

PROMOTING THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN DEVELOPING BAN THAM ECO-TOURISM ZONE, BAN HON COMMUNE, TAM DUONG DISTRICT, LAI CHAU PROVINCE

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Received: 09/9/2020

Reviewed: 16/9/2020

Revised: 19/9/2020

Accepted: 21/9/2020

Released: 30/9/2020

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.25073/0866-773X/463>

Ban Tham eco-tourism zone, Ban Hon commune, Tam Duong district, Lai Chau province with unique features of landscape, geographical position, especially the characteristics in the traditional culture of the Lu ethnic group, which is one of the very few ethnic groups in Vietnam, has started to operating. However, at present, Ban Tham eco-tourism zone has not become a known tourist destination in Vietnam and in the world. One of the important reasons is that this place has not yet paid attention to the important role of communication in tourism development in general and sustainable local tourism development in particular. This article aims to promote the role of the communication to support and promote the sustainable development of Ban Tham eco-tourism area, Ban Hon commune, Tam Duong district, Lai Chau province.

Keywords: Communication; Eco-tourism; Ban Tham, Ban Hon commune; Tam Duong district, Lai Chau province.

1. Introduction

Lai Chau is a region with a particularly important strategic position in the country, a land with abundant tourism potential. Diverse cultural landscape, pristine beauty of mountains and forests and many historical sites are impressive destinations for visitors to explore. But this place always faces many difficult issues, challenges from natural conditions and socio-economic life of ethnic minorities. Building Lai Chau for a comprehensive and sustainable development not only meets the requirements and aspirations of the ethnic minorities in the region, but also is an important task for the socio-economic development, ensuring long-term defense and security of the country.

Currently, under the direction of the Province and District, the People's Committee of Ban Hon commune has been promoting the construction of the Ban Tham eco-tourism zone with its own color, especially the exploitation of many cultural identities of the Lu ethnic group. However, although ethnic minorities here are aware of the importance of tourism development associated with cultural conservation as a sustainable development direction, in reality, they have not been trained in tourism profession and communication skills. Therefore, Ban Hon commune has not become a known tourist

destination in Vietnam and in the world. Researching and building a good set of media products will help introducing, promoting and attracting domestic and foreign tourists to visit, relax, experience the unique landscape as well as its cultural values. The unique characteristics of the Lu people will contribute to local economic development and improve the lives of the people here.

2. Research overview

Globally, the relationship between communication and development has been interested by many researchers, notably the works: Jean - Guyuailan Court, (2000), "Sustainable development: origin and concept", the Journal of Sociology, No. 2/2000; Melkote, S., (2003), "Theories of Development Communication, quoted in International and Development Communication: A 21st century perspectives" edited by Mody Bella, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA; Rogers, E. M., (1976), "Communication and Development: The Passing of the Dominant Paradigm, Communication Research", Vol. 3, No 2, 4/1976, Sage, London; Tim Bolt, (2008), "The Role of Journalism in Supporting a Sustainable Society", Journal Tropical Coasts 12.2008,...

The above studies have generalized and indicated theoretical problems about

development communication. These are important prerequisites for national studies on the role of the communication for the development as well as for this paper. However, the research on development communication is still quite conceptual and difficult to apply in practice.

Researches on development communication in Vietnam are limited, mostly scientific articles such as “Communication and rural development” by Mai Quynh Nam published in the *Journal of Sociology* (No. 3.2003); article “Development Communication - A new direction for journalism in developing countries” by Nguyen Minh Nguyet published in the *Social Sciences Information Review* (No. 12.2008); article “Communication for sustainable development” which outlines a number of effective measures for development communication in Vietnam.

The book “Development Communication - Ethnic Communication: Some theoretical and practical issues (Northwest Vietnam case study)” by author Dang Thi Thu Huong is the latest work which contains a fairly comprehensive systematization of issues regarding sustainable development, development communication, ethnic communication, and a survey of communication systems serving the ethnic people in the Northwest, from central to local levels. However, the content of the survey on the Northwest image in online newspapers is not the research focus of this article.

Regarding the research on how tourism communication develops, some researchers have actively studied and introduced theoretical and practical works about the type of multimedia communication like Le Anh Tuan - Nguyen Tuan Dung in the article: “Information publications in tourism promotion activities” (website of Hanoi University of Culture - Research No. 7). The authors pointed out the important role of information publications in tourism promotion activities, the purpose of using the publication includes: enhancing the image of tourist sites, creating trust for potential tourists and advertise to sell tourism products. Therefore, tourism information publications need to be studied in order to promote tourism promotion.

According to our research so far, there has been no research on communication issues in the development of the Ban Tham ecotourism zone, Ban Hon commune, Tam Duong district, Lai Chau province. Therefore, this article will provide new information in the field of communication research in general and development tourism in particular, and have many theoretical and practical contributions to sustainable development in a specific locality.

3. Research methods

To conduct this study, we use a number of main research methods: Document research method, field survey method, expert method, interdisciplinary research method, prediction method.

4. Research results

4.1. Potential for development of Ban Tham eco-tourism zone, Ban Hon commune

Ban Hon is an agricultural commune, Region III of Tam Duong district is 20 km southwest of the district center, borders Ho Thau commune to the North, borders Khun Ha commune to the South, borders Ban Giang commune to the West, borders Binh Lu commune to the East. Ban Hon commune has a natural area of 5.443,06 ha. The whole commune has 7 villages with 497 households, 2.432 people. Population of 2.471 people, including 5 ethnic groups living together are: Kinh, Thai, Mong, Lu... population density is 45 people/km². In recent years, the attention of all levels has been invested in building infrastructure such as electricity, roads, schools, stations,... so the socio-economic situation here has had positive changes.

Holding a strategic position in local development, Ban Tham is located about 1km from the commune center, more than 10km from the district center, over 10km from the province center, over 50km from Sa Pa, on the 136 provincial road, with convenient and easy transportation. Good communication system, power lines, clean water lines, paved roads and concreted to the village. The topography of the village is based on the rocky mountain, in which the Nam Hon stream flows through. In their traditional culture, the Lu people attach great importance to the natural gods: tree stumps, rocks... so they value the protection of forests and other landscape values. In addition to the area of Ban Tham forest there are tea hills. Tea is grown on terraces, alternating with limestone strips. Nearby there is a million year old limestone cave, with many beautiful stalactites, stalagmites in many different shapes. In the cave, there is a stream flowing year round, increasing the beauty and magic of the cave. Specialized agencies and the Commune People’s Committee surveyed and evaluated the tourism potential of Ban Tham cave, stated that this is a beautiful cave, of great value for the purpose of exploiting and developing tourism.

The subject of that cultural space is the Lu people - one of the least populated ethnic groups in our country. Up to now, the Lu people nationwide have a population of about 6.000 people, residing mainly in the two districts of Tam Duong and Sin Ho of Lai Chau province. In Tam Duong the Lu people live mainly in Ban Hon commune with 8 out of 9 villages belonging to the Lu people. Up to now, the Lu people here still retain almost intact traditional cultural values expressed in many aspects, from material

cultural life (cuisine, clothing, accommodation, travel...) to spiritual cultural life (folk songs, folk dance, folk music, traditional festivals...). However, along with the integration trend of the country, the rapid development of economic, cultural and social life, the traditional cultural values of the peoples in general and the Lu ethnic group in particular is also more or less affected in the near future. In fact, at present, there are quite a few villages of the Lu people preserve stilts, the daily clothes of the Lu women are no longer dresses, and their hair is no longer wrapped in towels; almost all men are no longer wear traditional clothing; Lu women no longer have black teeth and in daily life there are many changes due to the influence of other ethnic cultures. However, in Ban Tham, Ban Hon commune with a natural area of 225 ha with 41 households, 191 people with 100% of the Lu ethnic group, most of the traditional cultural values are still preserved and promoted from generation to generation.

In short, despite being located not far from the center of the province and district, the Lu people in Ban Hon still retains many ethnic cultures and customs without being influenced and negatively influenced by the stream of alien culture and other ethnic groups cultures, customs. The curiosity about the traditional culture of the Lu ethnic group, to experience daily life with local people has always been an attractive factor for domestic and foreign tourists. In addition, villagers and local authorities have a consensus and determination to develop tourism in association with socio-economic development, while preserving the traditional cultural values of the ethnic group. Currently, the village is improving the landscape and environment: cleaning the village and households, growing flowers in the village...

4.2. Current situation of communication activities in tourism development in Ban Tham, Ban Hon commune

Tourism - a smokeless industry in Ban Hon commune, Tam Duong district, Lai Chau province is a potential economic type. In Decision No. 730/QĐ-UBND dated July 5, 2019, the People's Committee of Lai Chau province recognized the tourist destination in the province for Ban Tham (Ban Hon commune). According to this Decision, the province assigned Tam Duong district to preside and coordinate with relevant organizations and individuals to invest, build, exploit and manage to ensure the protection, preservation and development of tourism resources, creating favorable conditions for tourists to visit; ensure environmental sanitation; maintain security, order and safety for visitors; mobilize the participation of the community in tourism activities.

The direction, management, administration and

coordination of agencies related to the development of Ban Tham eco-tourism zone, Ban Hon commune has had positive results. However, according to our survey, communication activities to develop tourism in Ban Hon have not been paid much attention to invest and the development is not adequate. The development orientation of the Ban Tham eco-tourism zone in Ban Hon commune is incomplete and inappropriate, in particular, the local tourism products are still few, and there is no adequate investment for development. Therefore, it has not created an unique tourism product which creates an attractive impression on visitors. Ban Hon commune has not yet developed a tourism promotion strategy for the next 5 years, which shows the mobilized material and human conditions in order to effectively use promotional methods.

Ban Hon commune does not have a high quality tourism product, especially in tourist service; The units, businesses, and businessmen related to tourism have not had a close connection and cannot create a chain in tourism activities. Activities of agencies, businesses and businessmen in the field of eco-tourism in Ban Tham and Ban Hon commune in general and tourism communication activities in particular are still confused in the way of organizing and serving tourists, leading to the waste of resources for the smokeless industry.

Communication activities aimed at promoting tourism promotion are limited, only stop at activities to provide information and introduce tourist destinations, not highlighting the characteristics of each tourism product. The provincial tourism advertisements are still limited in both quantity and quality. Understanding the concepts of «marketing» and «promotion» is limited, lack of understanding in «branding» to bring products with consistent quality. In addition, the Ban Tham eco-tourism zone in Ban Hon commune does not have a specific slogan, lack of destination tourism promotion websites, has not been creative in how to promote images, has not actively created events or linking with other events to introduce the local image.

Communication forms are still limited, not suitable for target customers, especially foreign tourists... The positioning is not clear to create a new and different image. in order to attract a large number of tourists to Ban Tham eco-tourism zone, Ban Hon commune.

Mr. Nguyen Van Thuan, Secretary of Ban Hon Commune Party Committee, said: There are many reasons for limitations in communication of the Ban Tham eco-tourism zone, Ban Hon commune, however, the main reasons are:

- The value of tourism exploitation in Ban Tham is only in potential form, there is no investment

from the authorities in terms of basic infrastructure and development of tourism services in the village.

- The concept of "Tourism" is still too new and unfamiliar with the perception of the majority of people. Due to the people's habits and lifestyles of people being afraid of contact, tourism services are limited.

- Facing the danger of gradually losing the traditional cultural identity of the ethnic group, especially the Lu ethnic group in Ban Hon commune, the issue of preserving traditional culture associated with the development of Ban Tham ecotourism is very important. It is urgent and has an important meaning, both helping people to develop economic and cultural from tourism, at the same time making an important contribution in preserving the traditional cultural values of the ethnic group.

- The management of the Ban Tham eco-tourism zone in Ban Hon commune has not really paid attention and invested in communication issues - an extremely important link in promoting the image of Ban Tham eco-tourism zone to domestic and international market.

5. Discussion

Ban Tham eco-tourism zone, Ban Hon commune is an area associated with historical places with rich culture, identity and natural conditions to develop various types of cultural tourism, ecotourism, also convenient in traffic with famous Sa Pa tourist area. However, most of them are only in the form of tourism resources, while local tourism development requires promoting the image of Ban Tham eco-tourism zone, Ban Hon commune has not been adequately invested.

To promote and attract domestic and foreign tourists to Ban Tham eco-tourism zone, in our opinion, it is necessary to focus on building a set of communication products in the direction associated with the traditional cultural values of the Lu people, as follows:

First: Building a website on Ban Tham eco-tourism zone, Ban Hon commune, Tam Duong district, Lai Chau province. This is a useful and convenient channel to provide information about the destination. These values need to be presented in a multimedia format (text, images, movies...) to create highlights to attract visitors' attention, change perceptions and especially towards behavior change. That is the decision to choose cultural exploration tours and community-based tourism experiences in a colorful cultural space. In addition to the function of providing information, the website must also act as a supporting tool in linking tourists with tourism service operators that the project builds, assisting visitors in finding tours,

booking tours and payment. Multilingual website (Vietnamese - English) for convenience for both domestic and foreign visitors.

Second: Producing scientific films about tourism resources in Ban Hon commune, Tam Duong district, Lai Chau province to promote tourism with impressive content of the natural landscape of Ban Tham ecological area; The traditional cultural values of the Lu people: culinary culture, life cycle rituals, festivals,... With duration from 10 to 15 minutes.

Third: Design and maintain a fan page about Ban Tham eco-tourism zone, Ban Hon commune, Tam Duong district, Lai Chau province. It is essential to take advantage of social media to find customers. Based on search engines provided by social networks, along with specific strategies, travel providers can easily build links with groups of people with travel needs. Discussing ideas, planning travel with the client is a good, effective approach. Social media is the future of tourism.

Fourth: Build a Youtube channel of video products introducing unique values of Ban Tham eco-tourism zone, Ban Hon commune, Tam Duong district, Lai Chau province, with the highlight of traditional culture of the Lu people. Each video is 2 to 3 minutes long. The video content revolves around cultural characteristics, life, traditions, customs... of ethnic minorities. With this information channel, domestic and international tourists can easily access information, explore values and build their own itinerary for their journey of discovery. This will be an important advertising channel to attract visitors to experience folk culture in Tam Duong district, Lai Chau province.

Fifth: Publishing photobooks with recorded moments of activities in the folklore space of Tam Duong district, Lai Chau province in these fields: architecture, customs, life, culture, music, costumes, cuisine... Through these books, pictures of folk culture space are reproduced in a clear and special way. Showing the book in bilingual (Vietnamese - English) format is convenient for both domestic and foreign visitors.

Sixth: Publishing Ban Hon commune folklore tourism handbook providing essential information for tourists when traveling and experiencing culture in Tam Duong district, Lai Chau province, including: yellow page, hotline phone numbers, tourist attractions, tourist maps, local specialties, special notes on local customs...

We believe that, if the above set of communication products are implemented and transferred to the management levels, Ban Tham eco-tourism zone, Ban Hon commune will soon attract domestic and foreign tourists, contributing to part of improving economic life and especially

preserving and promoting cultural values of the Lu ethnic group.

6. Conclusion

In order to avoid the danger of gradually losing the traditional cultural identity of ethnic minorities, including the Lu ethnic group, the conservation of traditional culture associated with tourism development in Ban Hon commune, Tam Duong district, Lai Chau province is very urgent and has a very important significance. This is a job of

utmost importance to both help ethnic minorities develop their economy and culture from tourism, at the same time making an important contribution to preserving the traditional cultural values of the ethnic group and contributing to protect the rights of ethnic groups to languages and cultures, ensure cultural diversity of ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic, multi-language and multi-cultural country; contribute to the sustainable development of ethnic minority areas in the period of industrialization, modernization and international integration.

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TĂNG CƯỜNG VAI TRÒ CỦA TRUYỀN THÔNG TRONG PHÁT TRIỂN KHU DU LỊCH SINH THÁI BẢN THẨM, XÃ BẢN HON, HUYỆN TAM ĐƯỜNG, TỈNH LAI CHÂU

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Ngày nhận bài: 09/9/2020

Ngày phản biện: 16/9/2020

Ngày tác giả sửa: 19/9/2020

Ngày duyệt đăng: 21/9/2020

Ngày phát hành: 30/9/2020

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.25073/0866-773X/463>

Tóm tắt

Khu du lịch sinh thái Bản Thẩm, xã Bản Hon, huyện Tam Đường, tỉnh Lai Châu với những nét độc đáo về cảnh quan, về vị trí địa lý, đặc biệt là về những đặc sắc trong văn hóa cổ truyền của dân tộc Lự - một trong các dân tộc rất ít người ở Việt Nam đã bắt đầu đi vào khai thác. Tuy nhiên, hiện nay khu du lịch sinh thái Bản Thẩm chưa trở thành một điểm du lịch được biết đến ở Việt Nam và trên thế giới. Một trong những lý do quan trọng là nơi đây chưa quan tâm đến vai trò quan trọng của truyền thông trong phát triển du lịch nói chung và phát triển bền vững du lịch địa phương nói riêng. Bài viết này hướng tới việc phát huy vai trò của truyền thông nhằm hỗ trợ và thúc đẩy phát triển bền vững khu du lịch sinh thái Bản Thẩm, xã Bản Hon, huyện Tam Đường, tỉnh Lai Châu.

Từ khóa

Truyền thông; Du lịch sinh thái; Bản Thẩm, xã Bản Hon; Huyện Tam Đường, tỉnh Lai Châu.