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Community-Based Tourism-Sustainable Development Strategy for Non Nuoc Cao Bang, Viet Nam

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Abstract

Cao Bang province with the majestic and beautiful natural landscape is associated with the global geo-historical values, along with the value of biodiversity, the value of diversity of ethnic identity and the richness of culture and history with many national special relics and national relics have created a special attraction for Non nuoc Cao Bang Geopark to domestic and foreign tourists and become unforgettable tourist area. By means of observation, descriptive and comparative statistical analysis, the article focuses on discovering tourism potentials as well as learning about the development of community tourism in the Geopark of Cao Bang province, Viet Nam.

Introduction

Cao Bang province is honored to receive the title of Global Geopark awarded by UNESCO on April 12th, 2018 as the second global geopark in Vietnam, after Dong Van Karst Plateau. This park covers an area of 3,390 km², including administrative boundaries of 07 districts, with fossil relics, marine sediments, volcanic rocks, minerals, especially limestone and cave landscapes. Caves, underground rivers are great examples of the evolution and change of the Earth's crust with a history of about 500 million years (Bocic et al., 2012; Bonacci et al., 2013). This is also the place where 9 ethnic groups live with many unique and rich traditional cultures and festivals. The beauty of the highlands of Cao Bang province has entered the national poetry and is fondly called "Non Nuoc".

Now, the CBT sites in Cao Bang Geopark have been built based on the exploitation and connection between ecotourism resources and humanistic tourism resources, between beautiful natural heritages and unique historical and cultural traditions in each village (Xian & Yin, 2020). However, in order to develop CBT in particular and tourism in general of the province, it still needs the orientation of the State, the investment and support of enterprises and non-

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governmental organizations. From there, the local government will lead, create and provide technical support for people to launch, maintain and develop the potential model of CBT.

The Travel Resources

The natural resources

Non Nuoc Cao Bang UNESCO Geopark has many famous scenic spots with 5 nationally recognized landscapes including Ban Gioc Waterfall, Nguom Ngao Cave, Thang Hen Lake, Mat Than Mountain and Bat Cave (Megerle, 2021; Luo et al., 2021). Ban Gioc Waterfall in Dam Thuy commune, Trung Khanh district is 53 m high, 300 m wide, has 3 floors with many different large and small waterfalls, is the largest and most beautiful natural waterfall in Vietnam, located in 10 majestic waterfalls. best in the world (Travel and Leisure Magazine). About 3 km from Ban Gioc waterfall is Nguom Ngao cave, which is also a beautiful, wild, charming and fanciful landscape. The scenery of stalactites in the cave is very lively and interesting. In the cave, there is also an underground stream flowing through, the murmuring water echoes in the Rocky Mountains, increasing the mystery (Shuman & Serravezza, 2017).

The mysterious Thang Hen Lake system includes 36 large and small lakes in the high mountains connected by underground rivers. The main lake - Lake Thang Hen is considered a fairy scene, with the shape of a water shuttle that is always green like jade, up to 2,000 m long, about 500 m wide, 40 m deep. 2 km away is the legendary Mat Than Mountain by Nam Tra Lake, a sub-lake in a system of 36 lakes, with a strangely large hole, more than 50 m wide in diameter, located at an altitude of 50 m above the lake surface (Paus et al., 2019). Next is Bat Cave (Dong Loan commune, Ha Lang district) is a rather large cave halfway up the limestone mountain, very magnificent and still very wild, about 930 m deep, 60 - 80 m high on average. The arched gate is about 4 m high and 7 m wide. From here, you can admire the majestic and beautiful natural scenery, in the distance looming the traditional stilt houses of the Tay, Nung ethnic groups, etc. Inside there are thousands of colorful stalactites and stalactites. spiritual and magical (Anh, 2020).

Cao Bang Geopark also has the historical tourist site Pac Bo with the majestic Mack Mountain beside the clear blue Lenin stream, constantly flowing, creating a very charming but sacred feng shui picture (Phuong, 2022). With high forest cover, rich in natural resources, biodiversity and cool climate, there is still plenty of room for sustainable tourism development. Tran Hung Dao forest is a primeval forest that still retains its natural, unspoiled beauty with a cool and pleasant climate all year round. Phja Oac National Park - Phja Den with 1931 m high Phja Oac peak - the western roof of Cao Bang province, famous for its high biodiversity and temperate climate, a pristine, beautiful Sapa of Cao Bang.

