



Impacts of Tourism Development in Sa Pa, Lao Cai, Vietnam

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Abstract

This study purports to study impacts of tourism development in Sa Pa, Lao Cai, Vietnam. The study is a qualitative research. Data is collected by in-depth interviews, non-participant observations and documentary research.

Results reveal that Vietnamese government has been issued and implemented various policies and solutions to support and improve the lives of ethnic minorities. Ethnic tourism in Sa Pa creates income sources for ethnic minority people and contributed significantly to economic growth and poverty reduction. Nevertheless, ethnic minority people get a small benefit from tourism compare to other actors such as Kinh people and the real estate developers. Among them, households of ethnic minority located at accessible places nearby Sa Pa district center or tourism attractions were successful in the development and marketing of tourism-related products than those who live further away.

Rapid development of tourism has led to problems on proper waste management and water shortage in Sa Pa. Local authority have to suspend the use of water source nearby to serve domestic water for Sa Pa tourism activities. The process of cultural commoditization gradually erodes cultural values of the ethnic minority. An increasing investment in hotels and resorts has been significantly contributing to the tourism development in Sa Pa and the process of land acquisition for tourism development has profoundly affected land use rights of local people.

Keywords: Ethnic Tourism, Sa Pa, Tourism impact



1. Introduction

Sa Pa is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Vietnam. Sa Pa is situated in the Mường Hào valley of the Hoàng Liên Sơn mountain range in Lào Cai, the north Vietnamese border province to China. Before the French colonial era, Sa Pa was called “Lo Sui Tong” plateau in Yunnanese Mandarin. Later, the French called this hill station “Chapa” and then “Sa Pa”, which means “sand village” in Yunnanese Mandarin. Michaud (2001) suggests that the name “Sa Pa” comes from a Hmông village “Sa Pả” or “Súa Pủa” according to the Hmông’s pronunciation, which is situated about five kilometres east of the town centre. The Vietnamese scholar, Mai (1998), pointed out that the elderly Hmông and Dao recalled the name of Sa Pa as “Hồng Hào Cái” or “a market on a bank of the red stream”. It is indicated that Sa Pa has long been a marketplace for the ethnic minorities in the area, providing a place for both economic and social interaction.

In 1887, Sa Pa had put into the planning of a French colonial resort in Indochina. In 1915, Sa Pa had 2 guesthouses made of wood, shortly after three big hotels Metropon, Pansipan, Hotel Duy Xang were built. In 1943, Sa Pa had over 200 French villas, part of which was office and resort section. In 1954, large constructions were almost no longer because of the devastating war. After that, some villas were restored as a resting place for workers. In 1992, Sa Pa really restored tourism to welcome domestic and international tourists, but it was still fragmented and small. The Vietnamese government opened the country to tourism in 1993. Since then, Sa Pa has grown from a sleepy and peaceful town to a hectic lively place. In 2003, tourism in Sa Pa had more development with 60 hotels and restaurants, 1,500 accommodation rooms, and 60,000 visitors a year (Báo xây dựng, 2018).

They are 5 ethnic minority groups residing in Sa Pa including Hmông (52%), Dao or Yao (22%), Tày (6%), Giáy (2%) Xa Phó (1%), while 1% belongs to other non-specified groups (General Statistics Office Of Lào Cai province 2017) and Kinh or Viet. Sa Pa district has 18 administrative units (17 communes and 1 town). The total natural land area is 685,584 km², with a population of 12,680 households with 62,153 people in 2017. The average income per capita is 32,063,000 VND/year (approximately 1,379 USD) whilst the average income of the whole country is 48,600,000 VND/person/year (approximately 2,090 USD), quite low compared to other localities (Báo xây dựng, 2018). The economy of Sa Pa is based on subsistence agriculture. Because it is a mountainous region, only 4% of the total land available is good for cultivation. About 45% of all arable cultivable land is used for wet-rice cultivation and 39 % is used for the cultivation of maize and other secondary crops like sweet potato and vegetables (Phạm and Lâm 2000: 158). Because of its steep topography and harsh climate, food crops such as maize and rice are harvested only once a year. This situation is the obvious cause of food shortage for most of the ethnic minority communities in the district. Tourism in Sa Pa creates new opportunity for employment and new



