

The Impact Of Agrotourism On The Local Community (A Case Study Of Son Islet, Cần Thơ City, Vietnam)

Ngo Thi Phuong Lan¹, Nguyen Thi Van Hanh²

¹University of Social Sciences and Humanities – Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam,

²University of Social Sciences and Humanities – Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

e-mail: nguyenthivanhanh@hcmussh.edu.vn

Abstract: *Community-based tourism is not only a tourism industry that aims to bring maximum profits to investors. Instead, it pays more attention to the impact of tourism on communities and environmental resources. Agrotourism has become an inevitable trend worldwide and is regarded as a potential gold mine for the development of tourism in southern Vietnam. Son Islet has initially been the residence of a few gardening and cage fish farming families. Until recently, the residents of the small island began to develop one of the earliest and most popular community-based agrotourism models in Cần Thơ City. As an emerging type of tourism that has recently grown in Vietnam, agrotourism has not yet considered much by researchers, and there are few studies on agrotourism, or only economic impact has been mentioned. This article aims to learn more about the overall effect of agrotourism on local communities in order to have some recommendations on making community-based agrotourism more effective. Qualitative research with observations and 22 in-depth interviews have been conducted to collect research data. This article discusses both the positive and negative effects of agrotourism on local communities. The elements of success have also been observed, and some suggestions have been made to develop agrotourism, maintain the success of this community model based on agrotourism on Son Islet, and achieve breakthrough growth in the near future.*

Keywords : *agrotourism, community-based tourism, Son Islet, Vietnam*

1. INTRODUCTION

Although tourism has a potentially positive impact on the world economy, the fact is that since the rise of tourism on a global scale, local communities have hardly received any benefits from tourism for many years. Instead, they suffered a series of negative effects; tourism destroyed their natural resources and changed their society and culture in many ways. Therefore, community-based tourism (CBT) was born to solve the problem of how tourism can contribute to the development of the community (Suansri, 2003).

CBT is not just a travel business that aims to bring maximum profits to investors. Instead, it pays more attention to the impact of tourism on communities and environmental resources. Among scholars around the world, there is no consensus on this type of tourism (Suansri, 2003). In this article, we use this definition to understand CBT: “A community-based tourism plan is a project or plan, or the collective action of a group of people in a community that

decides to participate in or jointly develop small and medium-sized local tourism" (Yanes A. et al., 2019).

In the era of industrialization and globalization, some traditional agricultural businesses have begun to decline. According to previous studies, the main reasons for the decline in traditional agricultural output are falling prices of agricultural products, rising production costs, the impact of globalization and the elasticity of commodity markets (Chen Y. & Lee C., 2018), and Today's climate change. All these factors together lead to a decline in agricultural profits. Under such circumstances, agrotourism is increasingly regarded as the "desirable diversifier" of local and regional economies (Chen Y. & Lee C., 2018).

Labels such as agrotourism, farm tourism, farm-based tourism, and rural tourism are often used interchangeably with agrotourism, but they have also been explicitly used to express similar but completely different concepts (Phillip S., Hunter C. & Blackstock K., 2010). In this article, agrotourism (or agricultural tourism) is regarded as a tourism product directly related to the agricultural environment, agricultural products, or agricultural accommodation (Liang 2017; Qiu and Fan 2016; Scaglione and Mendola 2017 in Chen Y. & Lee C., 2018).

Agrotourism has become an inevitable trend worldwide. It is regarded as a potential gold mine for the development of tourism in Vietnam, which has a long rice civilization. Vietnam has a strong agricultural foundation. Farmers live in every place and have rice civilization and agricultural traditions. The agrotourism industry is becoming stronger, along with other types of tourism. In recent years, agrotourism products have been developed nationwide and have shown positive preliminary results in terms of tourist popularity. According to data from the National Tourism Administration of Vietnam, agrotourism has promoted socio-economic development in many places, making them more attractive to tourists, and at the same time generating income for local farmers and agricultural enterprises. However, at present, agrotourism in Vietnam is mainly developed by families and is still spontaneous.

