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By

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**Volunteer tourism: An exploration of sociocultural impacts
from the local community perspective.
A Case Study of Mai Chau, Hoa Binh, Vietnam.**

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

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**Volunteer tourism: An exploration of sociocultural impacts from the
local community perspective.**

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For the folks in Mai Chau

“We were truly happy about the volunteer tourists and the performance; it is a rare occasion for us to gather. We are, deep inside, extremely happy but do not know what to say”

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Abstract

This research was designed to explore answers to the question: What do local people think about volunteer tourism in terms of sociocultural impacts on their communities, where the answer is often: “it is kind of good with some risks.” This research study involved a long journey to expose and evaluate such answers. The study follows the trail of a single case study strategy. The main methods used were interviews and a participant observation. The foremost sources of information were other research articles, volunteer tourists, local people and volunteer tourist organization. The nature of this journey was an exploration, with the results raising some fascinating points along the way. These were how local people perceive the risks of volunteer tourism, the discrepancy in their expectations and those of the volunteer tourist, and the central role of facilitators. Along this journey the explorer-researcher has a couple of advantages as compared to other researchers. The topic is rarely covered, as a result there is a shortage of research on local people’s opinion of volunteer tourism, and the qualitative method is relatively unique as compared to the quantitative data approach of the majority of other research studies on local people’s perspectives. In this, participant observation has great value when the explorer has the opportunity for a closer look into the relationships between volunteer tourism and local people.

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CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

A volunteer tourist (Wearing, 2001, p.1) is someone “*who for various reasons, volunteers in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments, or carrying out research into aspects of society or environment*”. There have been a number of research studies over the last two decades, due to the emerging of volunteer tourism as a subsector of tourism. The impacts of volunteer tourism on local communities have been taken into account by some researchers. Communities can receive positive outcomes, including tangible results and provision of services that would not otherwise be funded or supplied, social development outcomes, e.g. improvements in education and infrastructure, etc (Kristen& Karen, 2009). Volunteer tourism can be seen as the way to improve community involvement in the sustainability of tourism and protect local economic beneficiaries (Wearing, 2001). On the other hand, potential adverse impacts of volunteer tourism are also predicted (Guttentag, 2009) as being an abandonment of locals’ desires, a hindering of work progress and the completion of unsatisfactory work, a decreased labor demand, culture change and so forth. However, most previous researchers have explored the impacts of volunteer tourism on the perspective of the visitors or “outsiders” and there has been little or no focus on the local community's view; moreover, social impacts are mentioned only briefly.

With respect to the case study area chosen for the research, Mai Chau has been receiving volunteer tourists since 2007; it is considered as the most famous and the first volunteer tourism place in Vietnam with the number of volunteer tourists being around 400 in 2010. The main activities of Volunteer tourists in Mai Chau are involved in healthcare and basic infrastructure development, such as building schools, kindergartens,

and water tanks. For instance, in 2009, Seattle Community College and Buffalo Tours successfully organized a Medical trek program. There were 45 participants on the trek giving health care for around 1,200 patients in Mai Chau during a one-week period. Besides, this group also helped to construct a local kindergarten, which was handed-over to the local community by the end of the trip. However, there are no studies on this area in spite of the fact that volunteer tourism is significantly developing in Mai Chau.

Social impacts in the context of this research are limited to health promotion, basic infrastructure development, and the involvement and attitude of the local community towards volunteer tourism. Meanwhile, cultural impacts could be possible behavior changes, cultural exchange and so on.

1.1. The Research Questions

From the previous research and the practical condition of the case study area - Mai Chau - the main research question was formulated as “What is the socio-cultural impact of volunteer tourism from the local people's point of view in Mai Chau, Hoa Binh, Vietnam?”

In order to narrow the aspect of the main question, the following specific research questions were formulated:

1. To what extent do the local people involve in the volunteer tourism activities?
2. What are the positive social-cultural impacts of volunteer tourism?
3. What is the risk of volunteer tourism?
4. What is the attitude/desire of local people towards volunteer tourism?

1.2. The Objective of the Research

The objective of the research was to explore the social and cultural impacts of volunteer tourism on the local community perspective in Mai Chau, Hoa Binh, Vietnam. Volunteer tourism can have significant impacts on the local community, and the most likely reason is that volunteer tourists go into the local community, and they seek for the originality of the local community (Carter, 2008). However, Carter found that volunteer tourists are skeptical about their positive social impacts on local communities as “...*they were not sensitive to the local’s need and interest...*” or “*medical volunteer tourists who felt that they did not help local community because of differences in medical technology*”.” (Carter, 2008: 104). In addition, this research suggested “*It is necessary to get the local community’s perspective on these issues*” and this supports the research topic for this thesis. The more the researcher delves into volunteer tourism research, the more interesting this topic becomes. Benson (2011) claims that most of the most problematic criticism of volunteer tourism research is the lack of research from the local community perspective. The VolunTourist (2012) echoes this opinion by saying “*very little research on volunteer tourist has focused on resident attitudes*”.

1.3. The target of research

The population of Mai Chau, which is located in the Northeast of Vietnam, is around 60,000 dividing into 23 districts. The Thai indigenous group, which is the focus group for volunteer tourism in Mai Chau, forms the base group for this research due to their lower living standard. The research is directed to this group because they not only involved in but also are affected by volunteer tourism, they are the group who have the liveliest understanding about the social impacts of volunteer tourism. In each village, the

research was aimed at interviewing the chieftain, households, and the representatives of the local education and health care system. The criterion for the selection of the village was their involvement in volunteer tourism. The sampling method was purposive selection (village head, nurse, teacher, travel staffs, local authorities) and snowball (progressive contacts with local people)

Besides the primary target group in the communities, the main research population was the volunteer tourist. The data collected from this group is useful to create an explanation for the perspective of local people. These two groups have a logical linkage in terms of sociocultural impacts as *“outcome of particular kinds of social relationships that occur between tourists and hosts are a result of their coming into contact”* (Mathieson and Wall, 1982: 155).

1.4. Research Methodology

The nature of research is to explore, for this study the researcher chooses qualitative research methodology. In this, a field trip played a decisive part in the research to collect raw data regarding the research topic. This research follows the singer case study strategy (Yin, 2009).

The research started with a define and design step, which included the development of a conceptual framework, then moved to simultaneously selecting cases and design data collection protocols. The next step is to conduct the case study and write an individual case report. Afterward, the researcher may modify the conceptual framework, develop policy implications, and then write the final report. The final report focused on a single case study with a few comparisons to relevant research articles.

In an effort to understand the complex detail of the local desires, a field trip was considered vital for the research to encourage local people to share their story, ideas, and perspectives regarding volunteer tourism, and empower them to speak out their needs. The collected data are inductive, and are categorized under the main themes. The final report illustrates the voice of participants about social and culture impacts of volunteer tourism (John, 2007) Forms of qualitative method to collect data are face to face interview, observation, and discussion. A face to face interview is essential to gain an in-deep understanding of the research topic, interview forms include semi -structured questions designed prior to the dispatch of the field trip. Verbal interviews were be recorded and transcribed only with the permission of informants. Observation was conducted mostly to experience changes in behavior of local people and the interaction between volunteer tourists and local people. A Photography method was applied to collect data during the participation observation of the researcher. During the field trip, raw data will be coded due to the geographical condition and time order. The researcher also used a research diary to note the information collected by research on a daily basis.

The researcher worked as an internship cadet in Buffalo Tour, which is the leading travel agent in volunteer tourism in Vietnam. Thanks to this internship, two groups of volunteer tourists were escorted to the research location, and the researcher worked hand-in-hand with them as a volunteer tourist. This position created significant advantage in approaching the informants who are local people and volunteer tourists as well. All of the informants showed trust, and they were exceptionally willing to undertake interviews as a result. Another advantage was the language of interview; the researcher was a native speaker in the language of interview. Regarding the volunteer informants, most of them were students from Australia, and since the researcher worked

with them for about one week; the volunteer tourists showed their interest in this research topic.

The researcher transcribed the raw data from the interview into text. These texts are categorized into different themes by a textual coding process. The themes were deductive and compared with data collected from the literature review. Ethical issues: The author advised informants prior to the interview that they could refuse the answer, which they disliked; otherwise, the conversation would be recorded and transcribed and the interviewee had the right to withdraw their data from the study. All their data would be only used for the research purpose, and the questioner would only present private information in the research according to the permission of informants.

1.5. Research Significance

The researcher expected this research to provide data on social and cultural impacts of volunteer tourists on the local community. Possible impacts are in health care, basic infrastructure development, behavior changes, involvement of the local community, culture exchange and promotion.

Many scholars consider volunteer tourism to have positive impacts on the local community; however, is this true? There is a lack of research on the real impact of volunteer tourism from the local community perspective.

Assessing the impact of volunteer tourism might help local travel agents to develop their tour products in the right track which, in turn, helps to maximize benefits for local community.

Local people could also gain benefits from the study, which is a chance to speak out about their needs and their desires towards volunteer tourism.

Regarding the volunteer tourist, they might be curious about the result of their volunteer activities on the local community. The answers gained from the study might encourage them to join volunteer tourism again.

And from the administration level, understanding impacts of volunteer tourism hopefully helps them in policy making towards this type of tourism.

1.6. Thesis outline

This thesis divides into six chapters. Chapter II examines the existing literature in volunteer tourism research. This chapter briefly introduces the historical context of volunteer tourism, the image of volunteer tourists as well as the sociocultural impacts of volunteer tourist. The author summarizes these impacts into a mindmap, which serves as the conceptual framework. This framework guides the researchers through the research.

Chapter III outlines in the research methodology. This chapter shows the methods that the author selects to find data and answer the research questions. The backbone of this search is the case study strategy. This is the workflow, which the author uses to systematically solve the research problem. The main methods of this research are interview and participant observation.

Chapter IV shows the background information of the case study from Vietnam in general leading into Mai Chau in particular. Several factors are included to give the reader an idea about the case study and its relevance to research questions. The last half concentrates on describing information regarding the respondents. This research includes two groups that are local people and volunteer tourist. The author also expresses the compatibility of these groups to the research questions and the research methodology.

Chapter V is the heart of the research where the researcher shows his findings and recommendations. The data gathered from the respondents are the foundation of the findings, how the local people perceive sociocultural impacts of volunteer tourism is revealed in this section. Moreover, the researcher compares these findings with the volunteer tourist's opinion. The researcher takes both positive and negative impacts of volunteer tourism into account.

The last chapter VI is where the researcher encapsulates this study with some recommendations. These recommendations go beyond the scope of this research with the hope to encourage the sustainable development of volunteer tourism in the region.

CHAPTER II - LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to enhance background knowledge of the volunteer tourism. , volunteer tourism study is relatively new as compared to other areas in the study of tourism. Thus, the literature review does not aim to yield any new findings; this chapter instead was the first step in conducting the field study by accumulating the existing knowledge in this topic.

The second goal of the chapter is to explore the diversity of research methods conducted by other researchers in volunteer tourism. The most relevant methodology to the thesis topic would then be employed to carry out the field trip research. Besides, the questions and ideas of other authors also played a crucial role in forming the open-end questions and questionnaire of this research.

2.1. An introduction to volunteer tourism

The most popular definition of volunteer tourist is *“who for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve the aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments, or research into aspects of society or environment”* (Wearing, 2001:1)

However, this definition limit volunteer tourism to those experiences located within the context of holiday or vacations (Lyons & Wearing, 2008:4). For the purpose of this research, the volunteer tourist is therefore identified as “any tourist who participates in volunteer work while travelling”, regardless of whether the volunteer work is the sole purpose of his/her vacation. However, those volunteers performing work lasting longer than a year are not considered (Guttentag, 2009:538). By adopting this identification, the

volunteer tourist and their impact includes both psychological types of volunteer tourists (“volunteer-minded” and “vacation-minded”- Brown, 2005:492).

Historically, the term “Volunteer” originated from the French, as a military reference from the 16th century. A volunteer means a person who works for an organization without being paid (oxforddictionaries.com). In 1919, according to Tomazos and Butler (2009), a Pierre Ceresole had the idea of working together in a spirit of friendship to repair the damage after the First World War. Volunteer tourism, probably, comes from this idea. In his inaugural speech in 1961, President Kennedy encouraged the new generation of Americans to help needy people. Inspired by this political agenda, the Peace Corps, which “provided contemporary volunteer tourism with a blueprint of international expansion and involvement at a large scale”, was established. But from 1945 to 1973, thanks to the economic boom, volunteer tourists wanted to extend their horizon and urged that volunteer tourism should be transformed. The Youth Challenge International and many other organizations were established under this impetus (Tomazos et al, 2009).

Wearing (2001) situated volunteer tourism under the alternative tourism spectrum

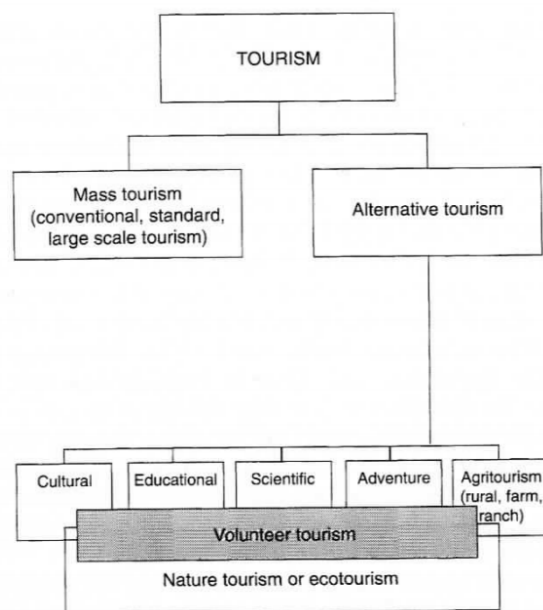


Fig. II.1. A conceptual schema of alternative tourism

Source: Wearing, 2001:30

According to Wearing, alternative tourism is considered as being opposite to mass tourism, which has the characteristics of being conventional, standard, large scale tourism. Alternative tourism is more sustainable in the sense of paying more attention to the environment and social capacity as compared to mass tourism (Wearing, 2001:31). Among the sub-categories of alternative tourism, it could be seen that there are some overlaps of volunteer tourism with other types of alternative tourism. These overlaps demonstrate the reason of considering volunteer tourism as ecotourism (Alexandra, 2006), sustainable tourism (Alison & Anne, 2007), etc.

In the recent decades, volunteer tourism has experienced a rapid pace of development. A quick look on the goabroad.com Website, a website on volunteer experience, shows that there are 17,000 such opportunities updated daily. In 2007, the number was 3,441 projects over 150 countries (Tomazos et al, 2009). In 2009, 28 US

companies sent abroad a total of 20,089 volunteer tourists (Alexia, 2009). The view of the volunteer is that *“I would go any region that is safe”* (Cheung, Michel M and Miller D, 2010).

Unlike mass tourism, in which visitors prefer specific tourist destinations, volunteer tourism and projects have a tendency to take place in every corner of the world as long as it is possible to access and there is someone to provide assistances there. Location ranges from environment projects in Kenya (Lepp, 2008), conservation of wetland areas in Vietnam (Nathalie & Tim, 2011), community development in Mexico (McGehee & Andereck, 2009), the Gibbon Rehabilitation Project in Thailand (Broad & Jenkins, 2008) and currently, a lot of volunteers and volunteer tourists are going to the Tohoku area of Japan to help heal the damage from the Tsunami of March 11, 2011. These are just a few reasons to show that:

“It’s (voluntourism) one of the hottest trend in travel right now” (Fox, 2010).

2.2. The image of the volunteer tourist

Since the study of volunteer tourists and their motivations is the dominant stream in research regarding volunteer tourism, this section utilizes the empirical finding of other scholars to illustrate the portrait of the volunteer tourist and their inspiration to attend volunteer tourist activities. The findings of this part are useful to crosscheck the motivation of volunteer tourists with their impact on local communities.

The majority of research studying on volunteer tourism utilize a small sample size, most of the researchers employed case studies as the main methodology to explore their motivation, however the demographic information on volunteer tourists in these studies might be questionable due to the sample size. Cheung, S. et al (2010) conducted a

study with a sample including 1073 responses from more than 70 countries. The finding of this research sheds some light about the general demographic of volunteer tourist:

2.2.1. AGE AND EDUCATION

The most popular age group of volunteer tourist is 20 to 29 (33%), there is a downward trend from the group of 20 to 29 to the group of beyond 60 year-old (Figure II.2). Generally speaking, the volunteer tourist is highly educated with University Degrees and Post-Graduate level accounting for 85% of respondents education levels (Figure II.3).