sources of income to the ethnic minorities as well as to the Kinh. Ethnic minority groups such as Hmông, Dao, Xa Phó, and Tàì deliberately embraced this opportunity to engage in the tourism business and do what they can do best to get their share of the tourism market. Dinh and Santasombat (2013) found that the drive of tourist consumption and profit-making gradually changed Tả Phìn's agriculture-based economy. Ethnic Dao villagers' desires to obtain more income lead to shifting to the new economic mode as they move from tradition to modernity. As a result, traditional social life changed, being expressed through: local economy, environment, and socio-cultural institution. Local people are not passively influenced by tourism but also they positively adapt these problems. The role of women is gradually strengthened. The percentage of both husband and wife making decisions on building a new house and arranging marriage for children accounts for 53.3% and 70% respectively.

Hoang, et al. (2018) state that the introduction of tourism increased the living standard of the ethnic minorities and led to more intensive farming systems with forest regrowth on abandoned fields. Households that are adopting a farming livelihood, but generate a lower income from their farming activities because they have less arable land and less means to invest in intensification. Only a limited group of households benefits from the development of tourism. Households engage successfully in the tourism sector only if they live nearby the major tourism attractions. the households that are gaining additional income from tourism or cardamom cultivation can afford to abandon less productive land. As the land available for paddy field expansion is limited in Sa Pa district, richer households can acquire paddy fields from other farmers. There is less labor available for agricultural activities, cutting or clearing of trees, marginal agricultural fields with low productivity are preferentially abandoned and deforestation and forest degradation are reduced.

After the highway system of Hanoi - Lao Cai expressway with a total length of 264 km passes 5 provinces and Fanxipan cable car project came into operation from the end of 2015, number of tourists coming to Sa Pa has suddenly increased, bringing great revenue to the locality and creating a new generated income for indigenous people. According to a report by Lào Cai Department of Planning and Investment, Sa Pa has a proportion of agriculture accounted for 18.5%, the proportion of industry and construction accounted for 28.12%; service sector accounted for 53.38%, up 4.99% over the year 2015. Per capita income reached 32,063,000 VND (approximately 1,379 USD), up 16.8% compared to the year 2015, the total budget revenue in the area reached



343,531 billion VND (approximately 14,775,584 USD), exceeding 15% of the estimate province delivery (Sở Văn hóa Thể thao và Du lịch Lào Cai, 2017).

Table 1: *Number of tourists in Sa Pa*

Item	2010	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of tourists	450,258	849,000	1.200,000	970,000	1,720,000	2,420,000
Average days stay in Sa Pa	2.5	2.7	2.25	2.0	1.8	N. A

Source: Sở Văn hóa Thể thao và Du lịch Lào Cai, 2017;

Đài phát thanh truyền hình Lào Cai, 2018

In Sa Pa district, there are nearly 700 accommodation establishments with a total of nearly 7,000 rooms; of which, there are 360 tourist accommodation establishments in the town, the rest are homestay accommodation establishments in communes (Tổng cục Du lịch, 2019).

Sa Pa tourism development policy from the Notice No. 241 / TB-VPCP concluding the agreement to build Sa Pa into an international tourism area. Previously, the Government had planned Sa Pa to be a national tourist area with special and high-quality products. Sa Pa mainly promotes the development of specific tourism to enjoy the climate, natural scenery and local cultural identity of the local people such as: "Sa Pa - The land of field and walking tourism"; "Sa Pa - The land of experience and learn about traditional culture". Sa Pa has adjusted the general planning to 2020, vision 2030, the core area focusing on tourism development is 1,500 ha; to upgrade the town and 4 tourist sections in the communes: Bản Khoang, Tả Phìn, Tả Van and Thanh Kim with connections to Bát Xát, neighboring districts. Sa Pa necessarily has a synchronous infrastructure, with over 16,000 rooms of accommodation, of which 80% of hotel rooms are 3 stars or more. Extensive internal road system, connecting with neighboring provinces connecting the Noi Bai - Lao Cai highway to Sa Pa. The services of electricity, water, waste treatment, and investment are synchronized with the speed of urbanization. Sa Pa is building a clean water plant with a capacity of 10 thousand m³/day, upgrading a dam, planning protective forests to create water sources. Planning to build 2 wastewater treatment plants, including: a factory in Sa Pa commune, a factory in 7 Sa Pa towns. Garbage is planned to be moved to a waste treatment plant in Đồng Tuyển commune, Lào Cai city for centralized treatment (Báo xây dựng, 2018).



