



Research Article

EDUCATIONAL SOLUTIONS TO STRENGTHEN THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM ON THE ECONOMIC ASPECT: A CASE STUDY OF CON CHIM, TRA VINH PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

This article gathers information to clarify the positive economic impacts of community-based tourism, along with the advantages and challenges involved in developing this type of tourism in Con Chim, Tra Vinh province. The research findings indicate that the expansion of community-based tourism in Con Chim has resulted in significant economic improvements, such as increased income for local residents, the creation of more job opportunities, reduced dependence on agriculture, etc. While the advantages are evident, some challenges must be addressed to ensure sustainable growth. In addition, this development allows the local community to gain more knowledge, develop essential skills, and enhance their overall well-being. Based on these findings, educational solutions are suggested to further promote the positive effects of community-based tourism, supporting long-term economic sustainability.

Keywords: Community-based tourism; Cồn Chim; economic growth; sustainable development; Tra Vinh

1. Introduction

In recent years, research on tourism for poor communities has become increasingly popular globally (Musavengane et al., 2019). There is considerable evidence worldwide showing that tourism development has a strong impact on economic growth. In countries where tourism activities are active, the economy grows (Pulido-Fernández & Cárdenas-García, 2021). Economic growth is achieved through the expansion of tourism activities (Cárdenas-García et al., 2015). As a result, it contributes to improving the living conditions of the local people (Li et al., 2018). Tourism development helps reduce poverty and fosters personal growth (Alcalá-Ordóñez et al., 2024; Jiang et al., 2011). The tourism industry positively impacts human development by boosting per capita GDP (Sharma et al., 2020). It

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creates job opportunities for workers (Chattopadhyay et al., 2022; Yakup, 2019) and helps increase foreign exchange earnings. In Vietnam, studies have concluded that community-based tourism development helps generate income and employment for local residents (Cao & Nguyen, 2023; Tran & Ngo, 2024). Dang Trung Kien (2020) also argues that community tourism development helps stimulate economic issues. Ta Duy Linh (2022) conducted a study on the community tourism activities of Khmer households, and the results showed that participation in the tourism sector improved their material life, while also enhancing their awareness of ethnic and cultural values, creating cultural exchange opportunities, raising public awareness, and strengthening social networks.

Since 2019, when tourism emerged as a viable livelihood in Con Chim, many studies have explored its community tourism model. Ta Duy Linh et al. (2021) examined the factors driving the development of the Con Chim community tourism model and its underlying exploitation philosophy. Ho Tieu Bao and Hoang Ngoc Minh Chau (2021a) investigated agricultural tourism development in Con Chim, contributing to the theoretical framework of agricultural tourism destinations. In a subsequent study, Ho Tieu Bao and Hoang Ngoc Minh Chau (2021b) analyzed the role of stakeholders in shaping and advancing agricultural tourism in the region. Further, Ho Tieu Bao and Hoang Ngoc Minh Chau (2022) explored sustainable tourism principles, encompassing economic, socio-cultural, and environmental dimensions, in the context of Con Chim. Hoang Ngoc Minh Chau (2023) highlighted the critical role of social capital in the tourism development process. However, among these studies, only Ho Tieu Bao and Hoang Ngoc Minh Chau (2022) addressed the positive economic impacts of community tourism in Con Chim, without proposing strategies to amplify these benefits.

This study adopts a qualitative methodology to collect evidence elucidating the positive economic impacts of community tourism in Con Chim, while also identifying the facilitating factors and barriers to its development. The findings inform the proposal of educational interventions aimed at amplifying these economic benefits and fostering sustainable regional growth. The research addresses four key questions:

- (1) What are the positive economic impacts of community tourism activities in Con Chim?
- (2) What advantages enable the development of community tourism in Con Chim?
- (3) What challenges impede the progress of community tourism in Con Chim?
- (4) What educational strategies can be implemented to enhance the economic benefits

of community tourism activities in Con Chim?

2. Theoretical foundation and research methodology

2.1. Theoretical foundation

2.1.1. Educational solutions

An educational solution is considered comprehensive, creative, and flexible only when it aligns with the social, economic, technological, and cultural conditions of the target

audience (Badar & Mason, 2020). According to Selvaraj (2014), an educational solution may be limited if it does not clarify the social relationship from the local context to broader institutional aspects. The educational solution focuses on developing environmental ethics, aiming to integrate nature and the mind by altering cognitive and sensory processes (Lavrysh et al., 2020). It is built as a process rather than just an event, as learning is inherently a journey with multiple stages, including preparation and practical learning (Nielsen et al., 2019). Thus, it can be understood that an educational solution is a way to address problems in a comprehensive, creative, and flexible manner, aimed at developing environmental ethics and integrating nature with the mind while being in harmony with the economic, social, technological, and cultural conditions of the recipients. It views learning as a continuous journey with many stages, rather than merely isolated events.