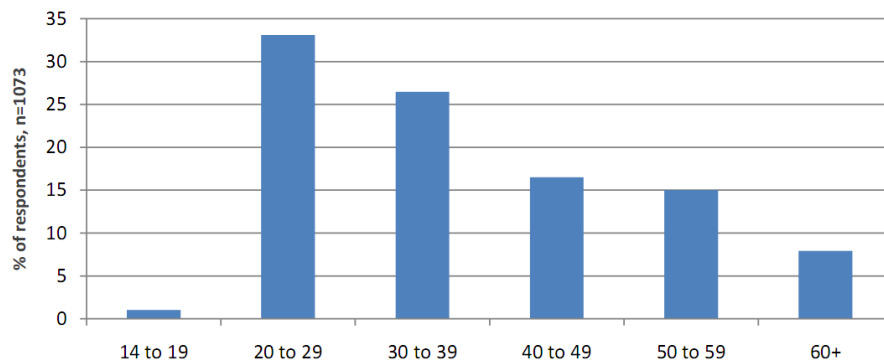


Fig. II.2. Age category of volunteer tourists

Source: Cheung, S. et al, 2010:18

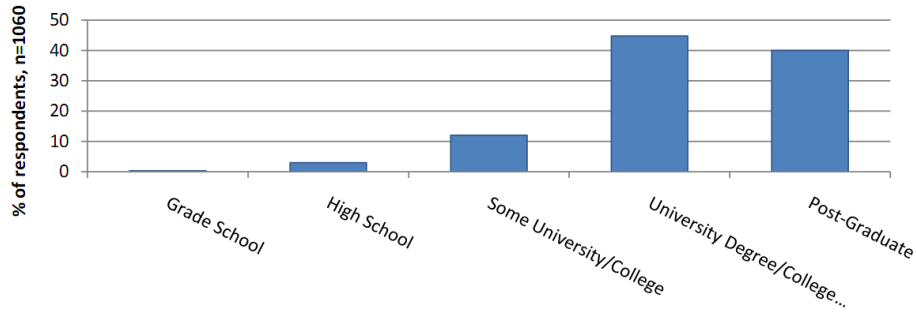


Fig. II.3. Education level of tourists

Source: Cheung, S. et al, 2010:19

2.2.2. FREQUENCY OF VOLUNTEER TRIP

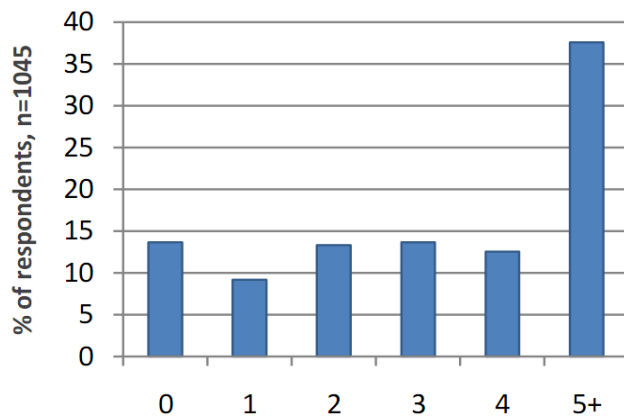


Fig. II.4. Frequency of volunteer trip

Source: Cheung, S. et al, 2010:19

When asked about how many trips you have taken the last 5 years, more than one third of respondents report that they had taken more than 5 times in the last five years. Additionally, GeckoGo (2009) also showed that more than 51% of volunteer trip lasted more than 1 month.

2.2.3. THE INTERESTS OF VOLUNTEER TOURISTS

The interest of the volunteers is in remarkably diverse projects. The three most interest tasks are environmental conservation, community tourism project and community development. Childcare and health care categories have the lowest respondent.

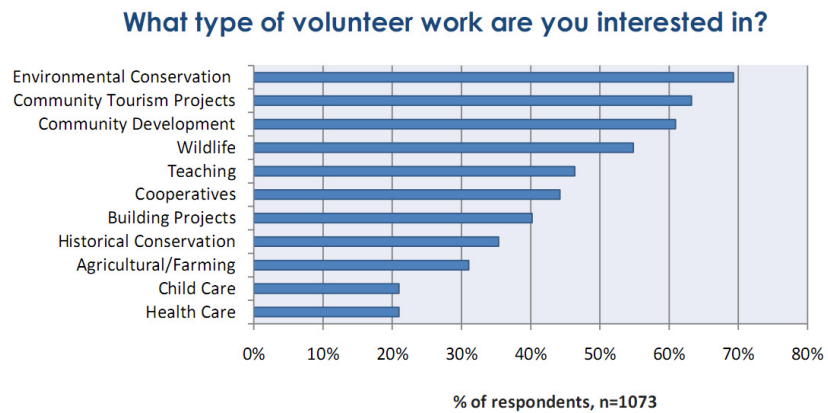


Fig. II.5. Type of volunteer work

Source: Cheung, S. et al, 2010:19

2.2.4. THE MOTIVATION OF VOLUNTEER TOURISTS

This topic has the interest of a number of researchers (Ooi & Laing, 2010; Alison & Anne, 2007; Campbell & Smith, 2006; Lo & Lee, 2011; Brown, 2005; Wearing, 2001, Clary & Snyder, 1999; Broad & Jenkins, 2008). These motivations can be classified into four main categories based on the model of Broad and Jenkins (2008) and Brown (2005)

Altruism refers to the desire to help others, to give back, to show love and care to needy communities (Lo & Lee, 2011; Brown, 2005) or the wildlife/conservation project (Brown, 2005; Wearing, 2001). It “included differing levels of idealism relating specifically to concepts such as saving the world and “doing good” (Wearing, 2001:66) Volunteer tourists often show the greater level of altruism than other cultural tourist (Alison & Anne, 2007). Brown (2005:448) stated this motivation as “giving back and make different”

Travel: this motivation is quite variable and akin to the tourist motivation. Volunteer tourists want to travel to experience the new culture (Alison & Anne, 2007:547), to escape their daily life, to interact with local people (Lo & Le, 2011:329), and to understand about the world and the nature (Clary & Snyder, 1999:157; Lisa & Chrisy, 2006:89). Carter (2008:102) argues that volunteer tourists also seek for more authenticity experiences than other forms of tourism, authenticity means the originality of local culture that volunteer tourist could understand.

Career: in lieu of the fact that volunteer tourists do not get paid during volunteer travel; career development is one of motivations pushing volunteer tourist to undertake volunteer vacation. Wearing (2001) found that volunteer tourist desire to improve skill on a specific field. Lo and Le (2011:331) echoed this finding; their interviewers show that volunteer experience might help the tourist to have more interest in pursuing the specific career, and selection of university program. Volunteer experience is also valuable to interviewer's resume.

Personal interest and personal development: according to previous researchers, the motivation of volunteer tourist is quite diverse. Volunteer tourists are keen to have the live-time experiences, "meet like-minded people" or extend their friendship networks (Broad & Jenkins, 2008:81), to enhance their social relationship with the local people(Lo & Le,2011:311) and to seek for meaningful experience (Alison & Anne, 2007:550). Moreover, many volunteer tourists consider volunteer vacation as more internal development, to realize their self-value (Lo & Le, 2011:311; Alison & Anne, 2007:549) or address their self-problems, in other words, to reduce negative feelings (Clary & Snyder, 1999:157). The example from the researcher's own experience supports this; during time being a volunteer in Tohoku area after the 3/11 earthquake, my teammate expressed through the open-ended interview that this was time for him to consider

whether to resign or continue his current job. The personal development is in the sense of enriching knowledge of the surrounding world or enhances the self-value, when doing good, the volunteer often feel his/her self -more valuable, and they feel proud of what they had done. This motivation also includes the specific interest on a particular project

Other motivation are referring to the fact of organization such as their local location or project (Wearing, 2001: 69, Brown, 2005: 81) and so on.

Most of the target group in motivation research are Westerners; however, Lo & Le (2011) focus on the volunteer tourist from Hong Kong. After being compared with other researches, this research illustrates the difference between Western and Asian volunteer tourists that the latter cares more about family, thus the motivation regarding family relationship is more mentioned in the research of Lo & Le (2011: 330). Examples are *“a shared experience with family members and an educational opportunity”* or *“more understanding of his accompanying family member”* (Lo & Le, 2011:331).

2.3. The socioculture impacts of volunteer tourism in the local community

According to the encapsulation of volunteer tourists as above, it could be assumed that volunteer tourist has strong potential to affect the social-cultural condition of local people. There are only small numbers of scholars tackling this issue directly from the local perspective.

McGehee and Andereck (2009) employed a case study, intercept surveys and regression analysis based on social exchange theory. The finding revealed a weak relationship between demographic variables and tourism impacts, while education was considered as a predictor of negative impacts. There are significant benefits from tourists. For instance, when this research added personal benefit, the nexus between education and

negative impacts as above became extremely weak. Planning was predicted by the negative impact perceptions and support for volunteer tourism.

McGehee and Andereck (2008) also argued the role of religion-oriented in volunteer tourism. Voluntoured and volunteer tourists become contradictory when adding religion factor. The community response was also diverse. In, local people seem to put more trust on the religion group, nevertheless Tijuana, respondents ranked the religious group at the lowest of interest. When it comes to proselytizing, the support of local people for a religious organization increased in opposite trend with the level of proselytizing.

Clifton and Benson, (2006) equated volunteer tourism with sustainable ecotourism. Using a similar method to McGehee and Andereck (2009), their research illustrated the existence of intangible social-cultural benefits associated with volunteer tourism. In spite of its often weak impacts in terms of economic benefit, volunteer tourism tends to have considerable social-impacts on local community. Negative environmental impacts are less likely to occur. Volunteer tourism is supposed to be as stable form of tourism.

Alison and Anne (2007) qualitatively employed in-depth interviews, diaries and participant observation, and focus group methods in their research. According to this research, the host community's response to volunteer tourists is enormously positive. Host attitudes to the volunteer tourism project = favorable attitudes to the volunteer projects. The trust they uncovered had been established for 3 years by a previous group of volunteer tourists. Hosts' perceptions of the volunteers: positive. They were impressed by the efforts of volunteer tourists to adapt their culture. The host's perceptions of the impacts of the volunteer on the community: positive impacts. According to their interviews, in spite of some bad image of western youth, the real experience turn out to

be "they contributed a lot to our community". They also highlighted the interaction between tourists and Maori children.

Spencer (2008) and Higgins-Desbiolles (2003) both support the idea of volunteer tourism could heal divided societies. The former took the example of reconciliation tourism, which could improve the nexus between indigenous community and Australian community. The latter conduct a research to study tour of American to Cuba. Author repeated the idea of volunteer transform into development agent. She also mentioned the outcome of volunteer tourist in terms of image, cultural exchange, knowledge flow and the development of NGO. Other researchers also indicated the potential negative impacts of volunteer tourism; however, the idea was not directly from the local people.

Guttentag (2009) conducted critical literature analysis research to predict some possible negative impact of volunteer tourism. A neglect of locals' desires: in this research, the author claimed that motivation of volunteer tourists is not simply an altruism factor; personal motivations also play a vital part. Meanwhile, a private company or NGO might focus on tourist motivation; the desire of local people is, therefore, being neglected. Regarding the conservation of the surrounding environment of local people, unlike the positive assumptions, this process might conflict with the local desire and wish depending on the particular circumstances of people. In non-environmental projects, due to the lack of knowledge of local economic structures and the so-call "expert view", volunteer tourists perform the work, which is not the best for the community.

Secondly, a hindering of work progress and the completion of unsatisfactory work can occur, unskilled labor into the local community becomes a burden and outweighs the benefit they might bring.

Thirdly, a decrease in labor demand and a promotion of dependency: volunteer tourism might bring extra economic benefit and labor to local people; however, these free

workers who pay to work here might become a competitor to unskilled local workers. Thus, these free labors might increase the circle of dependency. Fourthly, conceptualizations of the other and poverty rationalizations and, lastly, cultural change were also mentioned in his research.

In order to summarize the social-cultural impacts found by other research, a mind map is used to show collected information (Figure II.6).

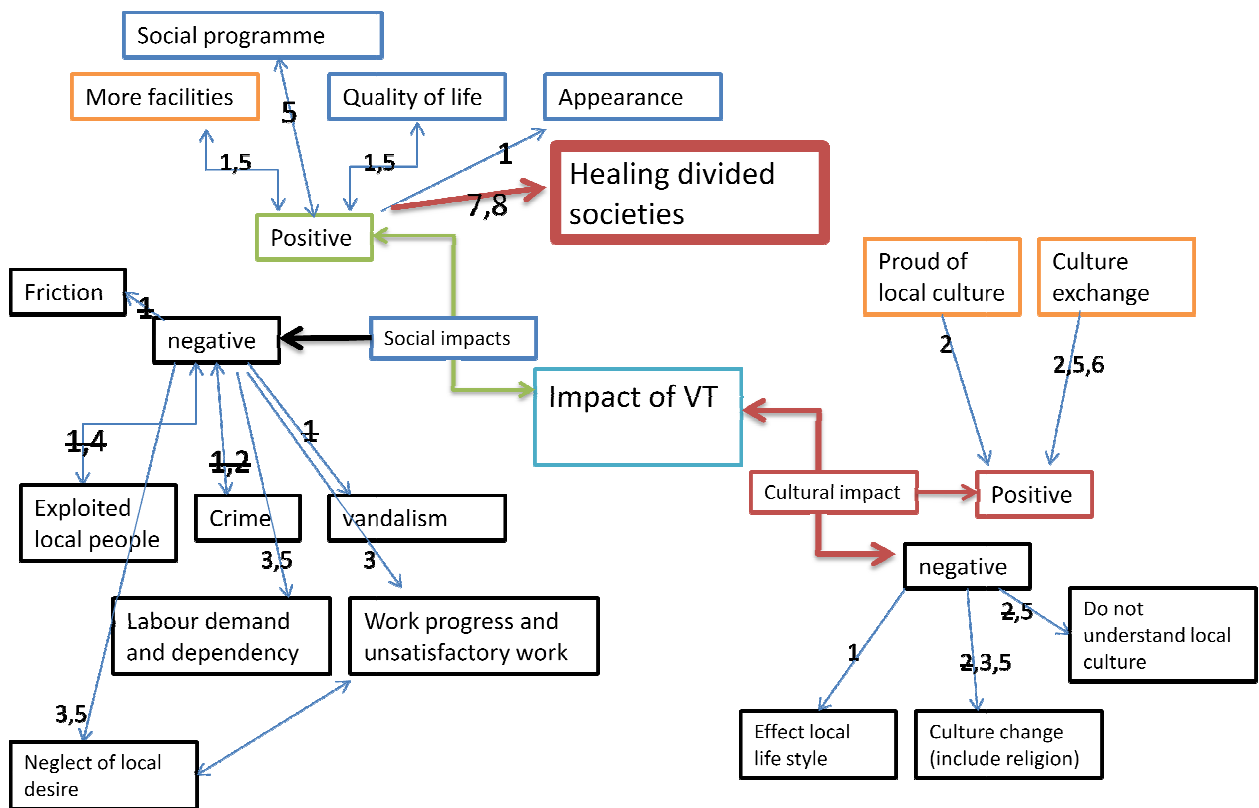


Fig. II.6. Conceptual framework of sociocultural impacts

Index:

1. (McGehee&Andereck, 2009)

5. (McGehee&Andereck, 2008)

2. (Julian & Angele, 2006)

6. (Alison & Anne, 2007)

3. (Guttentag, 2009)

7. (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2003)

4. (Faulkner, B. & Tideswell, C. (1997)

8. (Spencer, 2008)

(Number) : indicated by author(s) and either received positive responds or potential factor

(Number): indicated by author(s) however, received negative responds

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter illustrated the background of the research topic. To date, volunteer tourism research has focused on the history of volunteer tourism, the motivations of the volunteer tourist and the organization side. The impacts of volunteer tourism on communities are generally from researcher opinions, rather than from local people. There is a shortage of research that is based on the opinion of local people. However, regarding sociocultural impacts there is strong evidence that volunteer tourism has impacts on the local community. So far, most of the research has identified positive impacts; the negative side is still in a potential form.

This research aims to explore the impacts of volunteer tourism from the side of local people. Hence, it helps to bring awareness to the neglected side of volunteer tourism research which is local people perspective. The results from the local people are important factor to compare with other perspective of volunteer tourists or sending organizations. This study is the contribution lessens the risk of volunteer tourism that is the neglect of local people's desires. Moreover, the research focuses on not only the positive impacts but also the risks of volunteer tourism; consequently, it expects to illustrate the empirical evidences of risk that might rise during the volunteer tourism process, again, from the local people perspective.