Kreag (2001) asserts that the long-term sustainability of tourism depends on the ability of community leaders and tourism professionals to maximize its benefits and minimize its costs. The range of impacts from tourism is broad and often influences areas beyond those commonly associated with tourism. The impacts of tourism can be sorted into seven general categories: economic, environmental, social and cultural, crowding and congestion, services, taxes and community attitude. In case of Sa Pa, facilities are not commensurate with the sprung too fast of tourism services. Impacts of tourism in Sa Pa are clearly seen in various situations. Báo xây dựng, (2018) states that tourists to Sa Pa are mainly concentrated in the town. Facilities in the town is still limited with narrow road for rudimentary cars, motorcycles, small cars and pedestrians and small pieces of land to build low-rise houses. When the population increased, construction works increased but the land could not expand, the city is overloaded. During the urban construction revolution, Sa Pa is with new colors, dusty roads, many disordered constructions, and degraded urban infrastructure due to the density of vehicles and tourists. At the "overload" level is inevitable in the development process. The situation of illegal construction, improper construction, and wrong urban regulations is out of control.

This paper aims to study impacts of tourism development in Sa Pa, Lao Cai, Vietnam including economic, environmental, social and cultural, and land grabbing.

2. Method

The study of impacts of tourism development in Sa Pa, Lao Cai, Vietnam is a qualitative research. Data is collected by in-depth interviews, non-participant observations and documentary research. During almost 20 years of visits and several periods of fieldwork, I have carried out conversational interviews with numerous actors in Sa Pa District's tourism industry, including lowland Vietnamese and ethnic minority Tàì, Dao and Hmông people, interviewed were predominantly female informants. Discussions were completed in English, Vietnamese, Hmông, languages with the assistance of interpreters/translators from the Hmông ethnic group when needed. Data is analysed by descriptive analysis method.

3. Results

Impacts of tourism development in Sa Pa describe in 4 main aspects including economic, environmental, social and cultural, and land grabbing.

Economic Impacts

Many policies and solutions to support and improve the lives of ethnic minorities have been issued and implemented by the Vietnamese government. There have been significantly improved in the economic aspect but the social and cultural aspects have faced many difficulties. Regarding the tourism sector, particularly tourism development associated with preserving ethnic minority culture, is also implemented through activities such as organizing and supporting localities to develop tourism products; organize and support to open professional training courses related to



tourism activities for ethnic minority groups; carrying out activities of tourism promoting and supporting; research, survey and selection of specific tourism products; and developing community based tourism model.

Community based tourism has initially brought positive results, contributed significantly to hunger eradication and poverty reduction, creating income sources for ethnic minority people and contributed significantly to economic growth. Most notably villages with community-based tourism in Sa Pa has a poverty reduction rate 3 times faster than that of villages without community-based tourism (Lai (2019). According to the World Conservation Union (IUCN), more than 70% of international visitors to Sa Pa need to visit villages of local ethnic minorities.

Ethnic minorities in Sa Pa have been encouraged by the Vietnamese government to modernization their agricultural practices and participated in tourism business since 1990 (Bonnin and Turner 2012; Turner 2012; Tekken et al. 2017). Positive impact of tourism development in Sa Pa is clearly seen on an increasing of income for ethnic people. Hoang, et al. (2018) pointed out that number of households located at accessible places nearby Sa Pa district center or tourism attractions were successful in the development and marketing of tourism-related products. But the benefits of the tourism development are concentrated among a small group of rural households. The additional income from tourism allowed them to gain a higher income, adopt a higher living standard and invest more in the education and training of the next generation. They also invested in modern agricultural practices leading to agricultural intensification and abandonment of steep uplands. Households involved in tourism tend to abandon their marginal fields and intensify on their prime agricultural land. Income from tourism is invested in agricultural modernization such as the application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and acquisition and sowing of high productive hybrid rice and corn breeds.

In term of inequal benefit sharing between the ethnic groups and other actors such as Kinh businessmen and real estate developers, Cát Cát village case is an example of this situation. Cát Cát village has 610 Hmông people living there and up to 120 people accounting for 19.7% of the population participate in tourism activities. The Hmông ethnic people are one of the main reasons to attract tourists but only get a small benefit from providing homestay services or selling souvenirs, transporting tourists, or guiding the visitors (Dai bieu nhan dan, 2018).