2.1.2. Community-based tourism activities

Roy (2010) argues that diverse community-based tourism activities are an effective mechanism for protecting natural resources and fostering communication with local residents. Puspita and Nurhidayati (2018) note that this activity also helps mitigate the negative impacts of tourists while enhancing benefits for the local population. According to Yanes et al. (2019), community-based tourism is a project, program, or collective action by the community aimed at developing small to medium-scale tourism. Moreover, Maldonado-Erazo et al. (2023) emphasize that community participation in managing and operating initiatives is a key element of this activity. Thus, community-based tourism can be defined as a form of tourism in which local residents actively participate in the development and management of tourism activities in their area. This type of tourism not only helps conserve natural resources and local culture but also generates economic benefits for the community by providing services such as accommodation, tour guides, and experiential activities. Furthermore, the active participation of the community is a core factor that creates a connection between tourists and residents while enhancing awareness and responsibility towards their resources and culture.

2.2. Research methodology

2.2.1. Secondary data

Secondary data are pivotal to this study, with the researcher synthesizing information from diverse, credible sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and dissertations addressing the economic impacts of community-based tourism globally and within Vietnam. Sources from esteemed publishers such as Taylor & Francis and Elsevier, alongside reports from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the Vietnam National Tourism Administration, provide insights directly relevant to the research objectives. This analysis has deepened the understanding of the interplay between community-based tourism and economic development, laying a robust foundation for the focused investigation of Con Chim, Tra Vinh province. The insights derived inform the formulation of targeted educational strategies to enhance economic benefits for the local community.

2.2.2. Observation

Observation was also used to record the spatial conditions, landscape, infrastructure, and the lives of local residents. This method facilitated the systematic recording of temporal changes in these elements, providing direct, tangible evidence of the economic impacts of community-based tourism. The observation method plays a crucial role in providing direct and concrete evidence of the impacts of community-based tourism on the local economy. By offering insights into the evolving physical and social environment, observation significantly contributes to an understanding of tourism's influence on the local economy.

2.2.3. Participatory observation

Participant observation was utilized in this study. The researcher engaged in tourism services at Con Chim to assess the local community's communication, interaction, and service skills. This method is vital for capturing insights into the community's competencies, perceptions, and attitudes toward tourism. These observations enable a comprehensive analysis of the economic impacts of community-based tourism in Con Chim, Tra Vinh province, and inform the development of targeted educational solutions to enhance local economic benefits.

2.2.4. In-depth interview

In-depth interviews were also used to gather information from local residents directly involved in community-based tourism activities. This method not only provides a better understanding of the detailed experiences and perspectives of the community but also clarifies the economic impacts that community-based tourism. After collecting the data in audio form, the Memobot application was used to convert it into text.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Positive Impacts of Community-Based Tourism Activities in Con Chim on Economic Aspects

Table 1. Participation in community-based tourism activities and services

No.	Household name	Tourism services
1	Sau Mai	Bicycle rental, crab fishing
2	Ms. Van	Southern Kitchen, homestay
3	Ms. Loan	West Lake cuisine
4	Thao	Coconut garden
5	Ms. Ba Sua	Stinky opal berry cake
6	Mr. Thanh	Folk games of Lang Toi
7	Nam Luong	Con Chim meal
8	Sau Giau	Vietnamese pancakes
9	Nam Lien	Water coconut
10	Tu Pha	Crab fishing, homestay
11	Ms. Meo	Don Ca Tai Tu (traditional music)
12	Ba Hau	Wild honey
13	Mr. Long	Homestay
14	Ms. Huong	Homestay

As of July 2024, Con Chim has 54 households. Table 1 shows that 14 households are directly involved in community tourism activities in Con Chim. Before tourism developed, the locals mainly relied on agriculture, cultivating rice and raising shrimp seasonally, selling products at low prices to middlemen. With the introduction of tourism, they began selling shrimp and crabs to tourists at higher prices, and many households shifted from farming to serving tourists, earning from 5 to 20 million VND per month from services such as food, homestays, and folk games. Tourism has also created job opportunities for locals, helping to increase income and reduce the pressure from middlemen. Households not directly involved in tourism still benefit by supplying agricultural products to other households. After the COVID-19 pandemic, although commodity prices rose, the prices of tourism services remained unchanged, indicating that tourism has contributed to sustainable economic development in Con Chim (Ho & Hoang, 2022).