CHAPTER III - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Case study research design

Choosing the research strategy is extremely valuable to any research; it serves as the road map from the departure of research question into the arrival of findings. The researcher decided his research strategy at the early step of this research. As the nature of exploratory, the author conducted his research in a case study strategy because case strategy is most likely to create an in-deep answer about a specific problem. Yin, (2003) claims that most of the science book neglects on the research case study, in spite of the fact that it is widely used. According to (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 2000: 41), case study strategy is defined as “the detailed examination of a single example of a class of a phenomenon”. Yin, (2003) expands the definition into technical scopes of an empirical study that explores a phenomenon within its livelihood and the boundaries between phenomenon and context are blurred. This research aimed to explore the social – culture impacts of volunteer tourism on local people from their perspective. This phenomenon must be investigated in the context of local people’s livelihood setting. Therefore, the research focuses on the impacts of volunteer tourism in the daily life of people in Mai Chau and believed that it would be highly pertinent to the researched phenomenon. Mai Chau has been receiving volunteer tourist since 2007, thus the author predicted that the local people should have to a certain degree a concrete perception on the impacts of volunteer tourism. The perspective of the volunteer tourist is also studied to illustrate the balance between the two views. The greatest concern of case study is the lack of cohesion when researches are remarkably flexible with their strategies. They do not follow the systematic process (Thomas, 2004). Early decision and clear research plan of this research confirmed that the author has a mitigate plan to reduce that risk. Thomas (2004)

categorizes case study type by its purpose or the number of cases studied. Regarding these criteria, this research is either descriptive case study or single case study. Over the single case study, the multiple cases is said to have certain advantages (Thomas, 2004). The time availability for studying this topic led this researcher to stick with the single case study design. Bearing in mind the advantages of multiple case studies, the author looked for comparisons of findings to the relevant studies, in order to heighten the reliability of this research.

Ying (2003) lists the rationales of a single case study as proposed deduction of a situation to check the theory's proposition, extreme or unique cases, and the cases that have not been previously investigated. Volunteer tourism in Vietnam has seen an emerging trend in the recent years however, the research in this field is seriously limited. There is only one research article on the motivation of volunteer tourist in Vietnam. When it comes to this case study, Mai Chau is famous for volunteer tourist among Vietnamese travel agent; nevertheless, the author is unable to find any relevant research of Mai Chau in Volunteer Tourism. Volunteer tourists often come to the remote locations in Mai Chau; thus, the perspective of local people is hypothesized to be more original than other tourist locations. One unique feature of Mai Chau that should be considered is that the indigenous people operate most of the tourism services there. The suitability of Volunteer tourism in Mai Chau in the single case research strategy thus promises a reliable outcome.

This research strategy is also defined by three components including the research questions, its proposition, and its unit of analysis. The main research question is "What are the social-cultural impacts of volunteer tourism on local people's perspective?" The researchers' initial proposition is that volunteer tourism not only certainly creates many positive impacts, but also has some potential risks. Since the impacts and local people

perspective require investigation, the unit of analysis should be the local people living in areas where they have a reputation of receiving volunteer tourists. The main question of this research is “What is the social-cultural impact of volunteer tourism”. This research question is in the form of a series of “What” questions. The fact is however that a Case study usually answers the exploratory question of “How” and “Why”. (Yin, 2003) shows that there are two possibilities of “What” as a research question; it may either be exploratory or about a prevalent question. In this research, “What” is preferably similar to how and why exploratory questions, because its goal is to develop a hypothesis and proposition for further inquiry.

Theory development plays a crucial part in research strategy. In a case study, preliminary theory is developed prior to the fieldwork (Yin, 2003). As a result, the researcher improves the theory of this research in advance of the fieldwork. The theory in the present case is descriptive, and the author encapsulated theory from other relevant research articles. The figure II.6 in the literature review is used as the conceptual framework for the grounded research. This conceptual framework is analyzed and gathered from research articles, which focus on the impacts of volunteer tourism and conventional tourism. This table is critically valuable in guiding the researcher throughout the fieldwork. It provides the general view on the positive impacts and potential risks of volunteer tourism. It helps to provide explanations for guiding questions in in-depth interviews. This table also leads the participant observation.

“The use of this theory is not only in an immense aid in defining the appropriate research design and data collection but also becomes the main vehicle for generalizing the results of the case study” (Yin, 2003, p.32)

The workflow of this research started from the conceptual framework and follows the progress of Robert K. Yin (2009; Figure III.1):

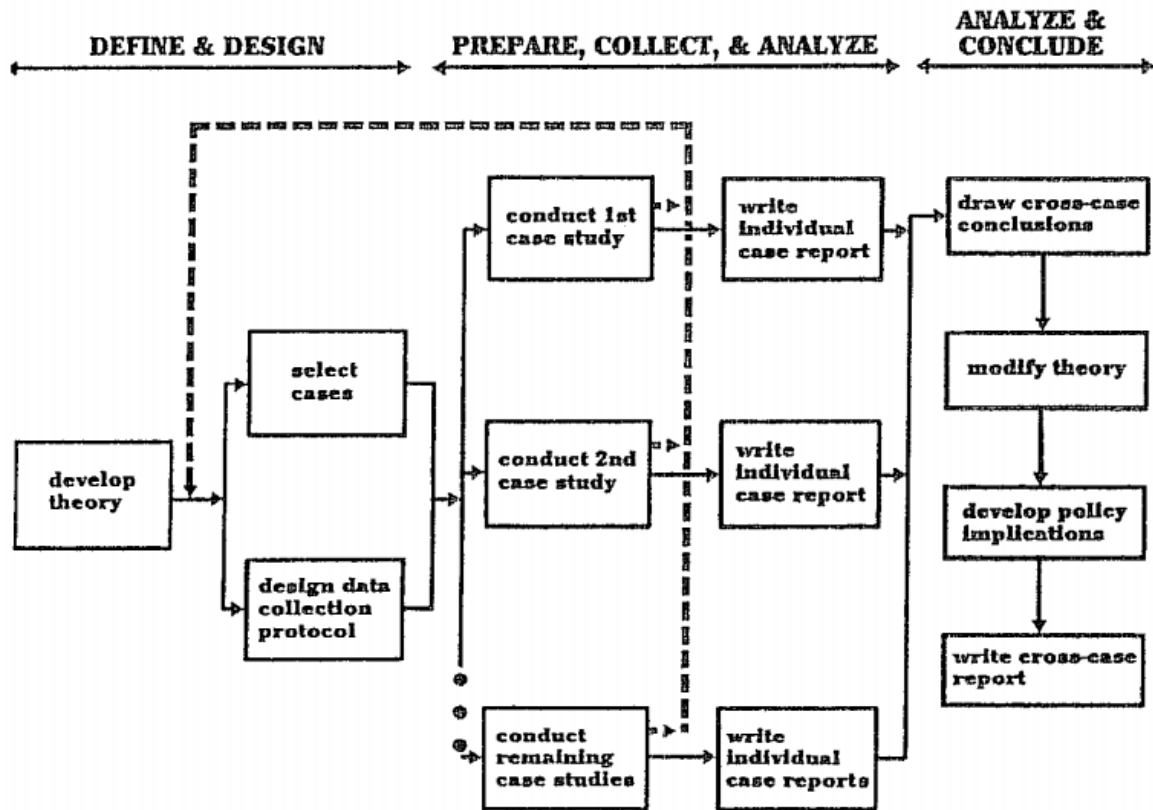


Fig. III.1. Case study strategy

Source: Cosmos Corporation via Yin (2009)

The fact is the above diagram is designed for multi-case study, in this research; the researcher simplified it into the single-case study. The Define and design step includes: develop theory then simultaneously select cases and design data collection protocol. The next step comprises of conducting the case study and case report. Afterward, the researcher can modify theory; develop policy implications and the final report completion. A box skipped from the above table was “draw a cross-case conclusion” since this feature belongs to a multi case study. The final report only focused on the single case study with a few comparisons to relevant research articles.

In chronological order, the researcher carries out these steps out with relevant research methodologies as follows.

Step	Task	Methodology
Define and Design	Develop theory (conceptual framework)	Literature review Open discussion
	Select Cases	Literature review Designing and selecting sample
	Design Data Collection Protocol	Pilot study
Prepare, Collect and Analyze	Conduct case study	In-depth Interview Participation Observation Field note Photography Literature review
	Write individual case report	Raw data analysis
Analyze and Conclude	Modify theory Develop policy implementations Write final report	Coding Pattern-matching Explanation-building Literature review Writing

Table III.1. Research methodology workflow

On the other side of the coin, case study research also received a number of criticisms in terms of Construct, Internal, External Validity and Reliability. In this

research, the author acknowledged these limitations of the Case Study method and designed the research plan to optimize the outcome of the research.

Construct Internal Validity is the concern over the correct operational measures for the concept studied. The concept in this research is the social-cultural impacts from the local people's point of view. (Yin, 2003) At this point, the author used the multi sources of evidence during the data collection. These evidences came from either other research material or multi types of research methodologies, such as in-deep interview, field note, photography. Moreover, the interviewers were from different occupations ranging from doctor, school principal into farmer and pupil. All of these sources reflected the general view of local people on the concept of social-cultural impacts.

Internal Validity mainly connects with the “spurious effect” of relationship between researched phenomenon and collected data (Yin, 2003). In the context of this research, the bias might come from other types of tourism when the local people perceive these tourists the same as volunteer tourist. Consequently, in his field research, the author focused on villages where only volunteer tourists visit so that the misunderstanding is under control. Moreover, in the data analysis step, pattern matching is employed to compare the empirical study with the proposition. A highly matched result strengthened Internal Validity of this research.

External Validity is about the limited generalization of a case study. This has been a considerable discussion over research study. Supporters of a case study claim that the main concern of research study is particularization or useful lessons from samples of one (Punch, 1998). In this research, the author managed to use logic of replication of other relevant researches with the final findings.

Reliability test doubts that the same case study research could deliver the same result (Yin, 2003). Since the phenomena are continuously changing, the author is not sure

that the same result could happen again. However, a research note is usually employed to record the procedure of the research plan so that the whole research progress could repeat in case of reliability test.

This part points out the case study strategy as the backbone of this research. The argument is built up covering the suitability of research concept and case study, the reason why the researcher choose single case study. The whole research workflow supported by the particular research methodology is illustrated in Table III.1. This table clearly shows progress of this research on each stage.

3.2. Define and Design

This step is the foundation of the research plan. Theory development, case selection, data collection protocol are three modules of this step. The following part describes in details about the process of each module.

3.2.1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework development is mainly based on the literature review and open discussion. Yin (2003) suggests researchers to review the relevant literature and discuss with their colleagues to overcome the theory barriers. In this research, the author follows his suggestion.

Every research starts with an efficient literature review, hence this research is not an exception. Resources for literature review came from academic books, online research journals and newspaper articles. Among these sources, the author used published research journals the most, due to the fact that volunteer tourism research is quite new with only few publications in this field. Google Scholar and the Runner database of APU Media center were extremely helpful to the researcher. The relevant research articles are found

through Google Scholar but, unfortunately, the majority of them are limited access. Runners came as the lifesaver in this situation, EBSCO host, Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe, etc could be accessed through these means. The literature digest started with oriented random and snowball method. The key word of “Volunteer Tourism Impacts” is the orientation to find research journal in the Google database. Afterward, snowball method is employed to gather a relevant research. For example, “Volunteer tourism and the “voluntoured”: the case of Tijuana, Mexico.” (McGehee & Andereck, 2009) is highly recommended and relevant to this topic. The snowball method saves time to search for documents and provides the finder with further sources through the literature review of the original document.

The goal of a literature review is to enhance background knowledge, to find the relevant research method, and to build the foundation theory. In order to overcome the theory barrier, all the literature was summed up in an Excel chart with the background information, research methodology, the quantity of interview and their demographic details, as well as last results of each research. Excel chart is particularly helpful to either summarize the general idea of all researches or pick up the relevant features to build the theory framework. All the relevant impacts are selected and put in a diagram to give the overall view on the social-cultural impacts. The diagram is illustrated in the mind map design, center of the mind map are impacts including social and cultural ones. The author divided these impacts into several features. All of those features are mapped with the appropriate author(s). There are three kinds of features; one is proved by the researcher, one unproved, last one rejected by the local people. A glance into this mind map diagram shows that the positive impacts of volunteer tourism was proven meanwhile, the negative ones are either potential or rejected by local people perspective.

This diagram was also useful at the stage of research analysis. The pattern matching and logic of replication could be much easier by using this diagram.

The researcher also used open discussion method at this step. An open discussion literally means discussions with colleagues, teachers and a supervisor. With the purpose of narrowing down the research topic, the researcher joins some debates to defend his topic. The intriguing thing was the key idea was not learnt from the success, but from failures. The topic research was changed repeatedly during the initial step of research, but finally, the author become confident with the current topic.

3.2.2. CASE SELECTION

3.2.2.1. Sampling method

The first module of case selection is to select the sampling method. Afterward, study population and sampling frame are defined. Each module contains different methods, which is described in the following part.

As the nature of qualitative methodology as well as case study research, the sampling method is non-probability. Unlike the probability method of hard science, the non-probability is most widely used in the social research. This method seeks for the units, which reflect a particular feature of groups within the sampling population when the large-scale social survey is unavailable (Richie & Lewis, 2003, Babbie, 2005, and Vaus, 2002). Regarding Mai Chau population, there are no organizational monitor system of local people who expose to volunteer tourist as well as the area receiving volunteer tourist thus the non-probability is a relevant sampling method for this study. Richie & Lewis (2003) maintain that the non-probability is not statically representative. The basis

of selection is the characteristics of the population, and it is highly suited to the small-scale, in-deep studies like this study.

There are three types of non-probability selections, which are reliance on available subject (Babbie, 2005) or convenience sampling (Richie & Lewis, 2004), purposive sampling (Vaus, 2002 and Babbie, 2005), quota sampling (Vaus, 2002, Richie & Lewis, 2004, Babbie, 2005). This research employs purposive sampling method to select the informants. The basic feature of researched population is a unit of a village, kindergarten, school, local medical institution or volunteer tourist group. The researcher use purposive sampling to select the purposive leaders of particular local group during his field trip, the purposive leaders might be a school principal of local schools or kindergartens, head nurses of local medical institutions, chieftains of the villages, the leader of volunteer tours. Another criterion of purposive selection is the engagement of informants in volunteer tours. During the fieldwork, the researcher worked as volunteer tourist. This position helped in participant observation. It created chances to observe the involvements of informant in volunteer tourism activities, so that it was possible to purposely select informants who look active in the volunteer tourist activity. The activeness could be their involvements in the construction work, medication check, or just the way they observe volunteer tourists. This purposive method does not represent the whole population but can create useful information (Vaus, 2002).

Thomas (2004) claims that there are two key features of these methods are the use of prescribed selection criteria and sample size. The prescribed selection criteria are either to ensure the symbolic representation or the wide variety of sampling. The second feature is the small size of sampling due to the purpose of in-depth research purpose, the rich data of each sample makes the data hard to manage with a large sample size. Other reason is a case study research does not need a large sample size to determine its

accuracy like the natural science. The final reason is that, at a certain point, the new evidence appears little and little from each additional unit so that the findings from the new unit might not be useful. In this research, the final sample size is around thirty individuals.

3.2.2.2. The Study population

There are two questions of the identification of sample and its sample frame in this step (Thomas, 2004). Regarding the first question, the purpose of this study is to research the impacts of volunteer from the local people's perspective thus the local people is undoubtedly the parent population for study of this research. Among the local people, the focus groups could be the unit that has received the support of volunteer tourists or interacted with volunteer tourists. Since the researcher did not have any translator, so that the subgroup, who cannot speak Vietnamese, were subtracted from the central group. Thomas (2004) also introduces the critical point on the question of defining the population for study. He suggests that the researcher should look for any additional group should be included. This group is selected due to their respond, which might bring the complementary insights to the enquiry, in other word, they are supplementary parent population. When it comes to this research, the experiences and views of volunteer tourist are likely to bring the general view on the impacts of volunteer tourist. Their perspective is useful to make comparison or pattern matching with the finding from the local people. Volunteer tourist is included in this research as the supplementary sample population by the above reason.

The second question for the study population is the population frame design. The frame design is some criteria of population from which the researchers could select samples. Since there is a little available source on the topic, the sampling frame is

generated through an organization and snowballing or chain sampling. A frame is created through an organization:

“Working through organizations which provide services to or represent particular population can be a useful way of generating a sample frame”

(Thomas, 2004: 93)

Before conducting a field trip, the researcher contacted with the volunteer tourism facilitator in Vietnam that is Buffalo Tour. Fortunately, an internship for three months in the department of volunteer and education, which is unquestionably relevant to the research topic, was available. Buffalo Tour is a travel agent providing the volunteer tourist throughout Vietnam, particularly in Mai Chau region. During this internship, the researcher worked closely with the staff involved in volunteer projects at Mai Chau. The researcher gave abundantly clear criteria to select the informants. According to these criteria, the project coordinator took the researcher to appropriate sample sites. Moreover, the internship also gives the researcher opportunities to work as a volunteer and as a translator of a few volunteer tourist tours in the area. On the other hand, Thomas (2004) mentions the pitfalls of generating frame through an organization. The organization might only show the researcher a positive representative of a particular population. He suggests using a mixture of framing methods to minimize this risk. According to this advice, this research also employed a snowball framing technique to increase the variety of samples.

Babbie (2005) suggests the snowball method is used primarily for exploratory purposes. In the interviews, the questioner asks respondents to suggest other member of their community. This method helps to shorten the time for searching new respondents and increases the creditability of the new respondent. The researcher explains to new respondents that their friends introduced them, so that the respondents might feel happy with the researcher.