Tourism policy, especially the model "1-1 link" is a model to encourage and support businesses to link with people and local authorities in each village, residential cluster, each commune to invest, exploit the potential and advantages of tourism. This model allows each locality doing community tourism will accompany a business that is responsible for calling and attracting tourists, preserving cultural identity, and managing tourism activities in a professional manner. In San Sả Hồ commune, the Cát Cát Tourism Joint Stock company invests tens of billions of VND in the houses of dozens of Hmông households, so that they can keep the local lifestyle and traditional agricultural practices, developing handicrafts, keeping the beauty of exchanging cultivation and husbandry products at the markets. The houses, kitchen corners, gardens, upland



fields, living utensils, linen deprivation, indigo dyeing, beeswax painting, brocade embroidery are preserved to attract tourists (Quốc, 2017).

“International tourists prefer to stay in the ethnic villages.

They love to spend time with the ethnic minorities in the

village more than staying in town center.”

(Interviewed with local Kinh people)

The company also pays VND 3 million per month (approximately 129 USD) directly to more than a dozen Hmông families along the village-wide walking route, so that they can keep their houses clean, preserve traditional items, conserve weaving and agreeing to let visitors visit home as they like, no selling or collecting fees. (Quốc, 2017). Their homes and livelihoods turn to objects of tourism interests, which are often geographically and socially marginalized groups whose position inferior to dominant majority group and tourists (Cohen, 1989; Dearden & Harron, 1994). This model may help ethnic Hmông to create and preserve their traditional livelihoods and provide opportunity to have stable income in the village but it is also put them under employment of the company. In my opinion, they should have roles on the village tourism planning, participation in the decision-making process and have more voice on their cultural preservation. Furthermore, the transition from agrarian to tourism creates tensions in time and agricultural management and can also impact on their ethnic social and culture.

There is also differentiate tourism generated income among ethnic groups in the village. In case of ethnic Dao or Yao community in Tả Phìn village, Dinh and Santasombat (2013) state that ethnic villagers can earn income from tourism more than from agriculture and non-timber forestry activities. In Tả Phìn village there are Dao or Yao and Hmông ethnic minority groups and the Kinh or Viet, the majority group living together. Both Kinh and Yao people open homestay services but souvenir shops and food shops belong to Kinh people who are new migrants from other areas. Kinh people do not have fields or engage in agricultural activities, they rely on tourism related business. The Dao or Yao people do not have enough capital to open shops. Most of Yao households take part in tourist activities and income of their household mainly comes from tourism. While around 50% of ethnic Dao or Yao can earn 3 – 4 million VND (approximately 127-172 USD) each year, a Kinh household who live in the center of the village earns over 10 million VND (approximately 430 USD) each year.

Sa Pa district put more restriction and control on ethnic women street sellers who previously able to roam the town’s streets to sell their textile products and souvenirs. Some of them face confiscation of their goods. Michaud and Turner (2017) assert that since 2015 all ethnic women street sellers have been warned that they must sell from specific, small stationary spots in the town. A number of them complained that such restrictions affected their sales to have dropped drastically. Many of them now follow trekking groups to surrounding ethnic minority villages and some have



set up small stalls in minority villages where no such rules apply. The relocation of Sa Pa old market from the town centre to a new market about one a half kilometers away in January 2015 also cause dropped of their income from selling their textile products and souvenirs. There are no prominent signs in Vietnamese or English nor district promotion to pointing tourists to the ethnic new trading location.

There is very small number of tourists coming here.

Rental fee at the new market is also higher than at the old market.

At the old market we paid 150,000 VND per month but here we have to pay an electricity fee for 70,000 VND per month and the after

2 years we will have to pay 8,000,000 VND for the rental fee.

All of us do not want to move but it was the government policy, so, we have to move. (Interviewed with Hmông seller)

At the second floor of the new Sa Pa market, there are 70 ethnic sellers including 35 ethnic Black Hmông and 35 Dao or Yao and Flowery Hmông selling in a designated space.

At the old market, I earned about 2-3,000,000 VND per week,

When we moved here, I can only earn 10,000-1,000,000 VND per week. I have to pay for a room rental for 370,000 VND per month.