This place is famous for many precious woods such as pine, kim Giao, pomu; many precious medicinal herbs such as ginseng, tam ventricular; famous fruit trees such as Dong Khe pear, Trung Khanh chestnut, Tra Linh mandarin; many populations of forest plants and rare animals need to be protected. The natural environment is fresh and there is still plenty of room for sustainable tourism development (Khan et al., 2021).

The Geopark has a road and waterway system adjacent to China, and many tourist sites are located near the Vietnam-China border. This border line is up to 333 km long with many pairs of border gates, creating an advantage in attracting international tourists from the large Chinese market (Wen et al., 2018; Xie et al., 2021). The road adjacent to Bac Kan, Lang Son and Ha Giang also creates favorable conditions for Cao Bang province in linking and developing tourism in general and CBT in particular. In particular, recently, the Dong Dang -Tra Linh Expressway has started construction, when completed, it will create a quick and convenient circulation between the Geopark with Hanoi and the lowland provinces, and create the shortest

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road for the public. Many southwestern provinces of China circulate goods and passengers to the sea, which will certainly contribute to promoting the development of tourism in the region, especially CBT (Gutierrez, 2022).

The cultural resources

Cao Bang is an ancient land with a rich history and culture, one of the revolutionary cradles of the Vietnamese nation. The convergence of cultural quintessence of the ethnic groups of Tay, Nung, Dao, San Chi, Lo Lo with rich intangible cultural treasures and unique by customs, practices, beliefs, ceremonies festivals, performing arts of folk songs, folk dances, traditional crafts, and cuisine (Driscoll et al., 2017). There are 214 relics here, 94 relics have been ranked, of which 03 relics are ranked special national monuments; 23 national level, 68 provincial relics; 02 national treasures (Double bells of Vien Minh Pagoda and Quan Trieu Temple, King Le Thai To's Ma Nhai Stele); Collected 16,015 artifacts. The number of intangible cultural heritages still existing in the province includes over 2,000 heritages, of which: type of speech and writing has 08 heritages; 150 types of folk literature with heritage; social practices and beliefs have 745 heritages; traditional festival 200 heritages; traditional crafts have 112 heritages; folk knowledge has 487 heritages; folk performing arts 300 heritage (Kim et al., 2019; Alivizatou-Barakou et al., 2017). As of 2021, Cao Bang has 04 intangible cultural heritages recognized as national intangible cultural heritage, including: Then Tay ritual in Cao Bang province; Nang Hai festival in Tien Thanh commune, traditional blacksmithing of the Nung A people in Phuc Sen commune; Fireworks festival in Quang Uyen town (Quang Hoa). In particular, the then Tay, Nung, and Thai ritual heritages are inscribed in the list of representative intangible cultural heritage of humanity.

In addition, Cao Bang Non Nuoc region is also famous as a real paradise: Khau Sli cake (Na Giang, Ha Quang district); banh cuon, sour pho, phu noong cake, sticky rice filling, banh xeo, roasted duck with 7 flavors, roasted suckling pig, banh bao chao, ant egg cake; some recognized products: Lee Dong Khe fruit entered the list. Top 50 most famous fruits in Vietnam in 2012; Cao Bang Coong Phu cake entered the Top 50 famous Vietnamese specialties in 2015; Tram sticky rice, Coong Phu cake, and chestnuts were among the top 100 famous Vietnamese specialties in February 2021, along with many other titles (Nguyen et al., 2021).

It can be said that this is a strength for Cao Bang to develop various types of tourism, especially community-based tourism, helping visitors discover the pristine cultural values of the ethnic groups.

Results of community-based tourism development

Tourism resources in the Geopark are mainly distributed along the following three experience routes; Route No.1: "Explore Phja Oac the Mountains of Transformation"; Route No.2: "Journey to the Origin"; Route No.3: Experience Indigenous Cultures in a Wonderland".

Community-based tourism models in Cao Bang Geopark

The beautiful nature and ethnic diversity, Cao Bang Geopark has great potential in developing this type of Community-based tourism (CBT) (Lanza et al., 2018). The end of 2021, Cao Bang Geopark and surrounding areas have 07 CBT models in the early stages of development: Pac Rang, Phia Thap, and Ban Giuong (Quang Hoa); Khuoi Ky, Lung Niec (Trung Khanh); Hoai Khao (Nguyen Binh); Khuoi Khon (Bao Lac – surrounding areas). These models are built in villages with beautiful natural scenery and unique ethnic cultural resources.