Selection criteria of the sample

The criteria for local people selection were prioritized from greatest to lowest as follows:

1. *Their involvement in the volunteer tourist activities*: Because this research focuses on their perspective towards the volunteer tourism, the local people need to have basis experiences of volunteer tourist activities. The experience involves how many times they meet and interact with volunteer tourist or whether their community receives a support from volunteer tourists;
2. *Ethical originality*: This criterion is to ensure that they are the local people of the researched area. For this research, the research prefers Thai ethnic group because they are local ethnic group, who have a lot of experiences with tourism;
3. *Their positions in the local community*: This research purposely seeks for the informant that have higher position in the community, because they are likely to give useful information (Thomas, 2004); and
4. Their occupation. Occupations of respondents need to be a wide variety. There should be construction workers, farmers, hospital staffs, chieftains, and teachers. Because construction and medical tours are two main types of volunteer tourist in Mai Chau.

Regarding supplementary population, the perspectives of volunteer tourists are included for explanation-building and comparison with the findings from local people. Since the volunteer tourist comes to Vietnam for a short period and the name list and contact of volunteer tourism is inaccessible before the field trip, the method of choosing volunteer tourist was a convenience method (Babbie, 2005 & Vaus, 2002), or opportunistic sampling and convenience sampling (Thomas, 2004). This method does not produce the representativeness, but give particular detail of the samplings themselves (Babbie, 2005).

Thomas (2004) also echoes the idea of opportunistic sampling that the researchers take advantages of unforeseen opportunities they might encounter during the fieldwork. In this research, the chances are volunteer tourists who are willing to undertake the interviews. This flexible approach helps to collect data in an unfold context of the fieldwork. Since the aim is to compare with the local people's perspectives, these data are validated and useable if they come from volunteer tourists who attend volunteer tourist activities in the researched area. The author takes advantage of his participation in some volunteer tourist tours in Mai Chau to build friendship and ask the volunteer tourists for interviews, all of them join the volunteer tours in Mai Chau. Sample size of this group should be at the smaller number than the main sample which is the local people. In a tour group, there are usually a leader, who coordinates all the tour activities on the field, and the heads of volunteer tourist, who are representative of customers. This research interviewed these people in each group.

3.2.2.3. Deciding on the location for the case study

As the single case study research design, the location of this research should be extreme or a unique case to check the hypothesis. According to the author's experiences of working in the tourism industry before and some open discussions with travel agent staffs, Mai Chau receives a reasonable volunteer tourist and volunteer tourists has been supported Mai Chau with around thirty public projects and delivered free health checkup and medicines to around 2000 patients per year. One more factor to contribute to the extreme of this case is the fact that Mai Chau is the first place that Buffalo Tours sent volunteer tourists to visit since 2007. The quantity and starting year of volunteer tourist projects in Mai Chau could ensure that the impacts of volunteer tourist are tangible to conduct a research. The fact is that Mai Chau is not the only location to receive volunteer

tourist in Vietnam, but the isolation of mountainous area can reduce the bias in the interview, the local people are predicted to perceive appropriate impacts of volunteer tourist, and they do not confuse the impacts with mass tourism. In some area of research, the only Westerners that local people know are volunteer tourist. The distinctive difference is predicted to reduce the bias in the interview when local people duplicate the images of volunteer tourist and mass tourist. This point increases the reliability of the data.

3.2.3. DESIGN DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOL

Before conducting the fieldwork, the author designed the main method to collect data in interview. Other research methods included field notes, photography and so on. Informants were selected by the non- probability method and snowball method. The interviewer planned to work as an internship cadet in one of the main travel agent, called Buffalo Tour. However, since the geographic distance between case study area and the location of the researcher is large and transportation fee was costly, thus the author decided to run a pilot study on volunteer tourist motivation using the same method of interview. This prestudy aimed to practice interview skills and seek for a new approach that may not be seen before conducting the pilot study.

The researcher volunteered in Ishinomaki in May 2011 under the coordination of Peace Boat. Ishinomaki, population around 160,000, is 120 kilometers from the crippled Fukushima nuclear plant and one of the city, which was most seriously affected by the Great Tsunami. The main tasks were cleaning up the sludge left by Tsunami, distributing necessities to new temporary houses. During these days, two main research methods were carried out. They are:

1. *Observation*: being as a volunteer was a significant advantage to observe other volunteer tourists and local people. I could observe them in a natural setting without any attention of being observed and;

2. *Interview*: total of nine volunteer tourists were interviewed. Among them, there were three Japanese volunteer tourists and six international ones from United Kingdom, Iceland, France, United States and Sri Lanka. Interviews, lasting around 10 minutes, were recorded on the approvals of informants. All the interviewers were fluent in English, and the interviews were conducted in English. Three main questions were on motivation of volunteer tourists, their expectation before the trip, and their achievements after the trip. This pilot had some limitations about time constraint and a small number of interviews, and it did not yield any new significant findings. The researcher gains many experiences and tricks of how to carry on an interview with people. The lesson learnt is that spending time with interviewers helps the researcher to get more information that is invaluable. It also helps to approach new method, which is participant observation. During the pilot research, the author realizes that participant observation is particularly suitable for research focusing on the people's perspective. The participant observation creates a tight relationship between the interviewer and interviewees so that it could break down the barrier between them. Interviewee talks with interviewers in the pure nature manner, consequently, their in-depth opinion could be disclosed. However, the interviewer still need to keep a certain distance to the information unless the interview becomes informal and bias factor arises. Participant observation is also an excellent opportunity to purposely select informants. Thanks to the pilot study, participant observation was added to the research plan.

3.3. Prepare, collect and analyze

This step includes conduct case study and field trip report.

3.3.1. CONDUCT CASE STUDY

The case study was carried out with the main methodologies being interview and participant observation.

3.3.1.1. Interview method

The interview method is the main research methodology of this study, hence the author focused on this method and describes it as details as possible. The interview method starts with designing interview questions, then the interview design. The general format of each interview is also described in the last part.

3.3.1.1.1. Questioning process.

Social sciences and natural sciences are different from the way that question is manipulated, both starts by the research questions, however, only the former gather information from asking questions. Asking questions are the fundamental way to explore the perspective of individual (Thomas, 2004). The nature of this research is social exploration thus the interview is the essential means to collect data. Regarding theories of questioning, Thomas in 2004 describes two theoretical assumptions of the topic, which are stimulus-response model of positivist and symbolic integrationist model of constructionist. This positivist approach assumes that the stimulus must remain unchanged during the whole process. This means that the question condition must be held constantly; the question must be orally presented as its written and the same order. The intention of this research is an in-depth interview, which happens in the daily life setup of

interviewers. It is predicted too difficult to keep the stimulus constantly; hence, this research does not conduct an interview in this theoretical fashion.

Another approach of constructivists is that, instead of stimulus; the question is utterance thus there might be a misunderstanding between an interviewer and the respondent. The question and answer sequence is the art of communication, exchanged (Thomas, 2004). This approach comes with principles of the clear understanding of both sites in the interview process; otherwise, skewed answers could happen. Based on this theory, Thomas (2004) claims that this method of interviews heavily bases on the flexibility of the question and answer process. To the author's point of view, it is much relevant to the reality of his fieldwork, because the interview could happen everywhere during his participant observation. The local respondent comes from every walk of life, ranging from high school student, farmer to the school principal and head doctor of district hospital. Moreover, they also have different nationalities and the interviews are conducted in two languages that are English and Vietnamese. This interview method is much relevant to this research. The drawback of this method is the large amount of data of the fieldwork thus the data analysis strategy is extremely crucial to overcome this challenge.

3.3.1.1.2. Interview question designs

The purpose of this process is to ensure that the respondent and questioner share the same understating on the research question.

Question designs have a tight relationship with the research question. The questions are the breakdowns of research question with some addition in case it needs an

explanation. Research questions are also developed from other research topic (Long, 2011) that has the relevant topic on the impacts of tourism.

This question design also accesses four problems, which are mentioned by Thomas (2004), language, question phrasing, question length, question order and response format. The author applies some trick and tips to minimize these problems and divert them into opportunities to collect data from respondents.

Language

The language in question is as easy as possible to avoid the misunderstanding between the meaning interviewers want to convey and understanding of respondent. The local people are predicted to have a variety of education background so the simplicity of question is hugely beneficial. The author design questions in two languages because respondent includes both Vietnamese people and native English speakers.

Question phrasing

Becker (1998) encourages the interviewer to ask a question “How” instead of “What”, “How” question encourages respondent to tell their whole story and answer at notable in-depth view. Adopting this trick, the researcher prepares questions to start by “how”, for example “How do think about the social impact of volunteer tourism?” instead of “What is the social impact of volunteer tourism?”. This phrasing method did promote the respondent to speak out their perspective directly without any barrier. Various sub-questions and suggestions support the main question and in case of the interviewees either misunderstand or do not get the questions.

Question length

With respect to Thomas' (2004) suggestion, the question length of this research is around 20 words, due to the fact that long question has a strong tendency to be misunderstood. In case of long question, the author tries to break down them into several sub questions/suggestions, which are borrowed from the theory framework. This process again promotes the interview to think more on the question than usual.

Question order

The questions are arranged orderly in the module of questions set. Demographic question comes first as icebreaking, second is the question on local people perspectives towards volunteer tourism; the last includes open questions towards their expectations about volunteer tourism. In each module, the question order is not fixed for all the interviews. This flexibility allows research to collect data efficiently. In some cases, when being asked a particular question, the respondent seems to be reluctant to answer, then the interviewer moves on to next questions, later on, that question is asked again. Surprisingly, most of the cases, the respondents re-answer question without any difficulty.

3.3.1.1.3. Interview design

The next step of questioning process is to define the interview schedule. The interview schedule in this research is a mix of semi-structure interview and conversational interviews.

The majority of the interviews were conducted in a semi-structure design. The design is consistent with the ontology of question as mentioned earlier. In semi-structure,

the question is worded different for different respondents to ensure that the entire respondents understand the topic of the interview. The risk of this method is likely to cause more bias; however, it allows the research to have more meaningful conversations (Thomas, 2004). The reason of choosing this method is the wide range of respondents that the researcher is seeking and because the nature of this study is exploratory. He believes that the interviewees should have more freedom to express their perspectives according to this suggestion.

“have a particular view of research ethics and politics which means that you believe interviewees should be given more freedom in, and control of, the interview situation than is permitted with “structured” approach”(Mason, 2002: 66)

As the research position is an inside research, conventional interviews were also employed. The researcher came to the research site as one of the volunteers; working together with other volunteer tourist. There were several times when the interview was conducted in conversational interview. Conversational helps them to collect data in many situations that might not be available to other interview schedule. While working or observing other volunteer tourists and local people, he could ask them a question on the topic as daily conversation and the respondent answer directly about what they think and perceive. This method provides the research with many extra valuable data. The disadvantage of this interview schedule is its flexibility and unpredictable; the interview might come all of a sudden and the absent of record method to reanalysis. In terms of these drawbacks, the author uses this method with a mix of photography method and research note to record all the data. Moreover, the bias is likely to arise with this kind of research schedule thus it needs highly intensive data analysis at the later step of this research.

3.3.1.1.4. The structured interview process

Thomas (2004) lays the foundation for this research's interview process. Ideally, the interview can be carried out in the setting of interviewer's territory; however, all of the interviews happened during the fieldwork thus the setting is in the respondent's territory. The location of the interview is diverse, ranging from the local hospital, kindergarten to a local people's house or the home stay accommodation. This natural setting makes local people feel more relaxed and easy to speak out their opinions.

The researcher briefly introduce most of the interviewee about the research topic and questions about two days prior to the actual interview; then he ask them if they want to attend the interview. One hundred percent of the respondents agree to be interviews when being asked.

The structure of interview contains three phases:

Opening phases

This step only last for several minutes but it is necessary for the rest of interview (Thomas, 2004). Firstly, the researcher introduces about himself and he asks the respondents for the permission of recoding their interviews as well as using of their answer in the research. Secondly, the author briefly introduces his topic on the social-cultural impacts of volunteer tourism. Since the volunteer tourism is the new concept to most of the local people, the researcher carefully defines and gives the example to the respondent about who is volunteer tourist and how they are different from the usual tourist. Then he approaches the respondent with easy demographics questions. These questions help the investigator to know more about the respondent, he quickly decides words that are most appropriate to the respondent. The appropriate length of the interview

is also mentioned to interviewees. The researcher does the opening phase in a friendly manner in order to bond with the respondent and make them feel at ease to answer the rest of the questions.

The question-answer phase

This is the heart of interview. All the crucial questions are delivered in this stage. There are two groups of informants in this research. The first is the group of local people and the second is group of volunteer tourists. Questions towards local people are on the positive and negative impacts of volunteer tourism, the image of volunteer tourist, their participation in volunteer tourist activities and their expectation on volunteer tourist. With regarding the questions for volunteer tourist, it focuses on their perspectives towards their encounter with the local people, the reason they choose Mai Chau as their tourist destination and their potential impacts on the local people. The logical connection between two groups is that the latter is comparison tool to the former. The answer of volunteer tourist serves for the purpose of explanation building in the data analysis process; also, the discrepancy between the image of volunteer tourist in local people perspective and volunteer tourist might be attractive.

In this phase, questions are delivered to respondents carefully throughout the interviews to guarantee that they still cover the topics. The researcher records all the answers simultaneously by the recorders and note taking; he also pays attention to the body language of respondents. As suggested by Thomas (2004), the researcher also does multitask of timekeeping, pacing, maintaining efforts. Fortunately, no respondents in this research limit the time of interview thus the interview could last as long as the conversation is; however, the researcher still maintains each interview in about 30 to 40 minutes. In order to maintain efforts to keep the momentum of research stable, the

interviewer avoids the long silence by the short questions or body language such as a smile and asks them “What else”, this minor action helps to keep the respondents keep thinking on the answer. At the time of confusion, the researcher briefly summarize the respondent’s answer so that the interview still keep in track as well as no misunderstanding happens. By the end of this phase, the researcher usually asks for open sharing from the interviewee, any point that he has not asked them.

Closing phase

The interviewer truly thanks the interviewee and informs them that their contributions are exceedingly useful for the interview. He also asks them for the further cooperation in case of any more information. Moreover, in an attempt to find more respondents, the author asks them if anyone else who is relevant to this research they want to introduce. This question serves as snowball method and some new respondents are given via this question. All the respondents show their interest in this topic, and they encourage the researcher a lot.

3.3.1.2. Participant observation

Many authors emphasize the importance of participant observation in the natural science, “If “action speak louder than words” then it seems that “observation speak louder than self-reports”. Questionnaires and interviews can only take us so far. Observation can take us further. (Thomas 2003:173)

In this research, the author uses observation as a supplementary method along with the interviews. The purpose of this method is in-depth data of the interaction between volunteer tourist and local people, from that he could conclude about the social-cultural impacts of volunteer tourists.

The findings of interview could depend on the interviewee's answer, sometimes, the researcher feel unconfident about the findings. Thomas (2003) describes the interview bias as memory errors, prestige bias, and situational bias. Directly observing the phenomenon brings a deeper understating and increase the level of confidence in the findings. Furthermore, this research also aims to explore the risk of volunteer tourism on the local people. The percentage of local people, who directly express their opinion on this problem through the interviews, is predicted to be low due to the benefits they expect from the tourist. The observation method could help the research to learn from the grounded fieldwork and he explores the negative impacts of volunteer tourism. In addition, it also reinforces his finding in the interview method.

The observation involves more than just watching. It is the process of listening and thinking at the same time (Thomas, 2003). During this research, the researcher participates in the volunteer process. He not only, together with other volunteer tourists, builds the local infrastructure but do translation during the health checkup to connect the volunteer tourists and local people in free health checkup. There are many details that rose from the daily work rather than in the interview. For example, if it had not been for the volunteer tourist, the researcher could never have a change to watch the interaction between young volunteer tourists and kids in the kindergarten during their break to experience the close relationship between them

Thomas (2003) says that only observation could give the direct access to a person's behavior. The fieldwork has proven this true. Thanks to the direct participation, the researcher could experience lively reactions of local people to the volunteer tourists. All the exchange of smiles, the welcoming body languages between volunteer tourist and local people speaks thousand words to this research. More importantly, all these actions

are performed openly that should create original data for research. The data collected from this method could be limited as compared to the interview method, but all of those data are extremely valuable in the conclusion because it directly affects the understanding of researcher.

One notable warning of observation is that the researcher should not interrupt or change the setting that he observes (Thomas, 2003). During his fieldwork, the researcher always concentrates on his task and tries not to talk or interrupt the interaction between local people and volunteer tourist. Even in the case that he acts as the translator, he just focuses on his duty of translation, no question or idea concerning his research is revealed to minimize his impacts on the interaction process. Another risk of observation is that participant observation could make the researcher so close to the sampling so that it might raise some bias, especially, when the researcher also uses the interview method to generate data. Realizing this point, the author at the very first start of fieldwork tries to keep the certain distance to the local people and volunteer tourist as the role of researcher.

This observation method is approached by several questions as follows.