During a recent visit to Con Chim, observations revealed positive shifts in the local community's perceptions and attitudes toward tourism activities. The economic benefits derived from community-based tourism have significantly increased household incomes and generated diverse employment opportunities, encouraging residents to actively engage in tourism-related services, including food, accommodation, and entertainment. They now have access to a larger market, where they can sell products at higher prices than before, thus improving the living standards of many households. This increased income is not just a financial boost but also a resource for them to invest in education and personal development, creating a new generation with higher skills.

Since starting tourism, I feel much more excited. Suddenly, I, a country person, know how to do tourism, and tourists from all over the world know about Con Chim, I really like it. I even increased my income, earning 150 million VND a year. This is the truth. Also, the teachers say I look younger than when I first started tourism. Thanks to that money, my children. (Mrs. V)

Furthermore, the development of the tourism industry has created many new job opportunities. Diverse services have grown significantly, contributing to the creation of a rich economic ecosystem, and encouraging career diversification and sustainable development for the community. In the past, the people of Con Chim faced many difficulties due to their dependence on agriculture, but now, by choosing to engage in tourism, they have secured more stable incomes and improved their quality of life.

Before I started in tourism, the economy was very difficult and uncertain. After joining tourism, the income has been relatively stable, although not much yet, but life is more stable. Before tourism, the people here were simple, without much education or refined language. Since joining the tourism community, I've learned from visitors from other provinces and also from the teachers at the research institute. I've learned a lot about language, and behavior, and from there, the community has improved their knowledge. Now, the people speak like cultured individuals. I still remember when the first group of tourists arrived, everyone was shy, some even ran away and didn't dare to greet the tourists. (Mr. NL)

Through interactions with tourists from all over, the locals not only have the opportunity to increase their income by providing tourism services or local products but also learn new knowledge about culture and business skills. This exposure has improved their communication skills and confidence, making them more proactive in cultural exchanges. Once shy people have now become more open and positive about embracing new cultures. Being more confident when hosting tourists not only helps make tourism activities more successful, leading to higher income but also builds a united community where people can interact and share rich cultural experiences. Additionally, by shifting to tourism, the locals have not only escaped the heavy pressures of agricultural work but also have the opportunity to tap into new economic potential.

I used to raise cows, it was very hard. After focusing on tourism, I quit that. I regret it a bit, but working in tourism is much easier and less exhausting. My child used to be passionate about studying but had no direction. Now, after we started tourism, they are keen on it and want to study tourism at university to develop it later. (Ms. L)

The tourism industry has opened up new paths for them, helping them significantly improve their quality of life. They are now able to invest in infrastructure such as housing and other essential services, creating a better living environment. Not only that but participating in tourism activities has also provided a drive for the sustainable development of the entire community, allowing them to make long-term plans for the future and preserve local culture in the context of global integration.

Table 2. *Economic changes before and after community-based tourism in Con Chim*

No.	Content	Before community-based tourism	After community-based tourism
1	Income	- Residents primarily engaged in agriculture, growing rice and raising shrimp. Selling products at low prices to traders	- Residents sell shrimp and crabs to tourists at higher prices. Many households have switched to serving tourists, increasing their income
2	Employment opportunities	- Residents had few job opportunities, relying on agriculture	- Residents have many new job opportunities in the tourism sector
3	Commodity prices	- Agricultural product prices were low and unstable	- The prices of tourism services remain stable while the prices of goods have increased
4	Economic improvement	- Life was difficult and precarious due to dependence on agriculture	- More stable income helps improve quality of life
5	Investment and development	- Little opportunity for investment in education and personal development	- Resources are available for investment in education, infrastructure, and essential services

Thus, it can be concluded (Table 2) that community-based tourism activities in Con Chim have had significant positive impacts on various economic aspects, transforming the livelihoods of the local people. Based on previous studies, the findings from the Con Chim study also reflect the positive impacts of community tourism on economic development,

particularly in improving income and enhancing the quality of life for local residents. Studies such as those by Lukito et al. (2022) and Jiang et al. (2011) show that tourism not only drives economic growth but also reduces poverty and promotes human development, which is also confirmed by the research in Con Chim. Additionally, according to Cárdenas-García et al. (2015), the expansion of tourism activities over the past two decades has greatly contributed to the economic growth of many countries, a finding that aligns with the outcomes in Con Chim, where tourism has helped transform the community from an agriculture-based economy to a more diversified one, with greater access to larger markets and improved income. Moving from a reliance on agriculture with unstable income, the community has made a strong shift towards tourism, allowing them to access broader markets and sell products at higher prices. As a result, many households have been able to improve their incomes. This, in turn, has generated resources for investing in education and personal development. This transformation not only brings economic benefits but also contributes to enhancing the awareness and communication skills of the people, making them more confident in cultural exchange. Community solidarity has also been strengthened as people collaborate to develop tourism and preserve local cultural heritage. By offering a variety of tourism services, Con Chim has become an attractive destination not only for tourists but also for the local residents, creating a rich and sustainable economic ecosystem.