As an emerging type of tourism that has recently developed in Vietnam, agrotourism has not yet considered much by researchers, and there are few studies on agrotourism, or only economic impact has been mentioned. This article aims to learn more about the overall impact of agrotourism on local communities in order to have some recommendations on making community-based agrotourism more effective.

Son Islet (or Cồn Sơn in the Vietnamese language) is a small island located in the middle of one among the two main tributaries of the Mekong River, the Hậu River, not far from Cần Thơ City, the largest city in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. This islet has a completely unique space, about 70 hectares of fertile land throughout the year, full of alluvial deposits and green orchards. The island was originally composed of small families engaged in gardening and fish farming in cages. Only recently did the communities on the island begin to develop one of the first and most popular community-based tourism models in Cần Thơ.

2. METHOD AND THEORY

The qualitative research method was chosen because it is particularly useful in discovering the meaning that people give to the events they experience (Merriam, 1998), and qualitative interviews lead to detailed descriptions of the research topics (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Twenty-two in-depth interviews were conducted with local residents who participated in islet agrotourism activities, tourists, CBT professional consultant and authorized representatives. The interviews were conducted in July 2020.

With the approval of the participants, the interview was recorded to ensure a complete transcript. When analyzing the data, the researchers named the categories, then coded the

transcripts, and placed parts in labelled folders representing each category. The observation was also used to investigate tourism activities and community life on the islet.

As sustainable tourism has become an important method for the development of tourism in the modern world, as long as the impact of tourism is involved, the three pillars of its economic, social-cultural, and environmental impact should be considered. The sustainable development framework is widely used to examine the impact of tourism development on the environment, economy, and social culture (Logar, 2010 in Barbieri C., Sotomayor S. & Aguilar F., 2016). In addition, in CBT theory, many principles are mentioned. These principles indicate the ways in which the host community can use tourism as a community development tool. The following are some primary principles of CBT, which can be used as a basis to describe the impact of tourism on the life of local communities on Son Islet: (1) Improve the quality of life; (2) Ensure environmental sustainability; (3) Preserve local characteristics and culture; and (4) Distribute benefits fairly among community members (Suansri, 2003).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Respondent Profile

The table below shows the role of each participant in the study in agrotourism on Son Islet.

No.	Participant	Gender
1	Local authority representative: Vice-chairman of the Búi Hửu Nghĩa Ward	M
2	CBT professional consultant	F
3	Head of the CBT Club	F
4	Deputy-Head of the CBT Club	F
5	Member of the CBT Club (Owner of the fish cage farm)	M
6	Member of the CBT Club (Boatman)	F
7	Member of the CBT Club (Owner of the pomelo garden)	F
8	Member of the CBT Club (Coordinator)	M
9	Member of the CBT Club (tour guide)	F
10	Member of the CBT Club (owner of the star apple garden)	F
11	Member of the CBT Club (owner of the Snakehead flying fish performance Minh Tâm)	M
12	Member of the CBT Club (owner of the rose apple garden)	M
13	Non-member (fruit-selling household)	F
14	Non- member (owner of the original Snakehead flying fish performance)	M
15	Non - member (gardening and homestay household)	F

16	Non - member (gardening household)	F
17	Member of the CBT Club (owner of the longan garden)	M
18	Member of the CBT Club (boatman and bamboo shoot supplier)	M
19	Member of the CBT Club (Đòn ca tài tử singer)	F
20	Non-member (Lottery seller)	F
21	Tourist (Free individual traveller)	M
22	Tourist (group inclusive tour)	F

3.2 Agrotourism in Son Islet

CBT requires local organizations to manage the tourism industry because the community will need a representative group to work with external organizations and make arrangements with tourists.

“Son islet tourism is not spontaneous, it originated from agrotourism, and it still runs in this way” (interview No. 2).

There are 73 households on Son Islet, 35 of which have joined a tourism community organization called "Self-Help Intergenerational Club" (hereinafter referred to as "Club"). This CBT model has been in operation since 2015 (the previous organization was a tourism cooperative). There is also a "sub-club" which includes 30-32 local guides. The local guides are all family members on the islet, half of them have a bachelor's degree, or are studying in a university or college in southern Vietnam (not all are tourism majors), and the other half have only completed high school or middle school.

Ms Bé Bầy, an authorized official of Bình Thủy District, is the founder and inspirer of the model. She is now the leader of the model and has always regarded herself as a community consultant engaged in tourism (Interviewee No. 2).

The Club receives about 700 visitors to Son Islet every day, 15% of whom are foreigners. The Club currently cooperates with 43 travel companies in Vietnam, including well-known companies such as Viettravel, Saigontourist, Fidi-tour, etc. The tourists from these companies account for 80% of the total. In addition to Club, there is another way to travel on the island, that is, independent families who run their own businesses. There are three such families on the islet.

Every tourist product and service provided on Son Islet is related to the local agricultural activities of the community. Every family has its own professional products and characteristic items. Families with orchards can provide visitors with the opportunity to visit the garden or taste the fruit. Families with fish cages allow visitors to visit their farms. Families with experience in traditional cakes can instruct visitors to make cakes and then try them in their own houses. Every family has its own products and responsibilities. All these have contributed to the collective tourism and sustainable development of Son Islet.

Visitors can enjoy many activities on Son Islet, such as learning about fish farming on floating fish farms, watching "flying fish" and feeding fish, going to the u-pick fruit garden, making local traditional cakes and snacks, eating local delicacies, etc.

3.2.1 Success factors of Son Islet agrotourism

Son Islet's tourism is one of Cần Thơ most popular tourist destinations and one of the most successful community agrotourism models in southern Vietnam. According to our observations and interviews, the following elements play a crucial role in making Son Islet's community-based agrotourism a success as figure 1.

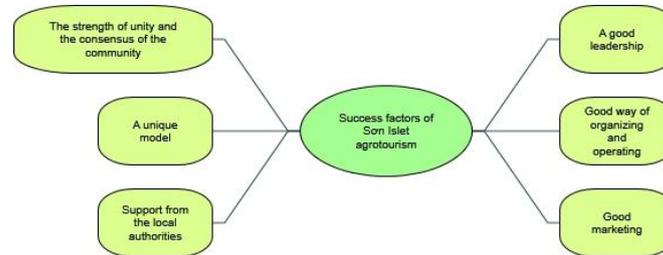


Figure1: Success factors of Son Islet agrotourism

The strength of unity and the consensus of the community

As organizational work is concerned, solidarity is an effective way to bring communities together. Solidarity is also a measure of a community's ability to effectively achieve its common goals, regardless of their personal relationships. When asked about the community's advantages in developing agrotourism, almost all members of the Club expressed their solidarity.

"Our biggest advantage is the unity of the community" (Interview No. 5 - 7 - 17).

"We provide travel services together, but we don't care too much about money. If there are few tourists, we still need to take care of agriculture. We have a long tradition of helping and supporting each other in the community" (Interview No. 3).

"Sometimes we have different views, but we will try to discuss them clearly until we reach some consensus. We have been together for five years, and there has never been any problem that we cannot solve" (Interview No. 4).

"Even before we engaged in tourism services, all of us took care of each other on this small island and helped each other long ago. There is no conflict between us." (Interview No. 12).

The community-based consultant has a closed connection with the Club but does not belong to the Club and is not a native of Son Islet. She also considers the people in the community as a whole: *"They are closely connected, very protective and supportive of each other"* (Interview No. 2).

As a matter of fact, the ability of community members to work together and the degree of sharing of common goals among members greatly affect the likelihood of success (Dodds et al., 2016).

Good leadership

Leadership is an important factor in the success of an organization. Good leaders can help increase productivity and achieve organizational goals. Leaders themselves have played a fundamental role in almost every aspect of society, especially in rural communities. In order to advocate successful community actions, encourage social well-being, and improve community viability, effective leadership in the community is necessary (Rickett K. G., 2005).

Community leaders are usually informal, not elected leaders (Martiskainen M. 2017). Ms Bé Bãy, the leader of community-based agrotourism on Son Islet – is the inspirer for the model.