Depending on the position and involvement of observer, the observation role divided into:

Involve Role	Participation	Non-participation
Covert	Covert participation	Covert non-participation
Overt	Overt participation	Overt non-participation

Table III.2. Type of observation

In this research, the role of the observer is more preferable to overt participation. This method is defined by the several questions of observation methods (Thomas, 2003)

3.3.1.2.1. Where to observe?

This observation was conducted in the natural setting of the volunteer tour. This topic must be studied in the natural setting because it is impossible to recreate the setting in the artificial setting.

The site of observation is defined as the actual site of volunteer tourist where the author simultaneously works as a volunteer tourist and observed as a researcher. Thanks to the close relation with travel agents, local people, volunteer tourists, the researcher has no difficulty in reacting problem. The local people consider him as one of volunteer tourists, and volunteer tourist consider him as one of them, even the role of the researcher is overt throughout his participation.

3.3.1.2.2. How to observe?

The method of observation is participation and overt to the respondents. The participation has advantages of first-hand exposure to the setting, to able to experience the process as the same view of participant(Thomas, 2003) A disadvantage of participation is that the researcher could get too close to the informants, and he may affect the observation process (Thomas, 2003). In this study, the researcher try to keep the certain distance from the respondents who are local people and volunteer tourist, he acts deliberately as a researcher.

The covert is suitable when the researcher worries about the threat of reactivity from the local people (Thomas, 2003). Unlike this concern, the researcher observes no artificial reactivity from local people. The reason might be due to the participation of the researcher as a volunteer tourist so the local people treats him as other volunteer tourist, in spite of that fact that they know him as the researcher. The overt observation also maintains the ethical value of this research.

3.3.1.2.3. How to record observations?

The data collected from this method is record by two methods, note taking and photography:

Note taking

The note taking is carried out throughout the research from the step of theory development into final analysis; however, the researcher uses note taking mostly during the observation hence the results are recorded with the observation.

The author writes down every idea raised during the process of study. The researcher keeps notes in a time order so that it could be easily analyzed. It is no doubt that during the research and literature review, the idea just comes all of sudden. The note taking is appropriate for the memories and makes sure that the author does not miss any critical point. The researcher also writes down the fascinating point about methodology and findings in the research articles, which he reads through. Burgess (1982) also suggests this point as the researcher should keep both methodological and substantive field notes. Substantive field notes are the description of the events during the study.

During the fieldwork, the author intensively conducts note taking. Every interesting feature, observation data and numbers are combined in his research notes. The researcher always carries a pen and a hand-size research diary with him during the fieldwork. By the end of each day, the author spends some minutes to sit down and review the event happened during the day time, then he could write down to his opinions and memorize main events of that day.

However, note taking was not enough to cover some events during the fieldwork because it takes time to write down. Therefore, photography method was used to supplement note-taking.

Photography method

This method used the camera to capture the thing that happened during this study. Unlike the field note, the photography captures the event immediately as it happens. The researcher could review events based on these photos and can generate data. The photography also increases the credibility of the findings, and it is more objective as compared to note taking. Some of the photo data will be used as an example in the

finding part to support the conclusion of this research; it is, somehow, the proof of research progress.

Photo data, which is taken before and after the construction project, shows the visible impacts of volunteer tourism project; it is particularly attractive to compare the broken schoolyard and the same thing with concreted material. Photography is also efficiency to record minor interactions between volunteer tourists and local people.

After the field trip, the research reviewed all the photos to seek for new data and findings.

3.3.2. INDIVIDUAL CASE REPORT

This report is written upon the completion of the field trip. The individual case report presents the raw data collected from the field trip; the finding in this report is not the final conclusion of this research. The aim of this report is to describe the research process that the researcher has done during the fieldwork.

Period of Research	Research Destination	Field Research Method
09/15~ 11/18	Internship at Buffalo Tour, 94 Ma May, Hanoi.	Data and document analysis.
09/20~ 09/24	Moi Village, Phieng Xa, Dong Bang, Mai Chau.	In-depth interview, research diary, observation, photography.
10/05~10/07	Chieng Chau, Mai Chau, Hoa Binh.	In-depth interview, research diary, observation, photography.

10/20~10/20	Prestige hotel, Hanoi.	Conference attendance, data and document analysis.
11/08~11/18	Pieng Ve, Mai Chau, Hoa Binh.	In-depth interview, research diary observation, photography.

Table III.3. Summary of field trip

Fieldwork was carried out in two provinces of Vietnam during a three-month period, in Hanoi and Mai Chau. I was given the privilege to work in the tourism industry and escort three groups of volunteer tourists. The first group was construction volunteer tourists. They donated funds and helped the local people to build a rest room for a local kindergarten. The second one distributed scholarships for local pupils. The last one was a group of nursing students who supported the locals with free health checkups and medicine. The local informants are living in two villages. Moi Village is about 20 kilometers North of Mai Chau Town. This village is close to the nation road, but there is no electric system there. Pieng Ve is thirty kilometers south of Mai Chau town. The rest of the informants live in Chien Chau, which is five kilometers from Mai Chau town. During each field trip, in order to research as an “insider”, the researcher worked as a volunteer tourist and observed the reaction of local people to volunteer tourists. This was an excellent opportunity to purposely select interviewees who were local people on the basis of their exposure and involvement in volunteer tourism. Interview questions focus on their perspective regarding benefits, social and cultural impacts of volunteer tourist. A face-to-face interview is essential to gain an in-depth understanding of the research topic. Each interview lasted almost 30 minutes with questions designed prior to the dispatch of field trip. The verbal interviews were recorded and transferred into transcript only with

the permission of informants. Thanks to the “insider” research position, I had in-depth interviews with approximately 20 local people and 10 volunteer tourists. These 20 local people consist of farmers, village chief and local school principals. Interview with volunteer tourist concentrated on their images and impacts on their first encounter with the local people and their glances. Research dairy was employed to record the ideas raised up during the field trip. In order to have a holistic view about volunteer tourist, the researcher also had an internship in Buffalo Tour that is the leading travel agent in operating volunteer tour in Mai Chau.

The research discovered that the attitudes of local people towards volunteer tourism are positive. In term of social impact, they said volunteer tourists help them to enhance the local infrastructure, improve the health awareness and so forth. Regarding cultural effects, volunteer tourists make local people proud of their authentic culture and encourage local exchange. Volunteer tourist is likely to be a good mirror to the locals. Local people respect them for good manners in working schedule, environment protection, friendliness, adoption of the local culture. Locals showed full appreciation and support towards volunteer tourist. When being ask about potential negative impacts, they tend to ignore the existence. Nevertheless, during the in-depth interview and observation by the researcher, some potential negative impacts were noted, such as the interest conflict between groups of villagers, incompatible supports leading to a waste of resources, changes in traditional costume of local children. Briefly, the positive impacts still outweighed these of negative, but it is necessary to study on the both site of the coins. Local people were asked about their expectation towards volunteer tourism, most of them are interested in these activities and look forward to more volunteer tourists, “the more, the better” said most of the interviewees. Regarding volunteer tourists, they also

tried to respect local cultures and minimize the negative impacts they might cause to the indigenous communities. Volunteer tourism is also a new experience to them, which they learnt from the local people. Thanks to the internship in Buffalo tour, the researcher gained general information about the development of volunteer tourism in Mai Chau region and some achievements of voluntours during the past 4 years. At a policy-making level, in early November, attending the workshop on responsible tourism development facilitates the strong belief on the governmental support to volunteer tourism, which belongs to the concept of responsible tourism.

The outcome of this field research was expected to illustrate the perspectives of the local people about the social-cultural impacts of volunteer tourism. Both negative and positive impacts will be taken into account. A closer look into the raw data taken after the field trip would yield many fascinating findings to answer the research questions. All data gathered will be categorized into different theme used as the backbone of my thesis. The nature of this thesis is exploration, thus this field trip is a stepping-stone of this thesis. It helped to collect compatible data, which might not be available with other research methods.

3.4. Analyze and Conclude

This is the final step of this research. It included three activities of modify theory, develop policy implementations and write final report. The raw data is analyzed and compared with the theory framework in order to find the pattern of social-cultural impact of volunteer tourism. The findings are also linked up with other published researches with an aim for comparison and explanation. Afterward, some suggestion towards the policy

implementation will be provided with the conclusion. The methods, which backbone this analysis and conclusion, are coding, pattern-matching and explanation-building.

The data collected from the fieldwork and literature review are enormous. Interview data contain thirty files, each of which is about thirty minutes of conversation, nearly a thousand photos, not to mention information from the literature review, note taking and other method. Frankly speaking, analyzing these data might be exceedingly troublesome and at the early step, the author has a lot of stress and anxiety about these data. Lofland (2006) suggested five ways to manage this anxiety.

1. The first principle is to recognize and accept the fact that analyzing qualitative data is neither easy nor mechanical task;
2. Start analyzing data at the early stage;
3. Work persistently and methodically;
4. Sheer accumulation of information could reveal some findings; and
5. Get together with other student for discussion.

Since the interview was the main method used in this research, the first step is conversation transcribe. The interviews recorded by the author are input into a computer. This process is highly time consuming but essential for data analysis. There are two type categories of data; one is in Vietnamese and the other in English. All these interviews are transcribed into word files in the original languages. During the process of recording, the author also starts to figure out patterns of interview.

The second step is coding data. The data are numbered line by line and simultaneously coded. Each line concerns particular topic or sub topic then the researcher groups these lines according to its theme.

The interviewer renamed the informants by their nicknames or first names to ensure the ethical issues are upheld yet still be able to provide the reliability of each informant. The demographic information was also recorded into the excel chart.

Once the author finished grouping and coding raw data, the analysis strategy.

Yin (2003) claims two strategies as relying on theoretical propositions and developing a case description. The second is less preferable, and it is conducted due to the absence of theoretical proposition. This research conducted data analysis by the first strategy – relying on theoretical propositions. The proposition of this research was that volunteer tourist has certain social – cultural impacts to local people, mostly positive; however, there is some potential risk of volunteer tourism. The data analysis takes this proposition as guiding proposition. (Yin, 2003) This method has advantages of increasing data focus, organizing explanations to be examined.

3.4.1. PATTERN-MATCHING

Yin (2003) and Thomas (2003) describe this method as the comparison of data to the predicted one. In this research, the predicted data is embedded in the conceptual framework. This approach is logically linked by relying on the proposition of the research strategy. This method also helps to increase the internal reliability of case study strategies.

In addition, this research collects information from both parties involved in volunteer tourism, which are the local people and volunteer tourist. The study focuses on the local people perspectives however, these data should be compared to the opinions of volunteer tourists.

3.4.2. EXPLANATION-BUILDING

The second step is to improve the explanation for the case. Even this is not the main focus of exploratory research, it is necessary to look into the reason regarding the local people's perspective towards volunteer tourists. The goal of explanation in exploratory might be developed ideas for further study (Yin, 2003). From the author's point of view, the descriptive data itself without explanation might be not persuasive. Explanation is built upon the relevant research, theory and linkage of volunteer tourist's opinion towards local people.

Summary

This chapter showed the methods used by the researcher to answer the research questions. The workflow is from the case study research design. It started with literature review in order to create the conceptual framework. The main research methodologies used were semi-structured and conventional interviews. The interview questions are designed much related to an open-ended question method, where the author utilizes the flexibility to gather data from respondent. Participant observation is the advantage of this research. It allowed the researcher to get closer to the informant and obtained more in-depth data. The data on the field are recorded by note taking and photography. The author also employed a number of other methodologies, such as conference attendance. The last step of analyzing and conclusion included patent-matching and explanation-building.

CHAPTER IV – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4.1. Vietnam at a glance

Vietnam, located in South-East Asian, is part of Indochina. Vietnam is a developing country in a group of middle lower income (WB). Table IV.1 provides the basic facts of Vietnam.

Official name	The Socialist Republic of Vietnam
Independence	2nd September 1945 (from France)
Capital	Ha Noi
Political party	Communist
Total area	331,210 sq kms
Coastline	3,444 sq kms
Population, total	86,025,000 (2009) 86,928,000 (2010)
GDP (current US\$)	97,180,304,813(2009) 106,426,845,157(2010)
Climate	Tropical in south; monsoonal in north with hot, rainy season (May to September) and warm, dry season (October to March)
Major tourist destinations	Ho Chi Minh, Ha Noi, NhaTrang, Da Nang, Hoi An, Hue, Ha Long Bay, Tay Nguyen, Me Kong Delta, Mui Ne, PhanThiet, Sapa, Da Lat
Time zone	GMT/UTC +7

Monetary	Dong (VND)
Literacy rate, adult total (% of people ages 15 and above)	92.77 (2009)
Life expectancy at birth, total (years)	74.6 (2009) 74.8 (2010)
Hospital beds (per 1,000 people)	3.1 (2009)
Health expenditure per capita (current US\$)	77.11 (2009) 82.87 (2010)
Pupil-teacher ratio, primary	19.52 (2009) 19.90 (2010)
Pupil-teacher ratio, secondary	19.39 (2009) 18.55 (2010)

Table IV.1. Vietnam facts

(Source: World databank, CIA country profile – date of retrieved 2012/05/07)

4.2. Vietnam tourism

Vietnam tourism has rich potential of diversity in the original culture, landscape and friendly people. Vietnam tourism emerged in 1985, thanks to the Doi Moi policy (Open Policy). The following table illustrates the international visitor to Vietnam in the year of 2012

	Accrue for 12 months of 2011	2011 vs. 2010 (%)
Total	6,014,032	119.1
By means of transportation		
By air	5,031,586	123.9
By sea	46,321	91.7

By road	936,125	99.8
By purposes of trips		
Tourism	3,651,299	117.4
Business	1,003,005	98.0
Visiting relatives	1,007,267	175.5
Others	352,460	103.1
By countries and territories		
China	1,416,804	156.5
South Korea	536,408	108.2
Japan	481,519	108.9
USA	439,872	102.1
Cambodia	423,440	166.3
Taiwan	361,051	108.1
Australia	289,762	104.2
Malaysia	233,132	110.3

Table IV.2. Visitors to Vietnam

Source: GSO

As could be seen, the number of visitor rises over years. The percentage of tourists increases by nearly 20% as compared to 2010. Among top ten tourists' nationalities, the majority are from the Asian region mainly due to the geographical

proximity. Australian visitors' ranks number nine among top-ten visitor and is also the second among Western countries.

Vietnam is famous for its breathtaking attractions, authentic culture of 54 ethnic groups. For example, Vietnam receives a number of UNESCO heritage certification.

Tangible heritages:

Cultural

Central Sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long - Hanoi (2010)

Citadel of the Ho Dynasty (2011)

Complex of Huế Monuments (1993)

Hoi An Ancient Town (1999)

My Son Sanctuary (1999)

Natural

Ha Long Bay (1994 and 2000) and currently in the new seven wonders list in New7Wonders of Nature campaign

Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park (2003)

Intangible heritages:

- The Cultural Space of Gong in the Central Highlands (2008)

- NhaNhac (the Royal Refined music) of Hue (2008)

- Quan ho BacNinh folk songs (2009)

- CaTru singing (2009)

- Gióng festival of Phù Đông and Sóc temples(2010)
 - Xoan singing of Phú Thọ Province, Viet Nam (2011)
- (UNESCO, New7Wonders)



Fig. IV.1. Vietnam tourist map

4.3. Volunteer tourism in Vietnam

The overall quantitative indicator of total volunteer tourism is not available. Many previous research articles also have this problem because volunteer tourist is a newly introduced concept in the travel industry, and the pure volunteer tourism motivation is hard to differentiate as they often mix their trips with volunteer activities. The other reason is that there are only few researches on volunteer tourism.

Speaking of tourism policy and law, tourism authorities dub volunteer tourist with responsible tourism. In the workshop of responsible tourism, Institute of Tourism Development Research (Vietnam Tourism Administration) presents an example of volunteer tourism as responsible tourism. Gray and Coren (2011) also echo this opinion on their research of commoditization of Volunteer Tourist in Vietnam and Thailand. In that sense, the volunteer tourist or responsible tourism receives favorable support from central government.

The legislation framework for developing responsible tourism toward Sustainable Tourism in Vietnamese tourism law

- Item 5 on tourism development regulation, in which it stated *“Sustainable Tourism Development, harmonizing economy, society and environment”*

- Item 6 on Tourism Development policy, in which it stated *“The Government encourages investment on sectors such as...protecting and improving tourism environment and resources”*

- Item 9 on Tourism Environment Protection, in which it stated *“natural environment, social environment need to be protected, improved and developed”* and assigned environment protection responsibility specially to ministries, ministerial

agencies; People Committee at all levels, individual or organization that running tourism business, tourists and local community.

The draft of development strategy from 2020 to vision 2030 also underlies the importance of responsible tourism as

“Developing sustainable tourism together with conserving and promoting cultural values; national security; social safety; environmental protection; with ensuring the interdisciplinary and socialization; with maximizing national advantages; domestic and international resources; and with promoting vital role of businesses.”

Or

“Developing tourism in consideration with socio-economic and environmental targets; ensuring economic growth targets; contributing to the conservation of the natural environment, society and culture”.

Luong (2011)

In short, the tourism outlook of the central government is to develop responsible tourism in Vietnam, which also includes volunteer tourism.