But others pay 10,000 VND per night for their sleeping space at a Kinh's house. (Interviewed with Hmông seller)

There are numbers of Hmông women who used to sell textile products at the old market decided to move back to their village in Lao Chải. Some of them set up a stall in their homes to sell beverages. A couple of them engage into homestay business and textile shop in the village, while others follow tourists around village trying to sell their goods. Interestingly, I found the ethnic Dao or Yao people, who are not residents in Lao Chải village come along with the Hmông for selling souvenirs in the village. One of the Dao sellers told me;



Here (in Lao Chải) there is no restrictions on following tourists around.

So I can sell my stuff more than in Sa Pa town center.

(Interviewed with Dao seller)

Environmental impacts

Sa Pa is on the Hoàng Liên Sơn mountain range, arable land comprises of only 4% of the total land. Sa Pa town center of 24.02km², with people 11,144 people, but in the first 9 months of 2017 welcomed over 1.3 million tourists. the city is burdened with the overload of tourists, residents and laborers coming to work, which leads to the risk of ecological imbalance and environmental landscape; ability to provide electricity, water, transportation, order and security services (Hoang, et al., 2018).

Bích (2019) pointed out that the rapid development of tourism has led to an increase in the amount of waste from tourism activities, putting great pressure on the local natural and social environment. The amount of domestic waste in the center of Sa Pa town in 2019 is 27 tons /day, 5 times higher than 2014 was 5.3 tons/day. The rate of waste separation at source in Sa Pa is only about 75%, the area around the Sa Pa cultural market, this percentage is below 40%. People and tourists lack of awareness in classifying waste and putting waste in the right place. There is also problem of dumping construction wastes along the roads, in which Sa Pa district built and put construction materials waste area of 2.3 ha in Bản Khoang commune into operation to mitigate the circumstance. But the area can only withstand for about 1 more year then it is going to shut down. Sa Pa district planned to transporting waste to Lao Cai city or build a high-tech waste incinerator in the local area. Sa Pa has no treatment of domestic wastewater, septic tank waste from households pour down to the water courses

or direct discharge to small streams in the area. In rural areas, there is also no sewage system. During the dry season, most of the wastewater is absorbed into the soil. In the rainy season, wastewater is mixed with rainwater and flows into agricultural canals and rivers.

Recent water shortage in Sa Pa Sa Pa during the holidays April 30 - May 1, 2019 caused some hotels and restaurants to cancel guests for staying and eating. Water source can only meet about 60% of demand (VN express, 2019). The urban water supplies were increased to 4,000 m³ /day. People and hotels have to buy water from other places to transport with very high prices, from 300,000 to 500,000 VND/m³. Some hotels in Sapa sent clothes to Lao Cai to launder or cancel the guest's reservation because it does not meet the demand for clean water supply (An ninh thu do, 2019). Sa Pa district resolved the problem by made an agreement with the people of Suối Hồ village to suspend the use of Suối Hồ 2 water source to serve domestic water for Sa Pa town. Then Sa Pa District People's Committee will mobilize over VND 500 million in socialization to support the entire agricultural production area affected by water shortage. Though Sa Pa district actively



implementing many solutions to overcome an incident water shortage, long term planning for serious shortage of clean water in Sa Pa town is awaiting to establish to avoid the situation of local people and tourists being "severed" because of lack of water. Moreover, Sa Pa urban water supplies should not be exploited agricultural water source of Suối Hồ to supply tourism needed.

Social and Cultural Impacts

A rigid top-down decisional structure dominated by the Kinh and ethnic minority residents mostly Hmông and Dao farmers are not nearly as welcome to be part of Sa Pa's tourist planning as government entities and large-scale real estate developers are (Michaud and Turner, 2017). Nonetheless, authorities, cultural brokers, and touristic entrepreneurs from outside the local community exert their power by initiating processes of commoditization that may lead to the exploitation of local communities and their culture. The Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Lao Cai province and the district of Sa Pa have been implemented a policy on "turning heritage into property." Every community and every village must have a product that help people eliminate hunger and reduce poverty. Lao Cai province has successfully restored 10 traditional festivals, bringing to the total number of 40 festivals in the province. Sa Pa has focused on preserving traditional festivals, such as Down-field festivals (Gầu tào, Roóng pọc), and various ethnic dances such as múa xòe, múa chuông, múa sinh tiền, múa quạt, and lễ cấp sắc.

After preserving and restoring the original, Sa Pa put festivals into tourism activities in towns, communes and villages; festival activities mainly focus on lunar new year, early spring festival, and holidays to attract and serve tourism purposes. In all communes, there is a national performance team, ready to perform for tourists at homestay sites. Programs like xuống đồng at Tả Van, múa xòe at Thanh Phú, cấp sắc at Thanh Kim, lễ hội trên mây, một ngày làm nông dân at Tả Phìn and Tả Van field, spreading Thanh Phu, Thanh Kim identity, cloud festival, and Tả Phìn farmer's day have been promoted all year round (Quốc, 2017). Due to the influence of Western culture, the plain and simple indigenous cultures have been greatly changed, the festivals are no longer kept intact and attract ethnic minority people to participate as before. The district authorities have to provide financial support and encourage associated communes to form groups to maintain and preserve the festivals. Dinh and Santasombat (2013) and Cohen (1986) state that local people do not care about the importance and internal meanings of cultural products anymore. The folklore performances and crafts are now produced because of money.

However, the activities of preserving ethnic culture, developing tourism associated with ethnic minorities have achieved some positive results. The trend of commercialization has made many cultural values fade away like the traditional costumes of many ethnic minorities, which are meticulously hand-crafted handicraft products, but now they have replaced by imported fabrics or ready-made garments. The development of specific local tourism products is also mechanically produced, losing the cultural value of unique identity of the ethnic groups (Lại, 2019). Hmông children and teenagers prefer to wear more western clothes. I witnessed some of black Hmông



children bought factory-printed flowery Hmông outfit to wear rather than making hand-embroidered outfit by themselves.

Black Hmông in Sa Pa sell Hmông clothing from another Hmông sub group, flowery Hmông in particular. Materials used for producing souvenirs and handicrafts, the old pleated flowery Hmông skirt and used embroidered clothes, are supplied by the Hmông from other districts, such as Bát Xát, Than Uyên, Bắc Hà and Bình Lư. The Giáy ethnic minority retailers supply jewellery in ethnic handicraft styles such as silver-like bracelet, ring, necklace, earring and silver decorating ornament. The Kinh or Vietnamese in the Red River Delta makes most of the jewellery sold by the Hmông and other ethnic minorities. Many Chinese ethnic jewellery factory-made products become commonly found in Sa Pa.

However, Dinh and Santasombat (2013) suggested that because of participating in tourism related business the roles of ethnic Dao women are enhanced. Tourism greatly contributes to equity between men and women. In the past, the wife was supposed to responsible for housework, agricultural activities and child caring. After women become breadwinner of the family, they are empowered. The Dao husband helps his wife on household chores, and some wives become money keepers of their families. They develop strategies to balance their new roles as breadwinners of the family and their traditional roles as mothers and wives. Their incorporation into the market economy has allowed women to have a voice on household affairs and increase their decision-making power (Srikham, 2006).

The economy of the Hmông is predominantly agricultural and subsistence base, which require intensive labour force involved in the process. Most of the street sellers still have to contribute their labour during cultivation period. They will normally take a week of from selling to work on rice transplanting and harvesting. Because of souvenirs and handicrafts selling, there are numbers of Hmông sellers reported that they hired people to help them on transplanting and harvesting rice. Labour hiring began a couple years after they engaged in souvenirs and handicrafts selling (Srikham, 2006).

Land Grabbing Impacts

In Vietnam, land belong to the state, people do not have land ownership, their rights are limited to land use rights permitted within the law. Land is collectively owned by people and administered by the government on their behalf. The government can choose to grant a one-time extension of another 50 years or take the land back if the party has failed to use the land under the terms and conditions of the land use right certificate. According to Land Law 2013, article 167 states that land use right can be exchanged, transferred, leased, subleased, inherited, donated, mortgaged land use rights and contributed land use rights as capital (Vietnam Law in English, 2013). An increasing investment in hotels and resorts has been significantly contributing to the tourism development in Vietnam. The process of land acquisition for investment projects in



Vietnam has caused problems for local communities and landholders in unequal benefit sharing (Nguyen, et al, 2016).

Duong, Samsura, and Krabben (2019) state that large scale and complexity of tourism projects in Sa Pa with approval plan for the development of Sa Pa National Tourist Resort in Lao Cai province until 2030 are dramatically increasing and require large area of land from diversify current land users who could be farmers, workers, small business households and local home owners. Sun Group, a dominant real estate investor and the owner of the Fansipan Cable Car project, a five starts hotel de la Coupole – MGallery is planning to invested in a complex of commercial services and apartments, a 3-star hotel complex, a resettlement area, and the center square cover an area of 17 ha or 170,000 square meters along the Dien Bien Phu street in Sa Pa and 28 households are forced to move but most affected families strongly resist to moving out. Moreover, Sun Group also planned to invest in the area of an old Sa Pa market with 30 shops to sell for 50,000 USD each and a business center (Interviewed with local businessman).

A series of collective land grabs took place across the three regions of the country. People and land users in Sa Pa protested against state recovering land for tourism development. In Sa Pa, on the morning of March 27, 2019, in Quarter 11, the authorities mobilized hundreds of police, security and related land officers to enforce the land of the local people and assigned to business owned to operate tourism project. However, the local people firmly resisted the coercion because this is a land they have reclaimed and settled for many generations. The authorities offered very low compensation prices, which unable to meet the needs of people to move to new places (Việt, 2019).

“It is absurd that this project is a tourism project,
they seized land of people and assigned to private businesses.
Land price in Sa Pa is very expensive now,
how can they get a new piece of land with this small money?”
(Interviewed with local Kinh businessman).

Duong, Samsura, and Krabben (2019) conclude that the process of land acquisition for tourism development has profoundly affected local people. The way land is acquired for tourism development in Vietnam has created important problems concerning the right of land acquired people such as a right to access, a right to be fairly compensated, a right to be prevented from the negative impacts of land development for tourism projects, a right to decision making participation.



The ambiguous and unsecure property rights system in Vietnam might have facilitated the land-grabbing phenomenon in Sa Pa.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Michaud and Turner (2017) assert that the dominated Kinh paid little attention to local minority groups' civil or ancestral rights, which reflected in local policy. Sa Pa has been issued and implemented various tourism development policies and solutions by the authorities to support and improve the lives of ethnic minorities and contributed significantly to hunger eradication poverty reduction and economic growth. Vietnamese academia agreed upon positive economic impact of tourism on the ethnic minorities in Sa Pa (Duong, Samsura, and Krabben, 2019; Hoang, et al., 2018; Dinh and Santasombat, 2013) but ethnic minority people get a small benefit from tourism compare to other actors (Duong, Samsura, and Krabben, 2019; Hoang, et al., 2018; Michaud and Turner 2017; Dinh and Santasombat, 2013; Srikham, 2006).

Hmông and Dao women develop strategies to balance their new roles as breadwinners of the family and their traditional roles as mothers and wives. Their incorporation into the market economy has allowed women to have a voice on household affairs and increase their decision-making power in which Wilson and Ypeij (2012) suggested that gender might be seen as a system of culturally constructed identities that are expressed in ideologies of husband and wife and that interact with socially structured relationships in divisions of labor, leisure, sexuality, and power between men and women. Tourism can promote changes in gender relations among the patriarchy ethnic culture.

Rapid development of tourism and unplanning proper environmental management has led to problems on waste management and water shortage in Sa Pa. Water resource nearby has been exploited and suspend the use to serve domestic water for Sa Pa tourism activities. Sa Pa should create a legislative framework for standard waste management plans in hotels and restaurants, allowing the plans to be introduced across the district. On the other hand, it made tourists, hoteliers and their employees more aware of this waste management issue. It is necessary to identify recycling potential in Sa Pa. It provides strategies and recommendations for incentives that the state can provide to encourage the private sector to become more involved in this area. Management plans to improve waste management have to be drawn up and implemented in the district.

The process of cultural commoditization gradually erodes cultural values of the ethnic minority. Production of quality souvenirs based on traditional crafts should be encouraged and diverse and high-quality ethnic products should be developed. Over-commercialized cultural shows might cause discontent among visitors and devalue local traditions.

Tourism development in Sa Pa cause land grabbing in a limited land has profoundly affected land use rights of local people in which Ojo (2013) asserts that land grabbing for tourism purposes does not differ significantly from other driving forces of land grabbing. Its character



might be non-extractive, but it is still a land-intensive export of intangible assets for mostly local and foreign tourist consumers.

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