Table 1. Number of CBT sites in Cao Bang Geopark and surrounding areas by the end of 2021

Community-based tourist attraction	Belongs to the tourism route	Address	Year of operation
Community-based tourist Hoai Khao (Dao Tien ethnic group)	Route 1	Hoai Khao Hamlet, Quang Thanh Commune, Nguyen Binh District	2021
Community-based tourist Phja Thap (Nung An ethnic group)	Route 2	Phja Thap Hamlet, Quoc Dan Commune, Quang Hoa District	2018
Community-based tourist Pac Rang (Nung An ethnic group)	Route 2	Pac Rang Hamlet, Phuc Sen Commune, Quang Hoa District	2016
Community-based tourist Ban Giuong (Tay ethnic group)	Route 2	Ban Giuong Hamlet, Tien Thanh Commune, Quang Hoa District	2018
Community-based tourist Lung Niec (Tay ethnic group)	Route 3	Lung Niec Hamlet, Dam Thuy Commune, Trung Khanh District	2017
Khuoi Ky Stone Village (Tay ethnic group)	Route 3	Khuoi Ky Hamlet, Dam Thuy Commune, Trung Khanh District	2016
Community-based tourist Khuoi Khon (Lo Lo Den ethnic group)	Surrounding areas	Khuoi Khon Hamlet, Kim Cuc Commune, Bao Lac District	2016

Source: Cao Bang Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism

Community-based tourist attractions are all places with beautiful natural scenery, located on sightseeing routes associated with famous places: Hoai Khao CBT (Nguyen Binh) is famous for the unique culture of the Dao Tien ethnic group with the ceremony of awarding the identity, traditional weaving and embroidery, the ancient national heritage tree (Nhoi tree) and 02 bee nest. Every year, there are at least 65 large beehives that provide enough beeswax for people in the village to print patterns in the production of traditional costumes. In 2021, the Nguyen Binh district government has made efforts to build and complete the CBT Hoai Khao hamlet (Nguyen et al., 2021). This point is located on route 1: "Discovering Phja Oac - The Mountain of Changes". The further development of CBT points is to exploit the amazing beauty of nature in the complex of Phja Oac - Phja Den eco-tourism area and unique Dao Tien culture.

Pac Rang CBT Village, Phja Thap (Quang Hoa) has beautiful mountain scenery interspersed with immense green rice and corn fields of semi-mountainous terrain, where a unique ethnic culture is preserved with forging villages and craft villages (Phuong, 2022). A thousand-year-old tradition. In 2018, Phja Thap CBT village was supported by the Swiss Helvestas Organization (non-governmental organization) in Vietnam under the project "Enhancing livelihoods for ethnic minorities through community tourism in Cao Bang". Pac Rang CBT Village received support from the Greater Mekong Subregion Sustainable Tourism Development Project for the 2009-2014 period, sponsored by the Asian Development Bank. Pac Rang CBT site started welcoming tourists in 2016.

The Ban Giuong (Quang Hoa) CBT is located with its back against the mountain, overlooking the vast fields, with legends and the famous Nang Hai Festival of the Tay people (Huong & Ngoc, 2021). Located near the Dong Dang - Tra Linh highway under construction. This place received investment from OWL Co., Ltd. to develop a community tourism village and has been in operation since 2018.

Khuoi Ky Stone village (Trung Khanh) near Ban Gioc waterfall, Nguom Ngao cave, with the ancient beauty of the stone stilt houses of the Tay people from the Mac dynasty, has been recognized by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism as a "literary village typical traditions of ethnic minorities". This site has received support from the Government of Luxembourg in developing a homestay model for DLCD and support from the State through the National Target Program on Culture (Phong, 2021).

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The CBT of the Tay people's stone house on stilts in Lung Niec village (Trung Khanh) is right next to the majestic Ban Gioc waterfall. This place has received support from the Project of Improving Livelihoods for Ethnic Minorities through the pilot building of a CBT model of the Center for Rural Economic Development (CRED) and has been in operation since 2017 (Nguyen & Tran, 2018). The sites of Phia Thap, Pac Rang, Ban Giuong, Lung Niec, Khuoi Ky are all on the 3rd tourist route, the key route of Cao Bang Geopark. CBT village in Khuoi Khon hamlet, Kim Cuc commune, Bao Lac district is a neighboring area, 17 km from the district center, 6 km from the national highway, convenient concrete roads and beautiful scenery (Li et al., 2021). There are terraced fields, there is cool fresh air. Currently, the hamlet has 62 households, 100% of households are Lo Lo ethnic people with unique architecture on stilts, traditional occupations such as knitting, brocade weaving, and folk songs of the Lo Lo ethnic group.

Tourism results in Cao Bang province

Cao Bang - charming mountains, poetic scenery, majestic mountains with unique beautiful scenes that cannot be found anywhere else. All have created a unique mark of Cao Bang, attracting a large number of domestic and foreign tourists to tourism, generating revenue, making a significant contribution to the province's economic development.

Table 2. Visitors and tourism revenue of Cao Bang province from 2016 to 2021

Year	Total number of tourists (people)	Growth rate over the previous year (%)	Include				Total tourism revenue (million VND)
			International visitors (people)	Growth rate over the previous year (%)	Domestic visitors (people)	Growth rate over the previous year (%)	
2016	741.547	13,5	40.335	11	701.212	13,6	146.700
2017	952.680	28,5	59.494	47,5	893.186	27,4	189.200
2018	1.321.200	38,7	113.245	90,3	1.117.955	25,2	363.300
2019	1.549.346	17,3	185.040	63,4	1.364.306	22,0	480.570
2020	617.665	-60,1	12.011	-93,5	605.654	-55,6	78.155
2021	493.870	-20,0	1.438	-88,0	492.432	-18,7	103.900

Source: Cao Bang Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism

In the 2016-2021 period, the number of visitors to Cao Bang reaches over 5 million visitors, an increase of 98% compared to the period 2011-2015, of which international visitors reached over 420 thousand turns, an increase of 213% compared to the period 2011-2015; revenue reached over 1,200 billion VND, an increase of 192% compared to the previous period; Average tourism growth reached 25.8%. However, the complicated situation of the Covid-19 epidemic has directly affected the tourism sector in 2020 and 2021 (Škare et al., 2021). For tourist areas and destinations, the number of tourists coming to visit has decreased markedly. Even at the famous tourist attractions of the province such as: Pac Bo special National monument, Ban Gioc waterfall Tourist Area, Nguom Ngao cave, the number of visitors has all decreased. There is a difference in the number of visitors compared to the same period in the previous period, the number of visitors and revenue decreased by 50-60%. From the beginning of May 2021 to October 2021, the number of visitors to the relic sites has decreased sharply, with an average of only 10-20 visitors per day. Tourism business results in 2020 and 2021 has dropped sharply.

In 2020, the total number of visitors is estimated at 600,000 arrivals, down 62% over the same period last year, of which, international visitors are estimated at 12,000 arrivals, down 93.5% compared to 2019, domestic tourists are estimated at 588,000 arrivals, down 56.9% compared to 2019. Revenue is estimated at 78 billion VND, down 85.4% compared to 2019. Room occupancy is 25%. In 2021, the total number of visitors is estimated at 493,870 arrivals, down

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20% over the same period, of which: International tourists are estimated at 1,438 arrivals, down 88% over the same period; Domestic tourists were estimated at 492,432 arrivals, down 18.7% over the same period. Revenue is estimated at 103.9 billion dong, up 32.9% over the same period. Room occupancy is estimated at 14.1%. Tourism growth is estimated at 32.9%.

Conclusion

Cao Bang province has great potential for tourism development, especially community-based tourism. In the past time, Cao Bang province has invested in exploiting and promoting beautiful natural landscapes, together with a safe political environment and friendly and hospitable people, creating a beautiful image that attracts a large number of people domestic and foreign tourists. Although, from 2019 to 2021, the tourism industry is severely affected by the Covid-19 epidemic, but Cao Bang province has taken flexible measures in combination with effective “dual goals”, the tourism industry still contributes part of the province's economic development.

Enhance propaganda, dissemination and education of the law and knowledge on conservation and promotion of heritage values in community tourism development: For leaders at all levels of local government, it is necessary to raise awareness about viewpoints, principles of heritage preservation and promotion in tourism; for people, it is necessary to equip them to understand the value of the heritage, the principles of dealing with the heritage; for tourists, it is necessary to propagate to raise the awareness of protecting and respecting heritage and cooperating with indigenous communities. Investment with focus to improve the efficiency of CBT development: Due to limited investment resources, it is necessary to develop a master program for tourism development in general and CBT in particular in the area. In that program, it is necessary to determine a suitable, reasonable and feasible roadmap to invest financial resources, material resources and human resources in a focused and focused manner in a reasonable order in order to promote invest effects. It is necessary to have a tourism human resource development program, to train tourism knowledge and skills for indigenous communities, so that the tourism process can not only be preserved and demonstrated rustic and sincere national identity, but also have smart and sophisticated professional skills to both bring the best service quality and impression to visitors, and organize for visitors to enjoy and preserve protect, conserve and contribute to the development of natural, cultural, historical and craft villages. Developing diverse and unique tourism products: Based on available natural and human resources, services and goods that can be provided to tourists must be diversified, not duplicated, and authentic and characteristics among tourist destinations on each tourist route, and richness and specificity in each tourist destination

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