At the Vietnamese market level, volunteer tourists are divided into two categories, which are domestic volunteer tourist and inbound volunteer tourist. The domestic volunteer tourist often self-organized their charity trip to the remote areas. The ethnic diversity and poverty gap in Vietnam needs a lot of funds and volunteer tourist is one of them. The inbound volunteer tourist refers to international visitors who often go to Vietnam under the organization of tour operator or nongovernment organization. The focus of this thesis is the inbound volunteer tourist thus; the term volunteer tourist refers to inbound volunteer tourist.

As mention above, there are three facilitators of volunteer tourist in Vietnam. They are non-governmental organizations, travel agencies and Vietnamese organizations.

In this research, the facilitator is the tour operator, called, Buffalo Tour. This travel agent is renowned as the leading travel agent in volunteer tourist.

The destination of Volunteer tourist in Vietnam stretches from North to South; the famous locations are Ha Giang, Hanoi, Mai Chau, Hoi An, BenTre and so on. The common characters of these destinations are close to tourist attractions, and the local people struggle with development. Mai Chau is chosen for this research due to the full accessibility of the researcher to the field, the uniqueness in the tourist setting here and the originality of hill tribe.

This section generally introduced tourism in Vietnam and the development of volunteer tourism. The volunteer tourism, as part of sustainable tourism, receives full support from the Vietnam central government. There are volunteer tourism projects from North to South of Vietnam, but as the nature of single case study, Mai Chau is selected as the researched area of this study.

4.4. Mai Chau as volunteer tourism destination

This section aims to briefly introduce Mai Chau district in Hoa Binh province. The last part concentrates on the description of volunteer tourism in this area.

Mai Chau is one district in Hoa Binh province. Some basic factors about Hoa Binh are as follows.

Area	4,662.5 square meter
Terrain	Mountainous
Population (2010)	793,500
Density (pp/km2)	173/ 01
Ethnic Group	15 groups including Muong, Kinh, Thai,

	Tay, Dao, Mong, etc.
Person income	UDD 128/person/year
Literacy rate	98 (%)
Number of school teachers	11,485
Number of Pupil	129,147
Number of Indigenous pupils	95804
Number of Medical staffs	2513
Number of Hospital beds	2795

Table IV.3. Hoa Binh facts

(Source: Vietnam general static office, Hoa Binh static office, the Committee for Ethnic Minorities website)

Famous tourist locations in Hoa Binh are the hydroelectricity factory in Hoa Binh city, hot spring in Kim Boi, and ethic tourism in Mai Chau.

Mai Chau is located 160 kilometers North East of the capital. Mai Chau has a total of 22 wards and 1 town. The population of Mai Chau is 50,739 people. The total area of the district is 564 square kilometers. Population density is 90 people per square kilometer. Travel industry mostly located in the central town where is famous for authentic Thai culture. Unlike this fact, volunteer tourists decentralize to the remote wards of this district and the poverty gap between the center town and ward is spacious.

Mai Chau has started its tourism service since 1990 (Nate-Chei,2011) and Buffalo is famous for helping the local – White Thai people set up tourism at remarkably early stage. Visitors and income from tourism rise over a year in Mai Chau. The domestic tourist number is much higher than international arrivals; however, the majority of them

are mass tourist customers, and in domestic perspective, Mai Chau is not a volunteer tourism destination.

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Number of visitor arrivals	256,650	492,255	689,092	886,000
Domestic	226,244	463,023	622,644	819,000
International	30,406	29,232	66,448	67,000

Table IV.4. Visitors to Mai Chau

Source: Hoa Binh Portal

Indigenous ethnic group, who are white Thai people, take control of tourism in Mai Chau as the way to enhance their economy (Nate-Chei, 2011). Two basic attractions with Thai culture are the hospitality and the morality of Money. Thai people often welcome outsiders to their village; they also invite them to have a meal together; they want to make guests feel comfortable (Nate-Chei, 2011). In Thai language, Thai vendor usually says “I beg you” and “thank you” when receiving money from customers. Their traditional thinking is price should be low so when their services are sold at a higher price; they appreciate the customers and respond, “I beg you”. The morality of money makes Thai people run their travel service with their “heart” (Nate-Chei, 2011). The author also shares this opinion according to his experiences in Mai Chau. He has visited this destination for more than twenty times, each time, he becomes more appreciated to the hearty service of Thai ethnic.

When it comes to volunteer tourist, Mai Chau starts receiving the first volunteer tourist group in 2007 and Buffalo Tour is well known as the leading travel operator in this area. Other travel agents also attempt to set up volunteer tourist in this area, however, due to low-profit return; they suspend the volunteer tour to Mai Chau. In Mai Chau,

volunteer tour focuses on construction and health promotion. Volunteer tourists raise fund and support building for about 30 projects in 18 villages in Mai Chau. The project sides are public buildings such as kindergarten, schoolyard, restroom, water tank, obstetrics room and so on. Health promotion is the program that combines tour activity, health check-up, free medicine distribution and health education. Health promotion tour is known as “Medical Trek”. According to material from Buffalo Tour, medical Treks provide an excellent opportunity for doctors and other medical professionals to assist underprivileged hill tribe communities who do not have access to health care, whilst trekking in one of the most scenic mountain regions in Vietnam and discovering new cultures. These treks are open to medical groups and clubs and are led in conjunction with local doctors and translators. The goals of the treks include providing health care to hill tribes who do not have access to medical help (due to their isolated locations and lack of money), training regional doctors and nurses and delivering medical supplies to remote villages (Buffalo tour)

These activities are organized under the coordination between Mai Chau and Seattle Community Colleges (USA) and Antipodeans (Australian). They have been doing this medical trek for 5 year since 2007. In 2009, the projects from Antipodean contributed more than USD 10,000 for the local community. Seattle Community Colleges gives free health check up to nearly 5,500 local people over 5 years; each local people receive free medicines in accordant to their symptoms. The total number of volunteer tourist comes to Mai Chau under Seattle Community Colleges is around 150 people. They all are nursing students, doctors or teachers from universities. The number of patients who received health check-up is as follows:

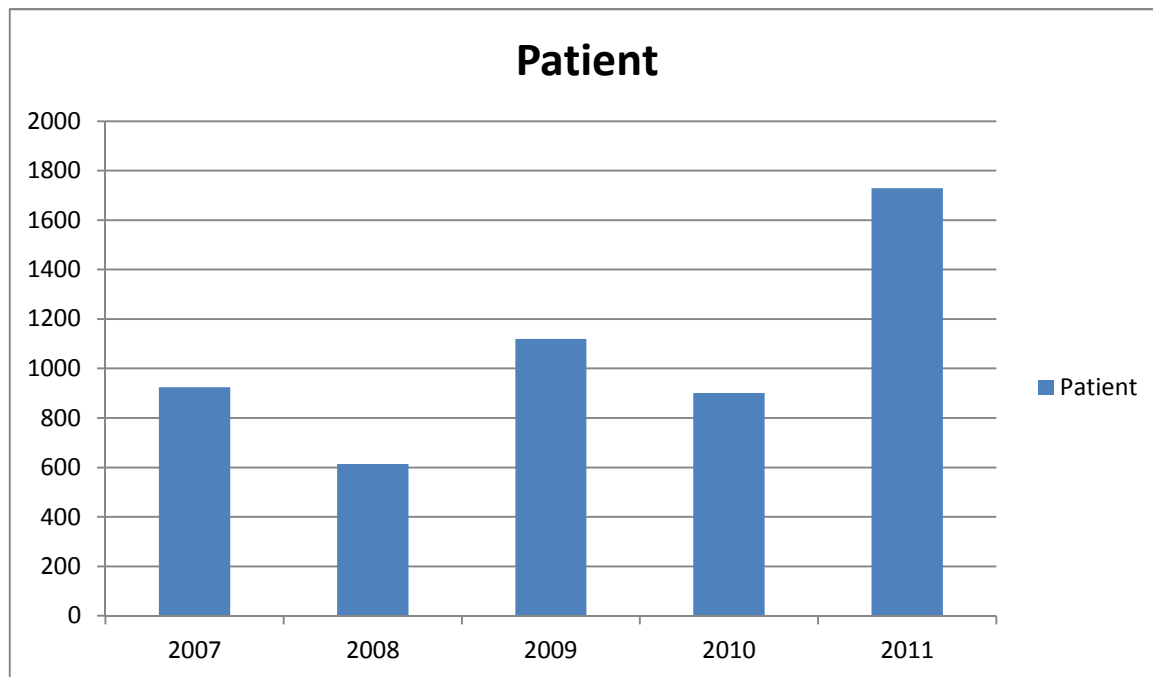


Fig. IV.2. Patient number

Source: Buffalo Tour data

One example itinerary of medical trek is as bellows

Day 1: transfer Hanoi – Mai Chau – lunch at Mai Chau Lodge then trek to Hich village, dinner then arrange the local clinic

Day 2: working day at Hich village from 8.00AM – 5.00PM

Day 3: trek through the small path to Pu village, picnic lunch on the way then reach Pu village in the afternoon. Set up the local clinic.

Day 4: working day at Pu village from 8.00AM – 5.00PM

Day 5: Farewell party with local people

Day 6: Trek from Pu village to Xam Khoe village, get on the van and back to Mai Chau lodge for lunch.

The date and location might be different depending on the tours. The average days they spend in Mai Chau is around 6 days including 3-4 days of working and 1-2 day of trekking activities. Activities also include health educations to increase public healthcare awareness. Volunteer tourists teach local pupils to wash their hand, brush their teeth in local school. In each school, volunteer tourist also presents local pupils with toothbrushes and soaps. These activities are carried out at the same time of health checkup.

Project process in Mai Chau

This section describes the process of project construction in Mai Chau. A Thai project coordinator takes responsibility of finding new projects. The researcher personally knew this project coordinator for about five years. He is truly a typical Thai person, very trustful and committed to his work. Initially, Buffalo Tour receives orders from interested organization about the upcoming tours. Buffalo Tour informs the project coordinator then he attempts to find new projects. The criterion for selecting project is upon the need of local school or community. The project coordination usually discusses with the school principal of local school about what they need. The next criterion is to check if there is any duplication with the supports from government. The project coordinator is a local person and he has been working in tourism for more than 6 years. Consequently, he takes advantages of the close relationship with the local people to find new projects, and assists local people when the need arises.

The next step is to calculate the financial funding for the project as details as possible. The financial proposal is sent to Buffalo Tour for agreements. Buffalo discusses with the interested organizations and let him know the final answer. The volunteer tourists come as a group and work as part of a project. The construction is heavy labor demanding so the volunteer tourist only helps the local constructor with an easy task such as carrying the material and mixing the concrete. Volunteer tourists contribute financial

help to the project and part of it is used as rent to the local constructor. On the ground, they are the local constructors who take the responsibilities to finish the project. Usually, volunteer tourists work on project sites for four or five days which is not enough time to finish the project. Photos of a finished project are sent to them via mail.

The interesting feature of volunteer tourism is that the local people manage all the logistic services. The facilitator such as Buffalo tour only coordinates the services. The home stay accommodation, food, beverage, local guide are provided separately by the local-run company. Home stay is only accommodation that the volunteer tourists use and as a consequence, this form of accommodation builds a close relationship between the tourists and the host family.

The previous paragraph illustrates the development of volunteer tourism and general tourism in Mai Chau. Mai Chau is famous for their friendly culture and hearty services. The later part also describes the progress of construction and medical volunteer tourism on the ground. It is intriguing to note down that Mai Chau people run their tourism service, and volunteer tourist only use home-stay accommodation in this area.

4.5. The facilitators

This research defines the facilitator as the organizer and sending organization who help to coordinate and run the volunteer projects. Speaking of Mai Chau volunteer projects, there are three notable facilitators, which will be introduced in the following part.

4.5.1. BUFFALO TOUR

This is the inspirational tour operator based in Vietnam since 1994. They offer the packages tour to Indochina (Lao, Vietnam, Cambodia) and Thailand. Buffalo Tour has

won several awards, such as Best Tour Operator, Condé Nast Traveler, one of the 158 Best Adventure Travel Companies in the World by National Geographic Adventure magazine, CEO win the PATA “Face of the future Awards”. In the early 2007, Buffalo Tour established “volunteer & educational project team”. This team is directly in charge of organizing volunteer tour in Vietnam and other countries. According to the CEO of Buffalo Tour, “Buffalo Tours believes Volunteer & Educational Travel is one of the most effective tools for poverty alleviation, cultural preservation and environmental protection. That is why we want to work with motivated teachers seeking innovative community-based experiences and ecotourism adventures for their students.” [Buffalo Tour data]. Buffalo Tours acts a bridge to connect the local community and volunteer tourists to achieve three Win, Win for local people, volunteer and himself. Their focuses are health care, education, building and development and conservation projects. In Mai Chau, Buffalo is the most effective and leading travel agent in organizing volunteer tour. Their main projects in Mai Chau are health care, building and development. Besides Mai Chau, the project location also includes other part Vietnam, Lao and Cambodia.

4.5.2. ANTIPODEAN

(www.Antipodeans.com.au) Antipodean is the sending organization tour operator from Australia. Their website introduces them as an independent company that has been creating unique student travel experiences for over 20 years. The scope of this company is *“Our unique travel experiences help students to discover a world of opportunity, skills to learn, people to meet, languages to master and trails to follow. They gain understanding and return knowing they have made a difference. The experience changes their view of the world their place in it”* (Colin Carpenter, the founder of Antipodean). The volunteer programs of Antipodean include uni-break and gap-break that are designed

for students. Antipodean offers program in 10 destinations in South America, Asia, and Africa. In Vietnam, Antipodeans only offers tour in Mai Chau. The researcher completed his participation with two groups from Antipodean. One construction group visits Mai Chau to build a restroom for local kindergarten. They are the students from St Margaret's Anglican Girl's School. The second group is a medical trek group. They are from the Notre Dame nursing college. This group has been coming to Mai Chau for many times and they will continue to visit Mai Chau; hence, the author briefly introduces this group.

Notre Dame Nursing College is the Australian college. 2011 was the fifth year of visitation to Mai Chau. During their trip, nursing students and teachers conduct health checkup and distribute medicines for free. They also teach the local kids to wash their hand and brush their teeth. Their trip is organized via Antipodean, which, in turn, cooperate with Buffalo Tour at the local level. Unlike the Seattle College Community, this nursing college returns annually to Mai Chau in order to contribute to the village development.

4.5.3. SETTLE COMMUNITY GROUP

This is the group of colleges in Seattle of United State (www.sccd.ctc.edu). Vietnam village trek belongs to “Global Impact” program, which is independently organized by Settle Community Group, in association with Buffalo Tour. The program is open for application; students of Settle Community Group can gain five credits after this trip. The program is introduced on their website as *“Seattle-area healthcare professionals and SCCD students/staff will join Vietnamese physicians, nurses and other volunteers on a medical trek and community development project in remote villages in the Mai Chau Highlands, Northern Vietnam. Our goal is that participants will be involved in all phases of the village campaigns. Our Village Development Project*

includes strategic activities that will impact the overall health of the community. ” (<http://www.seattlecolleges.edu/globalimpact/vietnam.aspx>). This group has been doing this trip since 2007 in Mai Chau, they change their villages for health promotion every year, but the itinerary is the same.

In short, there are four main facilitators in Mai Chau. They are Settle Community Group, Antipodeans, Notre Dame Nursing College and Buffalo Tour. Among them, Buffalo Tour is a receiving facilitator, and the rest is incoming visitors. It is noteworthy that all the incoming facilitators are from educational institutions.

4.6. Demographic information of interviewee

This study results are collected from the interview of total 20 local people and 10 volunteer tourists. The first part describes the demographic data of local people, the second volunteer tourists.

4.6.1. LOCAL PEOPLE

4.6.1.1. Local factor

This paragraph, showing the local factor of interviewees, aims to prove that the originality of the interviewee.

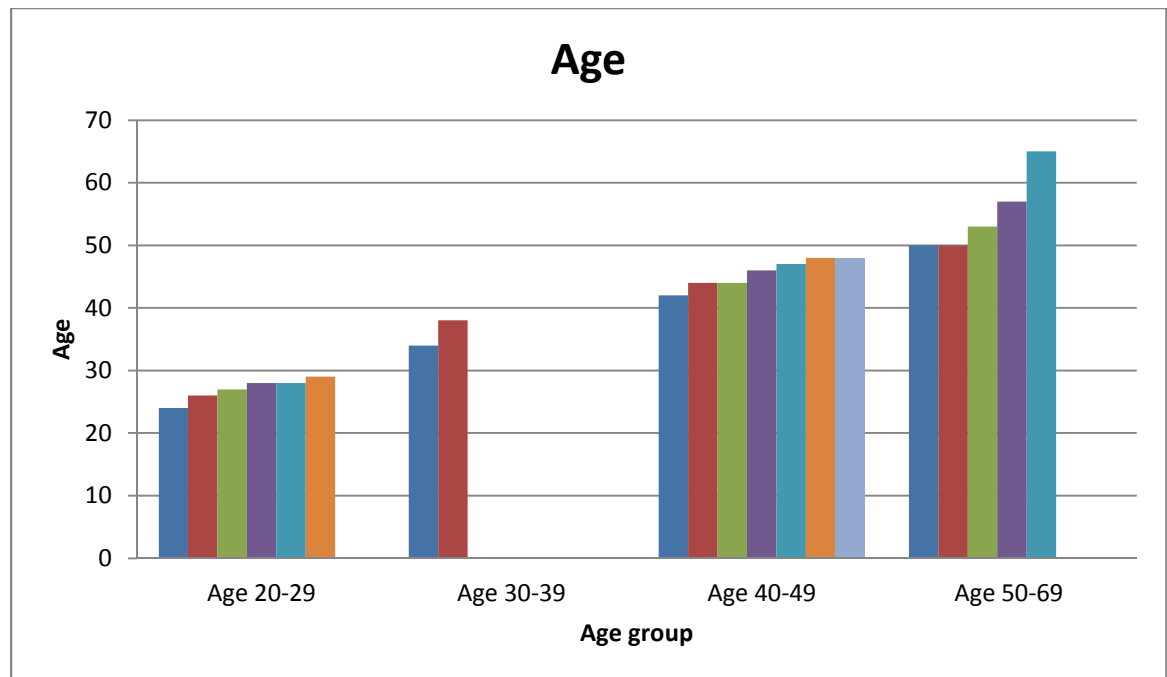
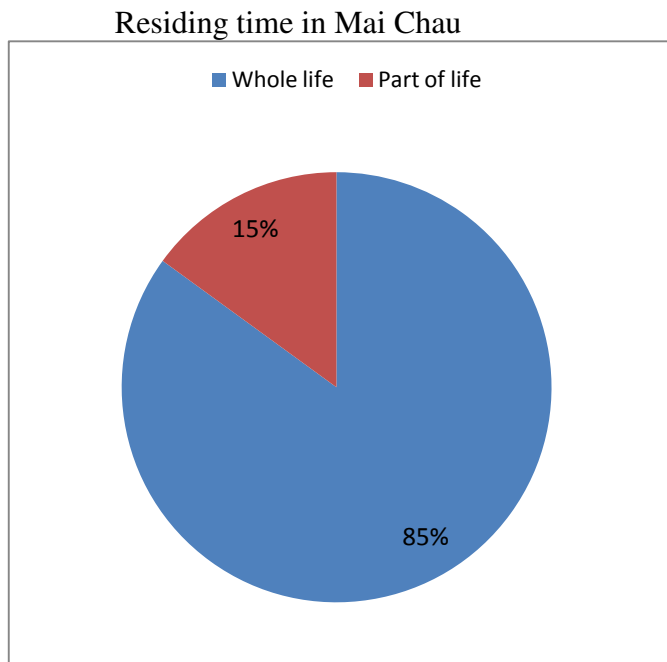


Fig. IV.3. Age group of local people informants

This chart illustrates how interviewee ages are distributed among the age groups. The age 40-49 receives the highest respondent. In Vietnamese society, this group usually hold the high position in the local community, the purposive method of this study also focus on this group. The youngest informant is 24 years old while the oldest interviewee is 65. The average age of respondents is 41 year old.



The left pie chart shows the average percentage of interviewees spending their whole life in Mai Chau versus ones who residing in Mai Chau for part of life. Most of them (85%) spend whole life in Mai Chau, only 3 respondents out of 20 do not. These three informants have been staying in Mai Chau for more than ten years.

Fig. IV.4. Residing time in Mai Chau

Ethnic distribution

Only two informants are Kinh ethnic and while the eighteen others are local ethnic Thai people. Unlike that fact that dominant group in Vietnam is Kinh people (around 85 %), Thai ethnic is the dominant ethnic in Mai Chau with the percentage being 60%. The proportion of respondents also illustrates this fact.

4.6.1.2. Other demographic data

Gender	
Male	11
Female	09
Marriage status	
Married	20
Education	
Elementary	1
Junior high school	3
High school	11
Vocational School	3
University	2
Household income (USD/household/month)	
25-100	5
101-200	4
200-299	4
300	4
Greater than 300	1

Table IV.5. Other demographic data of local people

The gender selection is quite balance, this factor increase the reliability of the findings. All of the respondents are married as the average marriage age in Mai Chau is at

the age of 20. Education backgrounds of respondent confirm that they are fluent in the language of the interview, which is Vietnamese. Education ranges from elementary to university level. Thai people also have their own language, which is significantly different to Vietnamese language. They learn to speak and write Vietnamese at schools. The highest number of education background is from high school; there is no higher education in Mai Chau. In order for further studies, they have to go to Hoa Binh city, which is about 50 kilometers from Mai Chau. This is the explanation for the popularity of education level in Mai Chau is a high school. The income of informant is relatively low because the volunteer tourist often seeks for the place where the local people have some difficulties in life. The average income per household is USD181 per month.

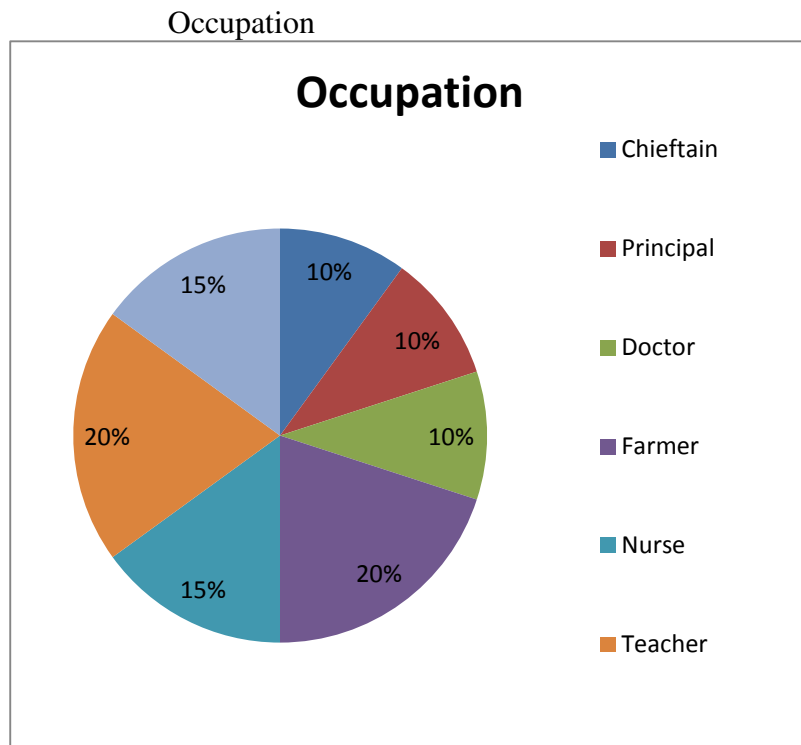


Fig. IV.5. Occupation of local people

Occupation percentage satisfies the purposive sampling method of this research. Since the volunteer activities in Mai Chau mainly include construction of local schools and health promotion, the interviewees have representatives from doctor (10%), nurse (10%), principal (10%) and teacher (20%). They are the ones who directly work with and receive support from the

volunteer tourists. The group of farmer (20%) and chieftain (10%) also illustrate the demographic factor of Mai Chau; Mai Chau is an agriculture district, and the public administration is based on the unit of a village where a chieftain is representative of each village. Each local interviewee at least had one encounter with the volunteer tourists.

4.6.2. VOLUNTEER TOURIST

As mention in the methodology chapter, this group is supplementary group. Total number of volunteer tourists answering the interview is 10. Most of them has background related to education and are from Australia.

4.6.2.1. Age group

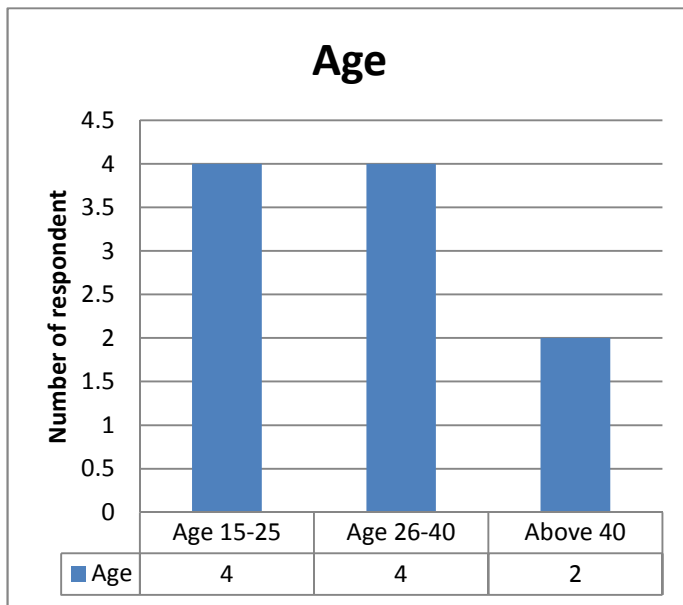


Fig. IV.6. Age group of volunteer tourists

The average age of volunteer tourism is 31 year old. Unlike the fact that the volunteer tourist is considered young people whose age is from 17-25 years old (Zahra and McIntosh, 2007), the average age of this study is relatively high because the author purposely selects the group leader or group preventatives among the group

who usually older than the rest of the group. On the ground observation also confirms about the young age of volunteer tourist, most of them are from 16 – 25 years old.

Education background:

The volunteer tourist group shows the high education background

High School	2
Colleague	3
Bachelor	3
Post Graduate	2

Table IV.6. Education background of volunteer tourists.

Nine of them have the occupation related to education; only one is the tour leader from Antipodean.

4.6.2.2. Occupation

Lecturers	4
Student	3
School student	2

Table IV.7. Occupation of volunteer tourists.

Informants with the high level of education background are hypothesized to provide the author with thoughtful respond, and they might create positive impacts to the local people.

Other factors	
Gender	
Male	03
Female	07
Marriage status	
Married	04
Singer	06
Nationalities	
Australia	8
England	1
Scotland	1

Table IV.8. Other factors volunteer tourists

In terms of gender balance, the volunteer group is female dominant. One group comes from female boarding school and one group from nursing college, so the female dominant is reasonable. Most of them are from Australia because both groups depart from Australia.

Mai Chau is the first international volunteer experiences to six of informants. The others have been in volunteer tourism for 2, 3 and 4 times per person. Among them, one informant did volunteer trip Mai Chau for four consecutive years. One informant is volunteer tourism leader, so his international volunteer experience is uncountable.

Overall, this section describes the demographic information of local people and volunteer tourist. The demographic of both groups show the high relevance to the research strategy and the topic of this research. As compared to the local people,

volunteer tourists have higher education background, more diversity in the marriage status and nationalities, and younger.

This chapter draws the background information of this research towards Vietnam, Mai Chau tourism, the image of local people, volunteer tourist, and facilitators in this research. The aim of this chapter is to show the high compatibility of this single case study to the research question and research purpose of the author.

CHAPTER V - FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This chapter addresses and answers the research question of this thesis, which is “What are the sociocultural impacts on volunteer tourism”. This question is broken down into several module questions. The main data are from the local people; however, in order to increase the credibility, these answers are compared to volunteer tourists’ perspective and observation method.

5.1. Image of volunteer tourist

All the informants were asked a question on the image of volunteer tourism whom they have met. General speaking, this image is decidedly positive. They perceive volunteer tourism as a righteous people who came to help them. Local people draw the characteristics of volunteer tourism as below.

5.1.1. ENTHUSIASTIC WORKER

All of the informant refer the volunteer tourist as enthusiastic workers. These are some of the notable interview from the respondent.

“Volunteer tourists work very enthusiastically, I know that, back home, they do not do this kind of blue-collar job. When they are here, they have to use garden hoes and shovels to mix concrete by hand. This job is highly laboring demanding, but they are still extremely enthusiastic.” Duong (project coordinator, 38)

“In the beginning, they do not know how to work, but after few introductions, they lean it real quick and are very excited to work” Luan (Construction worker/farmer, 24)

“ At first, I do not think that they are able to do these jobs. After two days, I realize that I am wrong, that they work exceedingly well” Tam (Farmer, 28)

“They try their best to work; they told me that these jobs are unimaginable in their country, for example, carrying soil by the wheelbarrow, digging the ground by pushing foot to the shovel, spades of sand to reconstruct the bicycle park “ Tem (School Principal, 53)

“In case of paralyzed patients, they come to their home to cure the ulcerate tumour, they wash and clean patient’s blanket and curtain.” Thin (Nurse, 48)

“These students work exceedingly hard; they work eight out a day from morning to the afternoon even in the noon time” Ngoc (Farmer, 44)

5.1.2. FRIENDLINESS

Even though, the language is different, but it is easy to watch the body language that volunteer tourists and local people. Hang waving and shaking, cheerful smiles all this speaks about the friendliness of volunteer tourists, which create a strong relationship and trust among local people.

“In spite of the language barrier, I can see the friendliness in their eyes, their smile. I feel them much closer” Tam (Farmer, 28)

“They always smile, say hi and shake hands with us” Ngoc (Farmer, 44)

““They are particularly attractive, they play volleyball with us. They dance a local dance with us in the evening. I consider them as a Vietnamese like us, not difference at all” Trang (Teacher, 27)

“Some volunteer tourist even shed tears when we farewell, that is so touching to us. I also cry because I miss them and I do not know when I could meet them gain” Luan (Construction worker, 24)

“After finishing project, they drink local wine and dance with us. It is impressive” Tem (School principal, 53)

“They wholeheartedly interact with us; they like children; they show their interest on our local culture, such as bamboo dance, local music instrument” Khoa (school principal, 48)

5.1.3. SKILLFUL NURSE

This part is only appropriate to the medical volunteer tourism. According to the report from local nurses, the volunteer tourists in the medical treks seem to be particularly skillful.

“One group includes three main doctors and nursing students. Nursing students examine the local patients; afterward, doctors give them instructions about the symptoms and appropriate treatment method. They prescribe appropriate medicines for each type of illness” Thin (head nurse, 48)

“They examine patients carefully and in details. They discuss with patient very openly, simultaneously, examining patients. They also educate patients about health awareness. There are many things that local people do not pay attention, for example, drinking water daily, brush the teeth. They tell adults to bath every day, moreover, they, themselves, wash some children’s hair” Dan (nurse, 42)

5.1.4. VOLUNTEER TOURIST – A GOOD ROLE MODEL

It is appealing that the local people seem to look upon the volunteer tourist as a good role model. According to the locals, volunteer tourists often act very politely in remarkably respectful manner; they also obey the local rules.

“They are not noisy and adopt the local living schedule, they work orderly”
Tien (chieftain, 44)

“We invite them some local snacks, after eating, they still keep the rubbish in their hand and ask me for the trash can. I take the rubbish bag from my room, afterward, all the volunteer students run to put trash in. I realize they have high environmental awareness. When we have meals together, they always help the host to clean up a place. I, myself, learn a lot from them and tell all the colleagues and school pupils to learn from them” Tem (School principal, 53)

“They respect the living schedule of locals and obey the local regulation. They do not bring wine or beer...They take responsibility for their work. Having a bath in the spring, they still keep the trash with them. Local children here throw garbage everywhere. My grand children also learn about the environmental awareness from volunteer tourism, not throwing the trash” Khuat (farmer, 65)

5.1.5. VOLUNTEER TOURIST AS A GOOD PEOPLE

Local people perspective towards local people is truly satisfactory, they fully support volunteer tourist; they trust the volunteer tourist because they know that volunteer tourists come to help.

“General speaking, we are truly happy to receive the volunteer tourist coming to help the mountainous villages like this...they are good people coming to help us” Tam (Farmer, 28)

“Villages are extremely touching upon the arrival of volunteer tourist; they feel happy of being cared by foreigner” Trang (Farmer, 27)

“My family is truly happy to host the volunteer tourists; we try to give them the comfortable staying” Dung (Teacher, 29)

“We are highly appreciated about their visiting and helps, we do not have anything to say but thanks” Ham (Chieftain, 47)

“We are tremendously happy to see the volunteer tourist here, we are truly thankful to their support” Tam (Farmer, 28)

This positive image is also reflected on the expectation of these volunteer tourists. In the interviews, they express the hope that local people would see them as a good people.

“I hope it is the right one, I hope they see us in the way we meant to be...I think, in reality, it always been good. They always make us feel welcome, which implies that they are happy to see us. They all talk to us and smile to us so it make us feel that we are welcome...they are happy for us to be here” Staff (tour leader, 35)

“I think they appreciate what we are doing, they are interested in what we do and how we are here. Today they helped us to carry the sand up so they are thankful and happy to have us here. I think they certainly like us” Nat (school student, 16)

“I think they probably find us immensely friendly and easy going...They always come up to say hello, nice to see you again and thank you for coming. I think we have positive image, and it has been extremely enjoyable to see the relationship grown...Because we keep coming back, we have come back; we have done that so they trust us as well. I think they look at us as Westerner, and they think, because we are Westerners, we have the best of everything, we know the best medicine, the best healthcare system, but they never show any envy or anything like that, they do not treat us any different ” Kylie (Lecturer, 58)

“Positive, hope they see we are coming here to help them and listening to what they need. Hopefully, we been friendly towards them” Jennet (Lecturer, 52)

“They seem to be intensely interested in who, and why we are here...by what we knew, they look up to us. They look us to see what we do, we are sort of role model” Donuald (24, student)

Some respondents were concerned about their different appearances in the local people's eye, however, according to the interviews, local people find volunteer tourists similar to them. They might find them strange on the first day, however, by the end of the day, they consider volunteer tourist as one part of the community.

"Loudly, open, have more stuffs such as clothes, we worry about a lot of things, clothes, we are strangers to them" Sara (School student, 15)

"Different, probably, particularly fortunate and lucky, from different word" Kellie (Teacher, 34)

The possible explanation of this positive image is actions and good will of volunteer tourist in the field. Volunteer tourists also aware about their role model in the community. Consequently, volunteer tourists try to adopt the local culture and become part of their community. As one of interviewee states

"We have been respectful to their local custom and tradition... we been able to be a good role model, so that we come in to teach them ... we show them how to brush the teeth, and they also see us brushing the teeth. We adapt local culture... we might be difficult to seat on the ground, but we try to fit to full respect of local custom, even it is terribly uncomfortable because my legs are too long. Food is a bit different (laugh) so they way we get our food is hugely different; everything severed in small plates. Back home, everything in one plate. We have tried to be part of community as the way of reaching people; you have to go with them. We have not come with much technology (such as iPhone). We had to use less water, careful of their resources. We had to be mindful of limited resources that we were careful of how we using it." Jennet (lecturer, 52)

5.2. The involvements of local people

Volunteer tourism is under the umbrella of sustainable tourism, and the involvement of local people is extremely critical to the improvement of this kind of tourism. Wearing (2001) also states that the cooperation with the host communities can help to maintain the improvement of volunteer tourism. This part is to examine the participation level of local people, as well as the individual benefit of them in volunteer tourism. The result is helpful to predict and maintain the possible impact of volunteer tourism.

Regarding the participations, four out of twenty informants say they do not involve in the volunteer tourism activities. The rest, which are sixteen informants, attend in volunteer tourism at different levels.

5.2.1. PROJECT-RELATED PARTICIPATION

Local people participate in the volunteer process, from the project selection to project implementation. In addition, they also take responsibility for arranging tourism service on the field. The fact that volunteer tourists in Mai Chau usually go to real remote places, where has no tourist facilities, maintain the attendance of local people in this process. The volunteer tourists mostly use home stay accommodation, ate food prepared by the local cook and sharing the same restroom with local people.

“I have coordinated construction projects in Mai Chau since 2007” Duong (Project coordinator, 38)

“My house is spacious so that I provide a home stay accommodation for customer. I am happy that Buffalo Tour selects my house as an accommodation. We need

to buy more blankets, pillows and household furniture for guests, Buffalo will support stuffs which are unaffordable to us” Dung (Teacher, 29)

“I provide the guest with accommodation, rest room, bath room. The price for accommodation is 2 USD per guest per night since 2004” Khuat (Farmer, 65)

“I am a cook for volunteer tourist. Sometimes, I sell them some soft drinks or beer” Chau (Cook, 26)

As could be seen, local community participates in the setting up of volunteer tourist service and project in Mai Chau. Local people also involve in the project arrangement.

“I facilitate the working location of guests in my school. I allocate the working schedule to match the plan of volunteer tourist and school staff” Tem (school principal, 53). Cuong, who is hospital director, also shares this opinion.

5.2.2. VOLUNTARY SUPPORT

Many respondents revealed that they voluntarily help volunteer tourist in a construction work or health checkup. This fact also reconfirms the support of local people to the volunteer tourism project.

“I help them to carry the material such as sand, brick, rock, etc” Ngoc (Farmer,44)

“I help to carry rock, whatever they ask for help, I will do it” Cuong (Farmer,26)

“I participate in the health checkup. I help to translate the local language to the translator of the volunteer group” Thin (Head nurse, 48).

An explanation is some patient cannot speak Vietnamese; they only speak their local language, hence, the nurse, who could speak Vietnam and local language, translate the local language to the Vietnamese translator.

As a participant, the author also had the chance to observe the active participation of local people. On the third day of the project that builds a new restroom for local kindergartens, many parents whose children are enrolled in that kindergarten come to help the volunteer group. They work exceptionally enthusiastic, hand in hand with the tourist to increase the speed of the projects. All of them look extremely happy to help because they know that it brings benefit for their kids.

Of interest, when being asked about the individual benefit from volunteer tourist, many respondents say that they do not have direct benefit for themselves; nevertheless, they consider it as public benefits for the community. In Mai Chau, most of the projects focus on the public infrastructure.

“My benefit is happiness because we can help the people, who in need, to build restroom, classroom. I am happy that I can help to create job for other fellows who are construction worker for the projects” Duong (Project Coordinator, 38)

“Most of the people is exceedingly happy and receive benefits from volunteer tourism, they come here to build local kindergarten for my children. People also feel proud of having Westerner help” Tam (Farmer, 28)

“I think about the public benefit in many aspects, rather than individual one” Cuong (Hospital director, 50)

5.3. Sociocultural impacts of volunteer tourism.

The sociocultural impacts of tourism have been the topic of many researchers (Richards & Hall, 2000), (Weaver, 2001). Reviewing these literatures does not give a clear definition of sociocultural impacts. In this research, the author uses socio-cultural impacts in order to narrow down the research topic; The idea is to study the impact on the society and the local culture. This research excludes the economic, environmental and

other impacts of volunteer tourism. The social impacts refer to the community development, and cultural impact is the culture change of local behavior. The data analysis method is pattern-matching so that the conceptual framework is followed to generate the finding. This research is exploration; thus, this framework only serves as the guideline, during the study, the author always try to explore new features out of the framework.

5.3.1. POSITIVE IMPACTS.

The impacts start by a positive one then the risk of volunteer tourism is described later.

5.3.1.1. Social impacts

5.3.1.1.1. Infrastructure development

The local people repeatedly mention this visible impact during their interview. In Mai Chau, volunteer tourists focus on developing an education infrastructure. Education one is classroom, schoolyard, restroom and so on. During the interview, informant also explains how these supports from volunteer tourist help them, without these supports; the local people would have to contribute by themselves, volunteer tourists share the burden with local people. The public building like this also triggers other factor such as education and work efficiency of the parents whose children learn in these schools.

“Local people directly receive benefits from projects thus they like the projects. Without the support of volunteer tourist, the local people would have to contribute to rebuild classrooms, restroom, and schoolyard every two or three years. These

constructions are more fortified than the one built by local people” Duong (Project Coordinator, 38)

“The school looks more spacious, safe, and modern, unlike the old one which was nearly torn to pieces. We find it much more convenient and better. Back to the past, in order to build the school, we had to go to the forest and cut down trees for timber” Tam (Farmer, 28)

“The local road used to be extremely dirty and muddy, thanks to the volunteer tourists, it is cleaner now. Children have playground to play there.” Trang (Farmer, 27)

“It was terribly tragic; the old school was exceedingly moist, especially during the wet southern wind, teachers use cloths to clean many times but the floor where the children sleep was still extremely wet. Some days, class was cancelled due to the moist weather. The new school is much better; we feel the life becomes more positive. Kids have a playground; parents are no longer worrying about their kids in school, and they work more productively” Dung (Teacher, 29)

“Volunteer tourists support us to build 1000 square meter schoolyard. Now it is used for the common activities...the electric system of Mai Chau is unstable, one volunteer group gives us an electric generator...when other school staffs visit ours, we are proud to introduce these works are constructed by volunteer tourists” Tem (school principal, 53)

“Volunteer tourist also builds a midwifery room for our medical center so the pregnant mother could give birth to baby in our center. They are tremendously happy because they do not have to go to central hospital anymore” Dan (Nurse, 42)

5.3.1.1.2. Health promotion

From the local people perspective, they highly appreciate the volunteer tourist as the cohort to promote healthy life style and volunteer tourist is one factor to change the public health awareness of local people.

“They come to teach pupils how to brush their teeth in classes; the kids have practical experiences by brushing their teeth and washing their hand under the instruction of Westerner during their class. Kids could get into the habit of brushing their teeth every day” Luan (School principal, 24)

“A lot of patients respond that their sickness becomes better after drinking medicine from volunteer tourist. They tell the local people to drink more water, keep hygienic and healthy life style. We (local doctor) also tell local people the same thing, however, when Westerners tell them; it becomes more persuasive” Cuong (Doctor, 50)

“When volunteer tourists give free medicine and health checkup, the local people feel more confident and being cared. However, medicine is just a small part; they train the local people about health awareness and how to take care of our health. Volunteer tourist is one factor to develop the health awareness of local people. This process takes a long time, but adding the volunteer tourist makes it more persuasive, when Westerner and Vietnamese doctors keep telling them the same thing. I suppose that local people accept it easier” Le (Doctor, 49)

This impact is also illustrated in the expectation of volunteer tourist. Some volunteer tourists have come here year after year, so they perceived their impacts in health education particularly clearly.

“It helps people. If only one people, it could worth out. One person might be an enormous impact to the society. That helps the health system. That less impact on the

health system that means the health system can be used for other people for preventing other people. If you do not wash your hand before going to the toilet and get diarrhea, then going to the hospital just because you do not wash your hand, that the huge waste of hospital. Your bed can be used for other patients. That social impacts are health promotion to get people try to be health, try not to be injured” Donuald (Student, 24)

“The kids look certainly cleaner, most of them knew about brushing the teeth now so it was not the first time they heard about it. They also knew about the hand washing; the clothes look a bit cleaner. There are obviously some improvements.” Jennet (Lecturer, 52)

“Health promotion with the school kids, we go to the elementary school and kinder garden and teach them to brush their teeth and wash their hand. Those are the two most beneficial things that you can teach in any local community. In the medical terminology of spreading of disease, if you can clean teeth, you can reduce teeth disease, if you wash your hand, you can reduce bug and disease of worms. So two basic actions are connecting to a big difference to general health and well-being of community.” Kylie (Lecturer, 58)

The volunteer tourists to Mai Chau also care about the limitation of health system here so they manage to maximize the available medicine and health care system, at the same time; they know that there is better treatment method; however, the health system in Mai Chau is unable to offer.

“There is a lot thing we see, and we know the way to treat them. Something can be done for them, but they do not have access to that treatment so we do not suggest, we do not mention, let them know that there is the other thing available...You can always offer the basic that can help them. The health care system in Vietnam could not offer them so you cannot get people hope that” Shelly (student, 32)

“We must be careful of giving out things. If we just give out thing that temporary fix that is not gonna do anything. That is gonna be counter the health promotion and education. For example, if we give out some kind of medicines that fix it now, and in a month or two when they run out of those then they have the same problems again. But when we educate and teach them about how to control problem, like lifting technique, thing like that, then they stay health and do not have the same problem when we are coming back next year” Rys (Student,25)

5.3.1.1.3. Education encouragement

This impact has a tight connection with the role model of volunteer tourists and the construction of education infrastructure. The local people perceive the volunteer tourist as a good image to encourage local children to study.

“Last group came and taught the kid some new games. They make the kids more eager to learn...Sometimes, I want to talk with the volunteer tourists, but I forget most the English. I will start learning English to talk with them next time” Cuong(Teacher,26)

“Interacting with volunteer tourist helps the children to become more confident. Volunteer tourists also present gifts to poor pupils and encourage them to study. These pupils are truly moving and thankful to the volunteer tourist...Volunteer tourist is an education tool. They train the local children to be more confident, to protect the environment, to study hard. Life skills of children are also improved. The education system in Vietnam is more theoretical than practical, pupils usually inactively study, and they do not use their imagination in studying. Volunteer tourists as an outer source make them thinking more and act actively.” Tem (School principal, 53)

During the observation, the researcher also experiences some examples of education development. In the home stay accommodation where has received the

volunteer tourists for the second time, a previous group left some English Alphabet sticker on the stilts, for example, A with an apple, G with grape, F with flower. I ask the only boy of that family, who is about ten years old often, to read them. He could not read every character; however, he could read quite well after me, so I hope that these minor details grow into his passion of studying more.

During interviews, many local teachers and volunteer tourists convey the concept that the infrastructure, which is built by volunteer tourists, enhances the love of school which then improve the knowledge that will have a flown effect for the community to develop. Moreover, the toys from volunteer tourist also help teachers to teach easier. The children could also learn a few words from daily conversations with volunteer tourists, and the tourists lean some Vietnamese phases from them, it is a mutual exchange in education.

The previous part has touched upon the positive social impacts of volunteer tourism. It is proven that volunteer tourist creates positive impacts on education, infrastructure development and health promotion to the local people. It is the local people who speak out on this evidence; these impacts also match the expectation of volunteer tourists.

5.3.1.2. Cultural impacts

In Mai Chau, the interest of volunteer tourists makes local people proud of their local culture, then it helps to preserve the local culture and promote culture exchange. Additionally, most of the volunteer tour end up by the exchange performances between local people and volunteer tourist; the shows usually include traditional performances of local people. In responding to question of cultural impacts, the local people answers are divided into:

5.3.1.2.1. Cultural exchange

“Local people can exchange our cultural value, in lieu of the language barrier; we still dance, sing and work together. People want to show the best of their local culture to the volunteer tourists. Last time even it was raining, people still worn local custom to perform traditional dance” Duong (Project Coordinator, 38)

“We played volley ball and perform with volunteer tourists even it was raining. Both local people and tourists are mere enthusiasm to show their culture” Ngoc (Famer, 44)

“As early as we know about the arrival of volunteer tourist, we will gather to practice local dances. We are so eager to perform our traditional dances that, sometimes, we leave our children for husbands to take care in the evening and we stay in school to practice” Dung (Teacher, 29)

“Volunteer tourist makes us feel closer to the other part of the world, I look forward to more group coming. It creates the environment to promote the cultural exchange between local people and volunteer tourists.”

“We have culture exchange here, we sing and dance together. I play a musical instrument, and they sing along with us” Khuat (Farmer, 65)

Before getting to the next advantage of the volunteer tourism, it is essential to look at the demographic factor of volunteer tourists. As mention before, most of them are Australian and all is living in Australia. This country also experiences the importance of culture in ethnic identity (see Freya Higgins-Desbiolles 2006) or *“Australia has the same problem with indigenous people – gap in health care and living standard”* said one of Australian respondent. Consequently, the volunteer tourists interviewed in this research

concern a lot about the culture factor, and they take a serious care about the impacts of volunteer tourism.

“They should try to keep their culture. We got the indigenous people, but in the last few eyes, Australian culture pretty much disappear as the result of English coming to Australia. The indigenous culture, a lot of it disappears and cannot be found again...I prefer to making them of what they have and who they are, and make them (Mai Chau people) proud to show Westerners about this who we are and where we come from” Donuald (student, 28)

“We have to be exceedingly careful when coming to the village that we have to adopt the local life style so that we do not bring outside influences. It is quite difficult. The first year we came in, the bathroom was a hole and drop-toilet, because we were coming then they build the toilet...we feel rude saying do not do that, but we do not want them to change what they do, we want them to stay the way we are.... When we come here, we tell the student what clothes to wear, you have to wear long sleeve the knee, we try to minimize the impact on what we do, not to bring all our food, sticker, and computer. If we have a phone, we just try to hide them, we try to isolate to minimize the impacts.” Kylie (Lecturer, 58)

The motivation and caring of volunteer tourists is the easy explanations for the last positive impacts of volunteer tourism.

5.3.1.2.2. Culture proud and preservation

The good will of volunteer tourists on the cultural originality and culture exchange makes local people proud about their identity value so that they could maintain it.

“They (volunteer tourist) show their appreciation to our traditional customs, and they encourage our people to love our traditional values. Suddenly, our people pay attention to our value, and they start to preserve it. The tradition value is used to be fade away, until, volunteer tourists show their interest at. People come back to learn about traditional dance, about local musical instruments. I think they remind our people not to forget our core value. Local people come to know that our cultural identity, our traditional clothes is so priceless that other nationalities respect it” Khuat (Farmer, 65)

“We can introduce our ethnic culture, Vietnamese as general and Thai people in particular” Khoa (school principal, 48)

“They ask me question on our daily behaviors, and they adopt it. I am so proud about it” Thin (head nurse, 48)

“The performance with volunteer tourists is the occasion for us to perform our traditional dance. We feel proud upon the visitors of guests because Thai people have the typical custom. We are extremely excited to show our guest our dance, our voice, our traditional custom” Dung (Teacher, 29)

The last night of volunteer tour is often marked by the farewell performance. During this show, local people often introduce the best of their culture as a gift to volunteer tourists. All the performers do not get pay from the tour operator. Unlike mass tourism, when culture value is used as a commodity, we see here the example of mutual exchange. Local people voluntarily perform their traditional dance and song to the volunteer tourist. Volunteer tourist is much more like a guest of the community than a visitor. Eliza & