

TOURISTS DEMAND ON HERITAGE SITE: A CASE STUDY OF PHUOC TICH VILLAGE, VIETNAM

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Abstract: A deep understanding of the motivations of tourists is essential in the planning and development of community economy through traditional handicrafts and tourism. Phuoc Tich Heritage village, situated in the center province of Vietnam, is well known for its traditional pottery crafts and ancient houses. The paper builds a profile of the tourists who visit the village, with a specific focus on their travel motivations and expenditure, and on identifying from a visitor's perspective where the tourism value chain can be strengthened. The study collected one hundred and thirty-two tourists participated in the self-administered survey and semi-structured interviews. The results show the general demographic profile of a tourist travelling to Phuoc Tich village is someone who is well educated, middle aged, and with a relatively high discretionary income. They are interested in seeing the pottery being made and would like to learn more about the culture and deep into the local people's lifestyles when they are travelling to rural or peri-urban destinations. When the tourists become emotionally involve and truly engage with the simple and slow life at Phuoc Tich Heritage village, they explore local food and cultural behaviours of rural people in an environment that is hundreds of years old. Through this interaction with the residents, the tourists also significantly contribute to enhancing the tourism products. This means that the tourists not only passively take part in the tour and experience the destination, but also actively play the role of the creator of their tourist activities.

Keywords: Tourists Demand, Heritage Village, Tourism Value Chain

I. Introduction

By the early 1990s, those writing about the New Age tourism movement highlighted the rising number of 'alternative' tourists who are in favour of more individualistic and authentic experiences. With the radical transformation of the international tourism industry from 'old' to 'new' tourism, Poon (1993) introduced the concept of New Age tourism, one based upon a new common sense, best practice of flexibility, segmentation and diagonal integration. Rid et al (2014) defined the new tourists as 'multi-experience' seekers who show interest in more individualistic and more authentic rural and local holiday experiences. They are more environmentally aware, more quality conscious, more adventurous and more ready to reject the passive, structured, mass-produced package holiday in favour of more individualistic, authentic experiences (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008).

Moreover, when discussing the alternative forms of tourism, Moscardo (2001) also highlighted the tourists' new experiences that are produced from the interactions between them and the objects or ideals presented at the destinations. Sharpley (2002) argued that one of the misunderstandings about tourists is that we think they are just regular consumers or shoppers seeking products, but in fact their principal objective is experience consumption. The experiences and the accompanying emotions of tourists are now part of the tourism product (Lohmann, 2004; Prayag, Hosany, & Odeh, 2013; Rid et al., 2014).

Together with tourism development, through the sale of local cultural products and services directly to visitors, the people in rural or peri-urban areas can earn additional income. Chok et

al. (2007) argued that unlocking opportunities for the tourists to discover more about the activities of traditional handicraft villages will increase benefits for the destinations, and hence is an alternative strategy to merely expanding the overall number of tourists arriving. A range of studies have examined the positive role that handicraft sales can play in increasing the benefits that local communities receive from tourism (Mairna, 2011; Nedelcheva, Dogan, Obratov-Petkovic, & Padure, 2011; Tsuji & Van, 2002).

To promote tourism and community economic development in rural areas, further knowledge is required to understand why tourists are motivated to engage in distinct tourism market segments (Rid et al., 2014). Tourists are not a homogenous group – they have differing needs, tastes and spending power (Noronha, 2010). Thus, understanding tourists' behaviours and their motivations in visiting a destination is the key point if one wants to be able to explain the reasons why people travel long distances to visit a particular place. Indeed, one of several reasons for the failure of recently completed tourism projects is their focus on developing products and producers but not on tourists' needs (Spenceley et al., 2009).

II. Consumer Behaviour in Tourism

Tourists' behaviour is one of the most researched areas in the field of marketing and tourism. It is generally considered as a continuous process that includes varied yet inter-correlated stages including before, during and after tour (Mill & Morrison, 2002). Tourism researchers have developed the nine key concepts (including decision marking, values, motivations, self-concept and personality, expectations, attitudes, perceptions, satisfaction, trust and loyalty), specific influences (technology and generation Y) and particular research contexts that present major areas of the topic (Cohen et al, 2014).

Motivation is one of the key concepts in tourism academics, given its importance in marketing decisions such as segmentation, product development, advertising and positioning (Bieger and Laesser, 2002). According to Cohen et al. (2014), several theories or models have been developed to explain motivation such as those of Plog's (1974) 'allocentric and psychocentric', Dann's (1977) 'push and pull', Pearce's (1988) 'travel career ladder' and Ross and Iso Ahola's (1991) 'escape seeking'. Among them, the push – pull approach remains the most widely applied for explaining motivations, given its simplicity and intuitive approach (Klenosky, 2002). Tourists are pushed by their biogenic and emotional needs to travel and pulled by destination attributes (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). It is very important to know the 'push' and 'pull' motivation of tourists. That is, why do tourists choose (or not choose) one destination over another and what the tourists' experiences are about the place, the products and the people they visited (Correia, Moital, Oliveria, & da Costa, 2009; Devesa, Laguna, & Palacios, 2010). The author Ateljevic (2000) stated that researchers should no longer relegate tourists to having merely a passive role; rather, research should be broadened to understand the role of consumers and their consumption habits. Thus, we should not only pay attention to the quality and quantity of the commodity, we should also broaden our knowledge about the tourists' expectations when they participate in the process, and their voices have to be heard.

III. Phuoc Tich Heritage Village

Phuoc Tich Heritage village, situated in the center province of Vietnam, is well known for its traditional pottery crafts and ancient houses. The village is located in Thua Thien Hue Province and between two world-renowned attractions: Son Doong the world's largest caves, and Complex of Hue Imperial Citadel Monuments. In 2009, Phuoc Tich was recognised as the second National Heritage village in Vietnam, it became a new tourist destination in Thua Thien Hue province. The competitive advantage of Phuoc Tich Heritage village lies in the unchanged nature of all its key elements, from its ancient houses, folk festivals and traditional handicraft

through to its green natural environment and the everyday life of its inhabitants. In the past, pottery making brought prosperity and a high standard of living to the villagers of Phuoc Tich (Dan, 2005; Thong, 2010). Most of their jobs were pottery related, but when the potteries stopped working 20 years ago, the villagers shifted to other small-scale jobs or day-labouring. Today, many of the villagers who had changed their occupations now have a stable living standard. There is currently around one-third of households involved in casual labouring work, but nearly two thirds of all households are retired people whose children are working in the region or far away. Apart from a small pension, the old people rely on the support of their children.

At present, many local residents of Phuoc Tich village have become stakeholders in tourism, either because they are affected by tourism development passively, or because they are actively and directly using tourism as a strategy for their development. Local cultures, natural resources and historical artefacts of Phuoc Tich Heritage village are not only potential resources for tourism development, though, they are also local resources shared by all Phuoc Tich villagers. As in community-based tourism projects around the world, moving up the tourism value chain or ‘mainstreaming’ is important. Mainstream means transforming the whole community’s resources into the tourism products for tourists, to force individuals to conform to the mores of the community. In the heritage village, the tourism value chain presents several types of tourism products such as visiting the ancient structures and spaces of typical garden houses in central Vietnam (Phuoc Tich has 24 130-year-old intact houses built in the ancient style), experiencing pottery making, cycling inside the village, tasting local dishes, taking a boat trip on the O Lau river, and experiencing a homestay hosted in one of the ancient houses. The pottery techniques and architecture of the houses have been preserved for hundreds of years in the traditional style and so they are invaluable, both architecturally and culturally.

The tourism value chain in Phuoc Tich Heritage village comprises tourists, travel agents and tour operators (TA/TO), the Phuoc Tich management board (PTMB) and the local residents who supply several tourism services to tourists. The current tourism value chain (TVC) for Phuoc Tich is presented in **Figure 1** (on next page)

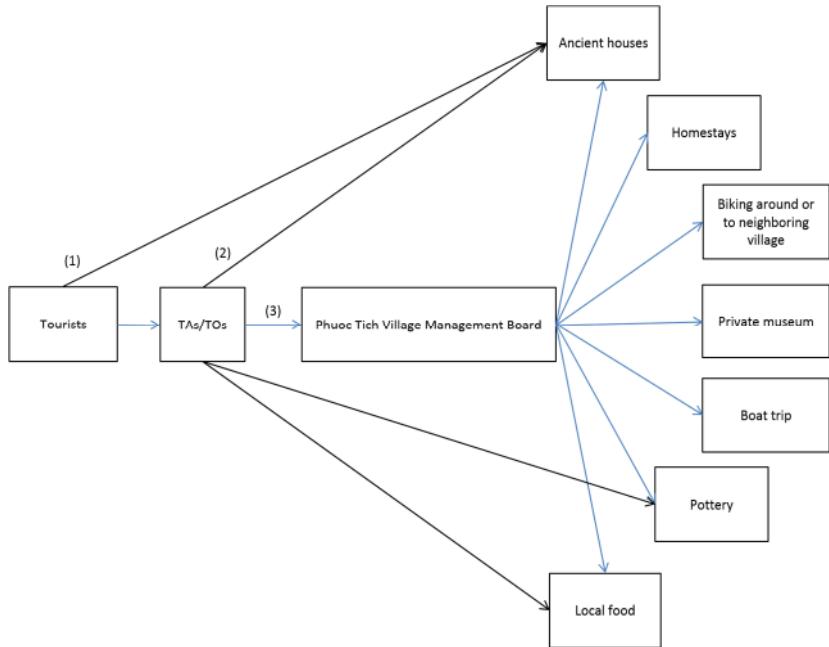


Figure 1: The current tourism value chain at Phuoc Tich Heritage village

In this TVC, the tourist either books a tour programme with a defined itinerary from a TA/TO or drives themselves to Phuoc Tich Heritage village as a free and independent traveller (FIT). While a FIT can explore Phuoc Tich village and visit the pottery kiln or an ancient house (option 1 on Figure 1), a booking through a TA/TO enables the visitor to also enjoy several services from local households at Phuoc Tich, such as having local meals, homestay accommodation, and watching pottery being made. Because of the close connections with several households before the existence of the PTMB, the TO/TAs used to call the households directly to book the services they needed, and the tour guide paid the household directly (option 2 on Figure 1). Currently, the TO/TAs book the local services through the PTMB (option 3 on Figure 1), so the PTMB has an important role in coordinating between the TO/TAs and the local service suppliers. This is in contrast to the situation with FITs (option 1), where the dominant roles of TO/TAs and the PTMB are not present. Building strong connections between tourism and local economic activities via the supply chain will ensure that tourism contributes to a fair and sustainable socio-economic development (Tapper, 2001). For that reason, the value chain can either help the producers or not, depending on how the interventions are structured in that chain (Spenceley et al., 2009).

IV. Methodology

The study applied semi-structured interviews and self-administered surveys to tourists to understand their behaviour before, during and after their visit to the village. The domestic and international tourists can be categorised as belonging to one of two groups: the homestay tourists, who stay overnight in a traditional-architecture historic house, and the day visitors. The key questions in the interviews were: what motivated the tourists to choose the traditional handicraft village to be their travel destination; and what their expectations were when participating in the tourism chain and interacting with the local residents. While the day-visit tourists who were in the village during the data collection period were invited to complete the questionnaire. The self-administered visitor questionnaire consisted of 43 closed and open-ended questions, which were offered in Vietnamese, English or French, reflecting the dominant tourist markets. Tourists' trip-related planning activities were included in the first part of questionnaire; the second part surveyed their experiences in Phuoc Tich village; and the final part comprised the tourist-related information questions needed for statistical purposes. One

hundred and thirty-two tourists participated in the survey and semi-structured interviews in the study, which are 53 face to face interviews and 79 completed questionnaires.

V. Results

5.1 Tourists' Profile and Expenditure

Based on a representative sample, this study found that the general demographic profile of a tourist travelling to Phuoc Tich village is someone who is well educated, middle aged, and with a relatively high discretionary income by nationalities. The majority of the tourist participants (72%, n = 95) were international visitors; only 28% were domestic visitors. Most of the international visitors were long-haul tourists from Europe, Japan and the US or Canada, with 31% of the arrivals coming from either France or Germany; a further 17% came from Japan, 12% from the US or Canada, and 12% neighbouring ASEAN nations. These countries are the main source markets for Vietnam's overall tourism industry (VNAT, 2010). The tourists who participated in the study were mainly male (70%), on their first visit to Phuoc Tich Heritage village and in groups (appr. 90%); (n = 43) of the respondents were travelling with their family, while only 13.4% (n = 18) of tourists travelling alone. There was a statistically significant difference between the companion travelling habits of the groups of visitors from different countries (χ^2 (8, n = 132) = 31.440, p < 0.05), with analysis of the data showing that 'nationality of tourists' was associated with 'travel companion'. A high percentage of the North American (75%) and European (63.4%) tourists who were visiting Phuoc Tich village were travelling with family, whereas the Japanese, ASEAN and domestic tourists were likely to be travelling with their friends.

Figure 2: The nationalities of the tourist participants, by type of research methods (n = 132)

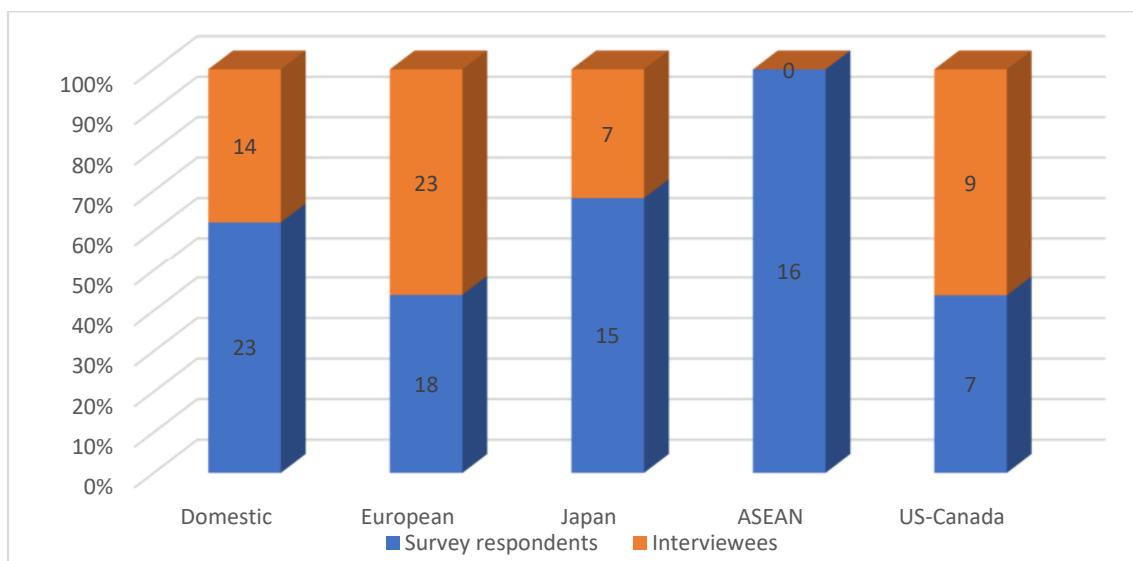


Figure 2 breaks down the nationalities of tourists according to how they participated in the study. Twenty-nine per cent of those who participated in the face-to-face semi-structured interviews were domestic tourists and 71% were international tourists, with similar proportions completing the survey (26% and 74%, respectively).

The tourists who participated in the research had an average expenditure per person per visit on tourism services such as tasting local dishes, homestay services, boating services and bicycle rental (see Table 1). Expenditure on other services such as visiting a Heritage house or the local museum are included in the price of the package tour, and directly paid by the tour guide to the local people. Many of the tourists (41.5%) travelled on all-inclusive package tours.

Table 1: Statistics of tourists' expenditure at Phuoc Tich Heritage village in 2012

ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES	NUMBER OF TOURISTS	NET REVENUE (US\$)	AVERAGE EXPENSES (US\$)
Food (drinks excluded)	426	2335.0	5.5
Homestay (including breakfast, and coffee/tea)	41	324.0	7.9
Boat rent	30	300.0	10.0
Bicycle rent	136	136.0	1.0
Pottery performance (served by two persons)	18	90.0	5.0

Source: Phuoc Tich Management Board (PTMB) (2013)

The statistical data above shows that the tourists had spent very little in the village. Although a majority of the tourist participants (76.5%) had bought canned or cold bottled water during their meals at the ancient houses, their expenditure was nearly always US\$2 or less. Furthermore, fewer than one in five (19.2%) had bought Phuoc Tich pottery, and very few (9.9%) had bought local food. The average spent by a one-day visitor is lower than that spent in the village by an overnight tourist.

Generally, the tourist expenditure is low for both FITs and those travelling in group inclusive tours (GITs). This low expenditure can be explained by the local expenditure analysis which revealed that the village is not meeting the tourists' needs for local products (pottery, foods and beverage) and services; this is a potential market that has yet to be tapped into.

5.2 Tourists' Motivations and Expectations to Phuoc Tich Heritage Village

The majority of tourists travelling to Phuoc Tich village can be classified as curiosity seekers, motivated by the pull factors of the authenticity and unique characteristics of the village. Many of the tourists were visiting Phuoc Tich to experience a broader sense of place and to get away from some of the more mainstream tourism experiences – with pottery not featuring as a factor in the decision to come to this village. For some, their interest in pottery was less about the products themselves and more about the way in which village life was shaped by the economic activity of pottery production.

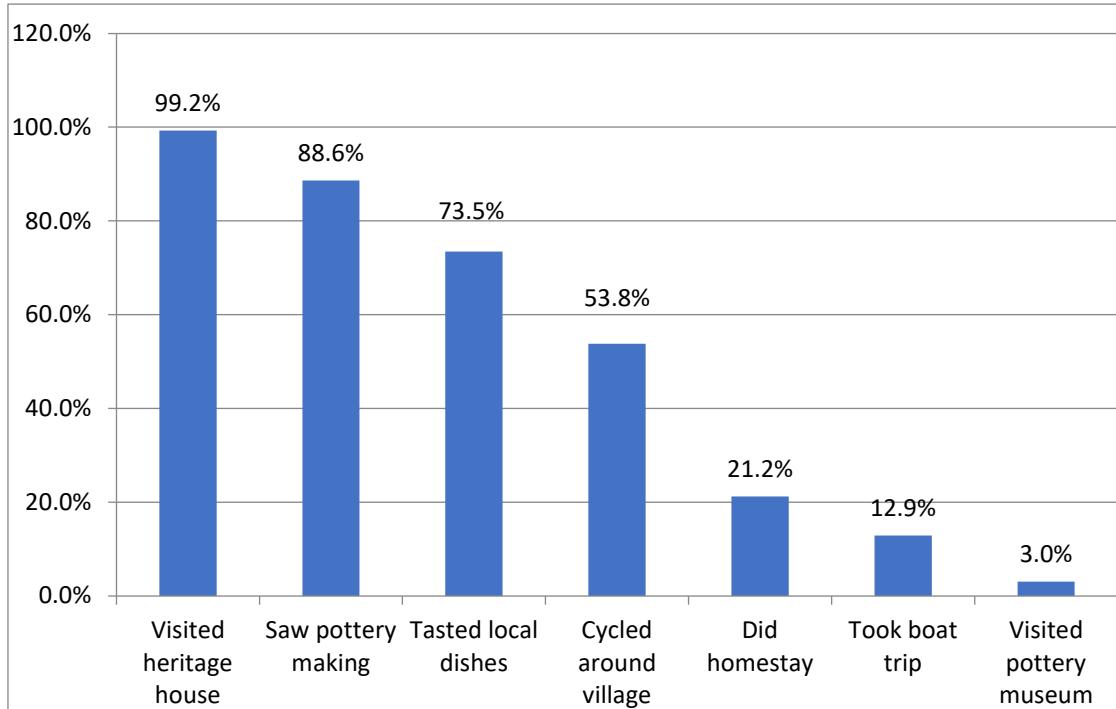
The tourists had adopted a multiple-mode approach to gathering information about Phuoc Tich Heritage village. Overall, 90.4% of the tourists claimed that travel articles and documentaries are an important or somewhat important source of information that influenced their decision to travel to Phuoc Tich Heritage village. This is reflected in the high mean score of 4.29 (out of 5) for this element. Other important sources of information they had used when deciding to travel to Phuoc Tich are a travel book, travel guide or brochure. The study also found out the statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) of the fact that the tourists with higher levels of education are interested in seeing the pottery being made and knowing more about the culture of the local people.

The tourists were asked to indicate which activities they had participated in, or services they had used, during their visit to Phuoc Tich Heritage village (see Figure 3). Nearly all of the tourists (99.2%) had seen the architecture and designs of the local Heritage houses, viewing both the interior and exterior of the houses. A large percentage of visitors (88.6%) also stated that they had seen the pottery being made in the pottery production space.

Nearly three quarters (73.5%) of the respondents reported that they had tasted local dishes, and more than a half (53.5%) had enjoyed the cycling activities around the village (see Figure 3). The number of tourists who cycled around the village included both the tourists who had

used National Way Number 49B to travel to Phuoc Tich and the tourists who had rented a bicycle and cycled around the village.

Figure 3: Activities and services the tourists had participated in during their stay at Phuoc Tich Heritage village ($n = 132$)



At Phuoc Tich, traditional pottery production is one of the main cultural activities on offer for visitors (Thong, 2010). All of the research participants were asked how interested they were in the traditional pottery activities, and if they would like to participate in more pottery-related activities at Phuoc Tich Heritage village. A 5-point Likert scale was used, with 1 being ‘Not at all interested’, up to 5 which is ‘Extremely interested’ (see **Table 2**).

Table 2: The tourist participants’ interest in traditional pottery activities ($n = 132$)

	Mean	Std. Dev.
Want to know more about the history of the local pottery industry	3.68	0.713
Want to make the pottery with the guidance of local potters	3.60	0.686
Want to buy pottery in Phuoc Tich Heritage village	3.50	0.682
Want to design and make a product on my own	3.19	0.568

The mean score of 3.68 (out of 5) for “Want to know more about the history of the local pottery industry” and 3.60 (out of 5) for “I want to make the pottery with the guidance of local potters” reflected the fact that tourists are interested in these experiences. The interviews with the tourists revealed that there were more opportunities that could be developed at Phuoc Tich Heritage village. There were tourists who wanted something “more detailed and meaningful”, and there were also several who wanted to have their own creative pottery experiences. More than half of the domestic tourists who visited Phuoc Tich noted that they were moderately or extremely interested in learning more about the history of the local pottery industry.

Making pottery under the guidance of local potters and then firing that pottery was a new experience for nearly all the tourists. Ek et al. (2008) highlighted that tourists not only consume experiences, but also co-produce, co-design and co-exhibit the potteries. In Phuoc Tich village, the pottery demonstrations for tourists are performed by the older potters, while the young potters are in charge of pottery production. During the time of the research the tourists could experience only the first stages of the pottery production process – how to knead clay and shape pottery – but they were not able to participate in the later stage of firing the pottery. It is not easy to have a completed pot because the costs of firing are high, especially if the kiln is not fully loaded.

Most of the tourists who were visiting Phuoc Tich wanted to buy something as souvenirs, symbolic reminders of their experiences at a Heritage village. There were some tourists who preferred the plain unglazed pottery decorated with simple regional characteristics, while others preferred the glazed pottery with detailed carvings. There was also demand for larger objects from domestic travellers, with international travellers often preferring smaller objects. The souvenirs the tourists buy may be never used, but they give the travellers pleasure as they talk about where and how these products are made when they return home.

5.3 The appealing image of Phuoc Tich heritage village

Generally, the most appealing images for many domestic tourists are the green hedging of the ancient architecture houses and Phuoc Tich Heritage village's small roads, as well as the effort made by the local residents (including potters) in the conservation and development of their traditional handicraft. While the international tourists thought the most appealing images of Phuoc Tich village were to do with participating in the traditional pottery production chain and sleeping in ancient houses with traditional architecture, as well as the warm welcome from the local people, and the green hedging and gardens in a rural setting. Many tourists showed their appreciation by writing positive comments in the visitors' books, and some even sent letters to their host thanking them for the precious experiences they had had during their time at Phuoc Tich Heritage village.

However, more than a half of the tourist participants' interviewed have complained that there was "nothing to do" and a "lack of activities" in the village, or that Phuoc Tich "just seemed like an isolated and desert planet", while a fifth of the comments complained that the "the pottery is simple, and not quite impressive". A majority of the domestic tourists (65%) were surprised to find, for example, that not many local inhabitants participate in the pottery production process and that there are not many remnants left related to the famous pottery history of the village. Several tourists ($n = 6$, 26%) had hoped that they could see the fire and feel the temperature of the kiln at the pottery village. There was also the expectation that several households would be producing pottery, whereas there were only two potters working on the day the tourists visited. Overall, tourists expressed a desire to interact more with the local inhabitants while experiencing the social, cultural, spiritual and aesthetic attributes of the village.

VI. Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, the tourists and local community are both key elements in the tourism value chain. A visit to Phuoc Tich Heritage village enables the tourists to experience a rural lifestyle that is very different from that of city dwellers. At Phuoc Tich Heritage village, many tourists want to directly participate in the local residents' daily activities and try their hand at pottery production. This involvement in the tourism chain and other local activities will enhance the tourists' authentic experience of the village. Tourism is not just travelling, tasting local foods and ambling; it is also a memorable experience in the tourist's life. With the fast pace of

development of the tourism industry, tourists' expectations are changing and so, then, are the specific needs for their trip.

The study also finds that participating in traditional handicraft production processes should be considered an attractive tourism activity at a traditional handicraft village. Tourists, as creative and expressive beings, plan their journeys, 'do' things, and exhibit their experiences; thus, tourists play an active part in the production and circulation of experiences. The tourists become emotionally involved and truly engage with the simple and slow life at Phuoc Tich Heritage village as they explore local food and cultural behaviours of rural people in an environment that is hundreds of years old. Through this interaction with the residents, the tourists also significantly contribute to enhancing the tourism products. This means that the tourists not only passively take part in the tour and experience the destination, but also actively play the role of the creator of their tourist activities.

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