

Doctoral Thesis

Tourism and Poverty Alleviation in Nature Conservation Areas:  
A Juxtaposition between Japan and Vietnam

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## **Summary of the dissertation**

This research examines the interrelationship between the tourism and poverty nexus in two countries, Japan and Vietnam, particularly focused on nature conservation areas. It argues that although tourism has often been linked with poverty through the concept of pro-poor tourism (PPT), limited research has investigated this from different perspectives of developed and developing countries where may suffer different types of poverty, that could be absolute or relative poverty. On the one hand, tourism may contribute positively to poverty alleviation, on the other hand, it may impact negatively to inequality of income distribution during its growth process. Little is also discussed about the perspectives of local people with regard to tourism in nature conservation areas, whose voices may influence the success of conservation outcomes. This is particularly important for both developed and developing economies such as Japan and Vietnam which are suffering with different types of poverty issues. Taking two case studies – Yakushima, a natural world heritage site (NWHS) and Cu Lao Cham, a marine protected area (MPA) as the two particular nature conservation areas, this research seeks to answer three main questions: (1) How do local people perceive tourism's impact on poverty alleviation in the case of Cu Lao Cham? (2) How do local tourism enterprises perceive tourism's impact on income distribution and spatial tourism development in the case of Yakushima? and (3) What are the barriers for poverty alleviation or mitigation of income inequality in Japan and Vietnam?

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter firstly provides background of the research which are related to tourism and poverty nexus in general, tourism development in nature conservation areas, and poverty situation in two countries: Japan and Vietnam. Secondly, it states the problems of current research and find out the gap of knowledge in this research field, then the research questions are formed. Thirdly, to specifically answer the stated research questions and to achieve the outcomes of the research, the research objectives are specified. Fourthly, to distinguish the uniqueness as well as the contribution of this research to the research field and research sites, some significances are stated. Finally, this first chapter outlines the structure of thesis.

### **Chapter 2: Literature review**

This chapter presents a review of literature relating to tourism-poverty relationship, particularly focused on the discussion of PPT, tourism in nature conservation areas, and perceptions of tourism's impacts on poverty. To cover all relevant reviews of the research

context, this chapter is divided into six sections. The first section discusses the various concepts of poverty and its measurements and describes what concepts are approached in this thesis. The second section reviews literature on tourism and poverty alleviation, notably with a focus on positive studies of PPT. Meanwhile, the third section provides an overview of research that is critical of PPT. Since this study selects two research sites located in nature conservation areas, thus, the fourth section highlights tourism growth in these special settings and how it relates to poverty alleviation. In section five, an emphasis on perceptions of tourism's impacts on poverty is examined. The final section summarizes the key areas of discussion in the existing literature and revenues for future discussion.

### **Chapter 3: Tourism development and poverty situation in Vietnam and Japan**

This research examines tourism and poverty nexus, choosing Japan and Vietnam as a comparative study. To set the background to this research, this chapter provides an overview of tourism development and poverty situations in both two countries. However, the sections on tourism development and tourism policies in Vietnam are focused more details as this case study clearly reflects the link between tourism policies and poverty alleviation. The first section presents Vietnam's tourism and poverty situations, with a brief introduction of the history of tourism development, tourism policies and poverty alleviation. Similarly, the second section reviews Japan's tourism development and its poverty situations, tourism policies with a focus to some important frameworks.

While tourism development in both countries suffered the effects of war in certain periods, generally tourism policies between Japan and Vietnam are differing. On the one hand, Vietnam considered tourism not only as an important industry for economic growth in the country but also there have been some considerations of tourism as a means to poverty alleviation. On the other hand, tourism in Japan is mainly regarded as an economic sector to national and regional development, and toward a tourism nation with its focus on an increase of international visitors.

### **Chapter 4: Research methodology**

This chapter discusses the methodological foundation on which this research is based. To achieve the objectives of the study, this chapter first presents the qualitative approach used in this research. Following this, it describes the case study approach by explaining criteria for selecting the study sites. The third and fourth sections detail the data collection and analysis.