3.2. Advantages of developing community-based tourism in Con Chim

3.2.1. Available values and development potential

Con Chim possesses unique cultural values and abundant resources, creating conditions for the development of community-based tourism. The local people here have a strong connection to agriculture, along with a deep-rooted community culture, as reflected in the customs and cuisine typical of the Southern region. The tourism products are made from locally available materials, helping to reduce investment costs while ensuring quality. Moreover, the friendly, hospitable nature and enthusiasm of the local residents have left a positive impression on tourists, encouraging them to stay longer. These factors not only enrich the tourism experience but also contribute to the sustainable development of the community-based tourism model in Con Chim.

3.2.2. Social capital

In the process of forming and developing community-based tourism in Con Chim, social capital plays a crucial role, manifested in three main aspects: trust, cooperation exchanges, and social networks (Hoang Ngoc Minh Chau, 2023). Trust among the households in Con Chim is very high, as they have built close and long-lasting relationships. As a result, the local households all agree with and are excited about the development of tourism, believing that it will bring benefits to the region. Additionally, cooperative exchanges occur frequently, from discussions on selecting services to preparing for the reception of tourists. They share experiences after each service to improve service quality. Finally, the effective social network between households, local authorities, businesses, and

experts has helped connect and promote the agricultural tourism model, attracting more tourists to Con Chim.

3.2.3. Coordination among stakeholders

It can be said that the development of community-based tourism in Con Chim has progressed smoothly thanks to the close coordination of stakeholders (Ho Tieu Bao & Hoang Ngoc Minh Chau, 2021b). The local government, particularly the Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, plays a key role in managing and connecting the stakeholders, ensuring the smooth operation of tourism activities. This management not only keeps tourism activities running smoothly but also provides timely support to business households when needed. Furthermore, consultations from experts, such as the Institute of Economic and Tourism Development, have helped the locals shift from solely relying on agriculture to participating in the service economy. It can be said that the close cooperation between the government, community, travel companies, and consultants has formed a strong connection network. The locals are not only involved in the tourism supply chain but also support each other in various preparations, generating supplementary income and developing local culture. Thanks to these factors, the community-based tourism model in Con Chim has the potential for favorable development.

3.3. Challenges in developing community-based tourism in Con Chim

3.3.1. Ineffective management

According to Hoang Ngoc Minh Chau (2023), the current management in Con Chim has not been as effective as expected, as some households run businesses without completing the necessary registration procedures, leading to a lack of control and allowing illegal business activities. This not only lowers the quality of the services provided but also creates difficulties in managing freely visiting tourists, as the businesses independently welcome guests, collect payments, and share profits, leading to challenges in maintaining environmental hygiene and service quality.

3.3.2. Unreasonable service business practices

Many households initially registered to offer specific services, such as guiding tours, serving meals, or renting transportation, but later expanded into services provided by neighboring households without coordination or common agreement (Hoang Ngoc Minh Chau, 2023). This action not only causes unhealthy competition between the households but also creates significant difficulties in building and maintaining a unified brand and service value for the entire area.

3.3.3. Limited language skills

Observations in Con Chim highlighted a deficiency in foreign language proficiency among local human resources. International tourists, drawn to nature-linked community-based tourism, often seek meaningful interactions and insights into local culture. Limited language skills hinder locals' ability to effectively promote products and services, constraining income potential. Conversely, proficiency in foreign languages could expand

market reach, enhance service quality, and generate additional employment opportunities within the community.

3.4. Educational solutions to enhance the positive impact of community-based tourism on economic aspects in Con Chim

The proposed solutions are grounded in a dual approach of leveraging identified advantages and mitigating observed challenges. This framework provides a robust basis for formulating educational interventions designed to amplify the positive economic impacts of community-based tourism in Con Chim.

Table 3. *Educational solutions to enhance the positive impact of community-based tourism on economic aspects in Con Chim*

Solutions	Content	Method	Objects	Expected Results
1. Organize classes on local cultural preservation and development	Training on cultural preservation and cultural tourism development	Collaborate with experts and educational organizations	Households participating in community-based tourism	Raise awareness of preservation and attract tourists
2. Strengthen education on community cooperation and social development	Encourage collaboration and build a common brand	Organize discussions and group courses	Households participating in community-based tourism; Local social organizations	Reinforce cooperation and develop tourism services
3. Advanced training in tourism management skills	Provide knowledge of customer and resource management	Short courses combined with practical experience	Households participating in community-based tourism; Tourism management officials	Improve management and service quality
4. Training on regulations and legal aspects in tourism business	Educate on registration regulations and environmental hygiene	Collaborate with authorities to organize seminars	Households participating in community-based tourism	Reduce legal violations and enhance business quality
5. Encourage business cooperation in service diversification	Train on service diversification and categorization	Organize discussions and market research	Households participating in community-based tourism	Foster business cooperation and enhance the tourist experience
6. Train foreign language communication skills	Provide English and other foreign language courses	Collaborate with language centers, combined with practical experience	Households participating in community-based tourism	Improve communication, increase international tourists, and income

The solutions (Table 3) include organizing cultural preservation classes, strengthening community cooperation, training in tourism management, regulations, and legal measures. Each solution is aimed at raising awareness and improving service quality. The main implementation method involves cooperation with experts, organizing courses, discussions, and market research. The expected results are enhanced cooperation, reduced legal violations, and attracting more tourists, contributing to a sustainable income source for the community.

4. Conclusion

This study highlights that community-based tourism in Con Chim has not only boosted the local economy but also fostered personal growth among residents. Initially, many had limited education, weak communication skills, and hesitated to interact with strangers. However, through tourism, they gained confidence, improved their social skills, and deepened their cultural awareness. The work, being less physically demanding than farming, also brought a sense of fulfillment. Notably, some residents developed aspirations to pursue higher education in tourism, hoping to return and contribute to their community's development. These positive changes extend beyond immediate benefits, opening promising prospects.

The proposed educational solutions aimed at enhancing the positive economic impact of community-based tourism in Con Chim reflect both a comprehensive and creative approach. These solutions are tailored to the specific local economic, social, and cultural conditions. They align with the perspectives of others (Badar & Mason, 2020; Lavrysh et al., 2020; Nielsen et al., 2019; Selvaraj, 2014). Organizing cultural preservation classes, strengthening community cooperation, training tourism management skills, implementing legal regulations, diversifying services, and improving foreign language communication are all in line with the principle of comprehensive education.

Globally, there is still relatively little research on the contribution of community-based tourism to human development in terms of knowledge and skills (Holden, 2013; Puig-Cabrera & Foronda-Robles, 2019; Rylance & Spenceley, 2016; Scheyvens, 2000; Snyman, 2012; Wearing, 2001), as well as health (Puig-Cabrera & Foronda-Robles, 2019; Pratt et al., 2016). Based on this study's findings, future research could expand to explore the impact of community-based tourism on human development in Con Chim, Tra Vinh Province.

❖ **Conflict of Interest:** Author have no conflict of interest to declare.

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**GIẢI PHÁP GIÁO DỤC GIÚP TĂNG CƯỜNG ẢNH HƯỞNG TÍCH CỰC
CỦA HOẠT ĐỘNG DU LỊCH CỘNG ĐỒNG TRÊN PHƯƠNG DIỆN KINH TẾ:
TRƯỜNG HỢP CỒN CHIM, TỈNH TRÀ VINH**

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TÓM TẮT

Bài viết này thu thập thông tin để làm rõ những ảnh hưởng tích cực của hoạt động du lịch cộng đồng trên phương diện kinh tế cũng như những thuận lợi và khó khăn khi phát triển du lịch cộng đồng tại Cồn Chim, tỉnh Trà Vinh. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy sự phát triển du lịch cộng đồng tại Cồn Chim đã tạo ra những thay đổi tích cực về mặt kinh tế như cải thiện thu nhập cho người dân, tạo thêm việc làm, giảm sự phụ thuộc vào nông nghiệp... Bên cạnh những thuận lợi nhất định, vẫn có những khó khăn cần giải quyết để có thể tăng trưởng bền vững. Ngoài ra, sự phát triển này còn là cơ hội cho người dân mở rộng kiến thức, cải thiện kỹ năng, sức khỏe tổng thể... của họ. Từ cơ sở đó, tác giả đề xuất các giải pháp giáo dục để tăng cường những ảnh hưởng tích cực, hướng đến sự phát triển kinh tế bền vững tại địa phương.

Từ khóa: du lịch cộng đồng; Cồn Chim; tăng trưởng kinh tế; phát triển bền vững; Trà Vinh