"Ms Bé Bãy is our leader. We are all farmers, so we do not know how to do tourism and business. We need a leader. Bé Bãy is the one who convinced us to start working on tourism and showed us how to do it. Before we started providing services, she experienced each of our

products and services and told us how to make them better to meet the needs of visitors.” (Interview No. 4).

Good leaders usually get good results through their followers. The person in charge of the community-based agrotourism model in Son Islet does acknowledge this.

"The community trusts me and considers me to be their family. This is an advantage because they will listen to me and follow my instructions" (Interview No. 2 – Ms Bé Báy).

A unique model

Although the resources for agrotourism in Son Islet are no different from other places in the Mekong Delta, its brand is unique and popular because it has different ways of running models. As a former cultural official, Ms Bé Báy learned how other places provide tourism services, and then chose the concept of tourism from 36 ancient streets and wards in Hanoi, and connected community-based tourism packages to meet the diverse needs of travellers. The uniqueness of tourism in Son Islet is the way tourists are served with “flying” typical food, loitering around different households enjoying different services and products, being treated like family members.

“This is a unique model of CBT. I named it "chain CBT". Each member of the group is a link and plays a unique role.” (Interview No. 2).

“Every member of the Club has his/her own products or services. There is no competition between us because no one provides the same products or services. Visitors can enjoy many activities. For enjoying the meal, they can sit in one of our five family gardens. It is big enough and beautiful, like a restaurant, we bring them food from many other families. It is called a "flying lunch" for tourists, because the food will "fly" to their tables from many families, and together we provide services for tourists to make them feel at home. It's not that you are going to travel, but visiting your family and relatives in your hometown. This is what we want to bring to tourists” (Interview No. 4).

This model seems to leave a lot of impression on tourists. A tourist said:

"I found that every family in the village provides special tourism products. Although I stay on this small island all day, I can enjoy different products in the same village without getting bored. It's so fun when many families join in serving your lunch at one time. I sit here and see five women bring their family food to my table. They are all delicious. Even though the water you drink varies from place to place, I have tried three, and I like them all” (Interview No. 21).

A good way of organizing and operating

Many community-based models fail due to a lack of management knowledge and skills of their members. The Son Islet Travel Club is elected by all members, and its head and deputy-head are fully elected by the members, but these two women are only responsible for running the operating system, all rules and regulations are formulated by the members as a whole. The system has been running regularly and compactly.

“The Club has a board of directors, a secretary, and a cashier. It is also divided into six groups, such as tour guide group, musician group, traffic group, and tourist service group. As a coordinator, I also use management software to perform tasks.” (Interview No. 8).

“Every week, the entire club meets to calculate and allocate funds and discuss necessary issues.” (Interview No. 4).

“Club members often meet to discuss and determine what needs to be fixed or improved” (Interview No. 5).

“We organize and control the activity like a company, even stricter” (Interview No. 3).

“Each member has their own notebook to write down and check their work, we hold group meetings once a week, and we have cameras everywhere for additional supervision” (interview No. 2).

Community-based resource management is a bottom-up approach, involving local resource users and community members excited managing and responsible for their resources (The Philippine Coastal Management Guidebook No. 4, 2001). Local residents of Son Islet are given rights and responsibilities and have the opportunity to use them to conduct business in their own way.

Support from the local authorities

As Mansuri and Rao put it, beneficiary communities, often too poor to fund their own community projects, remain in need of government support for inputs, maintenance investment, and trained staff in order to sustain project benefits (Mansuri G. and Rao V., 2004). The authorized representative in charge of Son Islet indicated how the local government had supported Son Islet in their tourism development:

“Our policy is to encourage the development of agrotourism on Son Islet in order to benefit the local farmers. We try to create good conditions for them to run their business, such as building roads and riverside dams, installing electricity and water supply systems, and ensuring safety, hygiene and food safety” (Interview No. 1).

Every member of the Club admits that the local government has given a lot of support for tourism on the island. They have the opportunity to participate in many training courses to improve their knowledge and skills in tourism and the reception of tourists.

“Every year, the authorities will organize training courses for us on hospitality, hygiene, and food safety, fire protection and prevention, and even tour guide courses.” (Interview No. 16).

“On our first day of CBT, local authorities even helped attract customers to us” (Interview No. 4).

From this perspective, we have made a major discovery. Although every member of the community recognizes some support from the local government, they all emphasize that they run their own businesses independently, and some people believe that it would be better if they could get more help from the local authorities. On the contrary, others believe that it is a good thing for the authorities not to impose their own rules on the community.

“If the authorities are to lead everything, it’s not a good way. The community has its own way. The authorities can even learn from them. Let the community “drive their own car”, and you will find how great it will become in the end” (Interview No. 2).

As long as local governments and their communities can establish a communication method that engages residents in a meaningful and legal way, local governments can play an important role in supporting local communities (Chaffey et al., 2017). In the case of Son Islet, local authorities seem to have created good conditions for community development. More in-depth research may reveal more accurate information about this relationship.

Good marketing

Marketing is an important factor in the success of CBT as local communities “lack the essential marketing expertise, resources and networks to attract tourists in sufficient numbers to enable the venture to earn break-even profits and more” (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2013, p. 10 in Dodds et al., 2016). There are many ways to market, especially in the technological age, but the agrotourism club based on the Son Islet community also has its own different ways to introduce to the market.

“We focus on the channels of travel agencies and travel companies to bring our products to customers. Whenever government agencies hold meetings or festivals to attract tourism

entrepreneurs to attend, we will not report our achievements there, but show them what we have and what we can do to attract tourists” (Interview No. 2).

“Of course, we have our website and fan page. The mass media has written many articles for us, but we not only use these channels but also try to seize every opportunity for sharing and inspiration. For example, Today's conversation with you also provides people with opportunities to understand us” (Interview No. 2).

So far, few people have paid attention to evaluating the existing literature of CBT to determine the key success criteria in order to mobilize global knowledge to promote the development of successful CBT (Dodds et al., 2016). Through literature review, it was found that there are six key elements that can promote the success of CBT: (1) Participatory planning and capacity building to improve the community's tourism management skills; (2) Cooperation and promotion of market linkage partnerships to ensure financial viability; (3) Local management/authorization of community members; (4) The establishment of environmental/community goals to ensure that the results conform to the values of the community; (5) Assistance from promoters (government, funding agencies, and the private sector) to promote access to the formal economy; (6) The focus on generating supplementary Income to achieve the long-term sustainability of the community (Dodds et al., 2016).

Other factors and conditions were also mentioned, which are very important for the successful development of tourism in rural areas: (1) complete tourism packages, (2) good community leadership, (3) support and participation of local government, (4) sufficient funds for tourism development, (5) strategic planning, (6) coordination and cooperation between businesspersons and local leadership, (7) coordination and cooperation between rural tourism entrepreneurs, (8) information and technical assistance for tourism development and promotion, (9) good convention and visitors bureaus, and (10) widespread community support for tourism (Chen Y. & Lee C., 2018).

Our discovery of the six successful factors of the Son Islet agrotourism model shares some common points with the above factors and has made more contributions to the existing literature.

3.2.2 The impact of agrotourism on the Son Islet community

Tourism can be a powerful tool for community development, especially if you believe that tourism and community development must be linked (Suansri, 2003). CBT is of great significance in alleviating poverty, empowering local communities, diversifying livelihoods, improving stakeholder cooperation, protecting the natural environment, and helping troubled economies. It can also minimize leakage, maximize connections, and empower local communities and instils a sense of ownership (Dodds et al., 2016). The following are some basic influences that reflect the contribution of agrotourism to the development of the community on Son Islet, as figure 2:

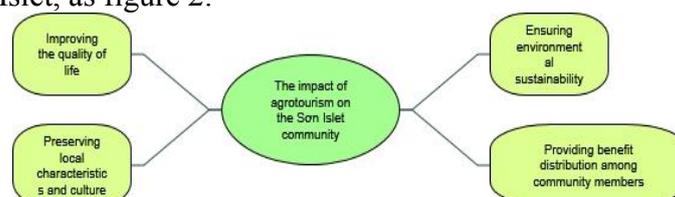


Figure2: The impact of agrotourism on the Son Islet community

Improving the quality of life

In areas that affect the traditional livelihoods of local residents, tourism is seen as an effective tool for generating supplementary Income (Campbell, 2002; Forstner, 2004; Markandya et al.

2005; Vaughan 2000 in Dodds et al., 2016). Various studies have pointed out that the main motivation for the development of agrotourism is economic reasons (Chen Y. & Lee C., 2018). Every villager on Son Islet involved in the survey mentioned that they profited from tourism.

“Income from tourism is much higher than the Income from agriculture. For example, if you sell rambutan to the market, the price is only 10.000 VND/kg, but the price for tourists is 15.000 VND. In addition, we can also sell tickets for visitors to visit the garden at a price of 20.000 VND/person” (Interview No. 4).

“Tourism is a quick way to eliminate hunger and reduce poverty. Son Islet once had 100% poor families, and now they don’t have single poverty. My family raises and sells fish. Before engaging in travel services, we used to advertise, but people did not notice or believe it. When we open to tourists, many people will see, buy, and even become our agents. Selling to tourists is more profitable than selling to supermarkets or local markets. Logistics costs are reduced, and prices are rising.” (Interview No. 5).

“Our lives have changed a lot. In the past, we lacked the money to feed our children; now, we can not only afford it but also have savings” (Interview No. 7).

“Our Income from tourism is 5-6 times higher than the sale of our agricultural products. Moreover, you can only have agricultural products once a year, and you can make money by doing tourism all year round” (Interview No. 11).

“Tourism has tripled community income” (Interview No. 2).

Not only economic aspects were discussed, but other social aspects were also mentioned.

“By providing travel services, our knowledge has been greatly expanded. In the past, we felt inferior because we knew nothing about the world beyond this small island. Now, even if we have not gone far, we still know many things. Our guests showed it to us.” (Interview No. 4).

“Our children have the opportunity to go to higher education and then come back to help the family” (Interview No. 4).

“We don’t have to live separately, my son and daughter all gather here to do family business” (Interview No. 3).

“The young people on the islet not only have the opportunity to support themselves and their families, but they can also contribute something to their homeland” (Interview No. 2).

“Today, young people like us can only communicate a lot through online channels. As tour guides here, we can meet many people, find direct communication very interesting, and learn a lot from them. In addition, the Income of tour guides is also good, better than other students working in restaurants or coffee shops” (Interview No. 9).

There are few signs of negative effects. The important ones are as follows:

“If there is a negative impact on the locals here, I must say that this is a psychological impact on men. They used to be the backbone of the family. Travel services have brought a central role to the women on the islet, leaving men behind with a low sense of self. Before starting the travel service, they might have to work hard but felt important. Now they must get acquainted with errands such as picking vegetables, serving customers, and accepting runners-up roles. Some of them even have depression” (Interview No. 2).

The main tasks taken by the Son Islet residents in order to serve tourists include cooking, giving instructions for making traditional cakes, guiding to U-pick gardens, selling local products, singing traditional music and rowing boat, most of which are operated and performed by women. The leader, the head and deputy head of the Club are all female.

More in-depth research should be done on this gender issue in the future. As Suansri emphasized, tourism includes many activities, and dividing roles among CBT members will make administration effective. In addition, it also provides opportunities for many community members, especially women, the elderly, and local youth, to demonstrate their workability and potential (Suansri, 2003).

In the past, rural communities passively watched the world change. Their only real connection with the outside world is through the sale of agricultural products (Suansri, 2003). Agrotourism redefines the farm from being limited to raw material production to a multi-product business with a variety of new ways related to society and nature (Douwe van der Ploeg, 2010 in Chen Y. & Lee C., 2018). Many tourists from famous tourist resorts in the area visit the community and share information with locals about places they have never been to but have heard of many times. If developed well, CBT can become a mechanism to reduce poverty, a way to improve the quality of life and provide empowerment and greater economic benefits for individuals in local communities (Dodds et al., 2016). As far as Son Islet is concerned, before the tour, the island only contained a single floating fish farm and garden. They are just pure farmers who are working hard to make a living all year round. This place was once popular because of the five “nos”: no electricity, no clean water, no roads, no schools, and no internet. Now it has access to electricity, clean water, roads, Internet and foreign tourists (due to the small population, it has not yet gone to school). Thanks to the tourism industry, the lives of villagers have been improved and become better.

Ensuring environmental sustainability

Through agrotourism, farmers must learn how to protect and use nature while promoting tourism to create greater profits. In our survey, people on the small island seem to know environmental protection very well and regard it as an important task for tourism development. *“Here, we only allow our local people to be the guides because they are locals, they know this place, like this place, and they will instruct tourists not to damage the environment. You know, five years have passed since we started our business, and every garden here is still in good original condition. Since 2018, I have persuaded people here not to use nylon bags to make Son Islet a green tourist destination.”* (Interview No. 2).

“At the weekly meeting, if we see that the environment is not clean, we will comment” (Interview No. 5).

“Once every two weeks, the community gathers to collect garbage and clean up the environment” (Interview No. 7).

“We tend to use environmentally friendly materials on the islet” (Interview No. 3).

“Even tourism can bring us a lot of money, we still love our farm, and we also like agriculture, we will protect it no matter what” (Interview No. 4).

Agrotourism is more dependent on the environment than any other activity field. Tourism is carried out in the environment, and the environment and its quality may be favourable or unfavourable for tourism activities (Ciolac R. et al., 2019). The clean environment of Son Islet is the interest of many tourists when visiting the village.

Preserving local characteristics and culture

In the new context, community-based agrotourism is considered a promising sustainable tourism industry. It is not only to make money but also to encourage tourists to help communities protect local culture and protect the environment. All stakeholders of the agrotourism model on Son Islet are shared and consistent with the concept of preserving their local ancient cultural values.

“I was born in an agricultural family and once held an official position in the field of cultural protection, so I am very eager to restore and maintain traditional cultural values. They will be like family meals, traditional local wetland activities of daily life, or anything that reminds us of childhood memories [...]. So I choose to run tourism here in this way” (Interview No. 2).

“To do tourism services here, we hope to retain our traditional values, to show tourists our southern Vietnamese lifestyle, our agricultural production, and to retain these things to educate our children. Not only me, but all the locals here want the same” (Interview No. 4).

“The locals here bring the ancient local cultural value to tourists through our stories and the ancient flavours of local cuisine. The way we travel on this small island is to bring back the past and bring tourists back to their childhood memories. I still keep many old farm tools and plan to build a museum for tourists” (Interview No. 3).

“Anyone who likes luxury leisure vacations will not be satisfied with the services we provide here, because we tend to ecotourism and try to preserve and present the friendly way of our ancestors” (Interview No. 16).

Barbieri (2013) found that compared with other forms of farm entrepreneurship, agricultural travel farms have indeed made greater contributions to heritage protection. Her research shows that the frequency of cultural and historical resources preserved or restored by agrotourism farms is twice that of farms without agrotourism (Barbieri, 2013). Our findings in Son Islet are consistent with Barbieri’s argument.

Providing benefit distribution among community members

In community-based tourism or sustainable tourism, the distribution of benefits is an important factor. All members of the Club in Son Islet seem to be satisfied with the way the profits are distributed.

“We are equal to each other; the benefits are clear and transparent” (Interview No. 17).

“Benefits are distributed transparently and equally. If one family earns 10 million, another family may earn about nine or so” (Interview No. 7).

“The benefit distribution mechanism here is transparent, and the distribution of tourists to each family can even ensure equal income” (Interview No. 11).

Not only families who participate in Son Islet’s travel club profit from agrotourism, but families that only sell garden fruits and vegetables can also take advantage of tourists’ consumption.

“Families who are not engaged in tourism also benefit from tourists. They pick fruits from the garden and sell them to tourists who come here. They do not need to get up from 2-3 in the morning to bring the fruits to the mainland market, and they can sell them at higher prices. Some families can become our suppliers because they can sell vegetables for us to cook for tourists. Not only club members are interested, everyone on this islet can benefit from travel” (Interview No. 4).

“It’s much better to sell things for tourists at home. I don’t need to get up very early and don’t need my husband’s help. He can have time to run his own business, and I can still have time to do some farming.” (Interview No. 13).

Not all opinions about benefiting from local people’s tourism are positive. Someone mentioned their dissatisfaction.

“When I can sell fruit to tourists, I feel very satisfied, but when I ask the Club to let my daughter-in-law participate, they say they have enough members. Sometimes the guides of the Club do not allow visitors to buy my products, and they urge visitors to go and say that they can buy the same products later at other places. I don’t feel the support of the community” (Interview No. 13).

“When tourists cross the port to reach the island, there will be many local guides standing there to guide them, but if the tourists want to see “flying fish”, the guide will take them to another part of the Club, but not to my home. Tourists heard my flying fish from the Internet, and I guided them here, but when they landed in the port, they would be guided in different

ways. I lost 60% of the tourists. I may have my own tour guide, but the port and boatman belong to the Club, so it is difficult” (Interview No. 14).

“Due to the conflict, I did not become a member of the Club. I run my own business. The Club sometimes prevents the tour guide from taking tourists to my garden.” (Interview No. 15).

The Head of the Club also confirmed that not everyone who wants to join could become a member of the Club, it depends on what products/services they have to offer and whether they share common opinions with the whole Club.

The local authorities seem to acknowledge this problem and are concerned about it.

“The CBT on Son Islet is effective but still has to face some threats. They used to be very united, but when it comes to interests, it is difficult to maintain continuity. Some of them are not satisfied with the way the interests are distributed. There was a conflict in the community. Only the members of the CBT club interact closely with each other. Outside the Club, other members of the entire community do not have that sense of belonging, nor can they benefit from travel as much as club members” (Interview No. 1).

An accounting system that is easy to understand, easy to audit, and divide different worker roles and responsibilities is an essential part of the CBT administrative organization because the tourism industry generates profits from many sources. Establishing a good accounting system will help build trust among the members of the organization (Suansri, 2003). It seems that the community-based agrotourism organization in Son Islet has successfully done this, leading to mutual trust among its members and the efficiency of the model.

Previous research has shown that not all types of tourism are equally beneficial to the community (Yanes A. et al., 2019), and some may benefit more than others. The organization responsible for CBT needs to maintain open opportunities for community participation, rather than formulating rules or regulations that restrict it. Although it is difficult to ensure the direct participation of the entire community, CBT should at least allow all members of the community to benefit from tourism indirectly (Suansri, 2003). So far, Son Islet’s community-based agrotourism has enabled every villager to benefit from tourism, but it has not really opened up community organizations or reached a level that makes every islander satisfied with the distribution of benefits (as all members of the Club are).

4. CONCLUSION

This article aims to explore the impact of agricultural CBT on local life on the small islet of Càn Thọ, Vietnam. The results show that agricultural CBT has many positive effects, such as improving the (economic and social) quality of life, ensuring environmental sustainability, and preserving the unique local characteristics and culture. As an inevitable choice for a successful community-based model, the benefits of community members have been fairly evenly distributed.

Some negative effects were also observed. Together with the enormous economic gains, the role of women in the community has changed, resulting in the “lost” status of men which has a negative psychological impact on men and may threaten the stability of the family.

In addition, although every member of the CBT organization believes that the benefits of travelling in Son Islet have been fairly distributed to everyone, even those who do not belong to the Club have also benefited from the tourism activities, not everyone on the islet admits this.

The survey results also showed that some factors could successfully promote Son Islet’s tourism industry, namely, community unity and consensus, good leadership, unique model, good organization and operation methods, support from local authorities and good marketing. From these findings, there may be enlightenment for the development of agrotourism in Son Islet. In order to maintain the success of this agrotourism-based model and achieve breakthrough growth in the future, it is necessary to ensure the equality of all stakeholders,

benefit every local people, continue to use the uniqueness of the above model, and continue to protect heritage and protect the environment. The unity of the entire community should be considered, not just the travel club.

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