## **Chapter 5: Case studies of Yakushima and Cu Lao Cham**

This research examines the interrelationship between tourism and poverty in nature conservation areas, taking Vietnam and Japan as two case studies. An overview of tourism development and poverty situation in two countries are provided in Chapter 3 and the research methods are discussed and selected in Chapter 4. Prior to presenting the results of the two particular case studies, this chapter provides an overview of Yakushima and Cu Lao Cham. The two case studies' tourism development and their economic situations also are introduced. Then a comparison regarding the similarities and differences of these two sites are discussed.

## **Chapter 6: Results – Interviews in Yakushima**

This chapter reports and discusses findings from semi-structured interviews conducted with local tourism enterprises in Yakushima. It considers the important issue of local enterprisers' perceptions of tourism's contribution to the local economy, its effects on income distribution, and its impacts on spatial differences among villages. Interviews results are complemented by field notes taken during the fieldwork. This chapter starts with a re-description of the interviewee selection process and a detail about the interviewees. Then it reports the key themes based on the questions asked. Three key themes were identified that comprise local enterprisers' perspectives: (1) perceptions of tourism's impact; (2) perceptions of income distribution; and (3) perceptions of spatial differences of tourism impacts. After these key themes are presented and discussions are given, a chapter summary is provided.

## **Chapter 7: Results – Questionnaire and Interviews in Cu Lao Cham**

This chapter reports results obtained from a questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews conducted with local people in Cu Lao Cham. The findings of this chapter help to answer the first and third objectives of this research which are related to the perceptions of local residents in Cu Lao Cham regarding tourism's impacts on their lives as well as the barriers that prevent them to participate in tourism.

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first main section presents the results from a questionnaire survey conducted with local residents (both tourism-related and non-tourism related groups) in Cu Lao Cham. The second main section discusses the findings of the interviews with local people working in tourism only. In particular, the first main section starts with a description of survey respondents' characteristics, followed by the respondents' living conditions in the second sub-section. Sub-sections three to six discuss findings about respondents' perceptions and experiences of tourism as a means of poverty alleviation in Cu

Lao Cham. The final sub-section explores additional statistical tests which are presented the results of ANOVA and Chi-square tests. The second main section also begins with an introduction of interviewees' profiles, followed by the three key themes about the perceptions of respondents which are the contribution of tourism to interviewee's lives and the local economy; tourism income distribution and social conflicts; and barriers to tourism participation.

This chapter indicates that a majority of local people were involved in fishery before tourism developed in Cu Lao Cham. Tourism is generally seen as an important contributor to economic development and to poverty alleviation. Although the sector has made a positively significant improvement to many local people's lives, it is perceived unequally benefit distribution among tourism stakeholders. Non-poor people and non-local tourism businesses are perceived to be the main beneficiaries of tourism. Tensions and disagreements also occurred among various tourism participants on the research site. In addition, limited tourism knowledge and skills, financial capital, and market access have been found as the most critical barriers to tourism participation. The chapter concludes with a discussion of both questionnaire and interviews findings and a chapter summary is provided.

## **Chapter 8: A comparison of two case studies' results**

Once the two particular case studies of this research have been examined, this chapter attempts to make a comparison of its results based on both secondary and primary data provided in Chapters 3, 6 & 7. First, tourism's policies in two countries, Japan and Vietnam are re-examined to find out some similarities and differences. Second, the perceived impacts of tourism to the two local economies are re-elaborated. Third, the perceptions of tourism and income distribution in Yakushima and Cu Lao Cham are re-presented. Then, barriers to tourism participation and poverty alleviation in these two cases are re-discussed. Finally, based on the findings provided, a new concept of the pro-poor tourism in different contexts is created.

## **Chapter 9: Conclusion and Future research**

This chapter provides general conclusions based on the research findings and main lines of argument discussed in the previous chapters. First, the chapter summaries the main findings of this research. Second, it indicates the main contributions of this research in relation to the study of tourism and poverty alleviation overall. Third, several limitations to the thesis are noted and thus implications for future research suggested. Finally, the main conclusions of this research are highlighted.

## **Papers published from this research**

Nguyen, V.H. and Funck, C. (2019). Tourism's contribution to an equal income distribution: Perspectives from local enterprises. *Tourism Planning & Development*. DOI: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21568316.2018.1563564>. (Journal article based on Chapter 6)

Nguyen, V.H. (2019). Tourism and poverty: Perspectives and experiences of local residents in Cu Lao Cham MPA, Vietnam. *Tourism in Marine Environments* (Accepted manuscript). (Journal article based on Chapter 7)