turystyką rzemieślniczą interesuje się wielu turystów krajowych i zagranicznych. Choć wydaje się, że w ostatnich latach wioski rzemieślnicze w Wietnamie wykorzystały swoje możliwości w przemyśle turystycznym to uważa się, że działalność turystyczna jeszcze może się rozwijać. Celem artykułu jest określenie stanu, potencjału i ograniczeń turystycznych a następnie sformułowanie zaleceń dotyczących rozwoju turystyki na wyspie Phu Quoc. Dokonano analizy literatury przedmiotu. Przeprowadzono wywiady z właścicielami wsi, powiązanymi władzami, turystami, firmami turystycznymi itp. Przedstawione wyniki badań stanowią wytyczne dla rozwoju branży turystycznej i zarządzania.

### **Słowa**

**klucze:** *Vietnam (Phu Quoc), wioski rzemieślnicze, rozwój turystyki.*

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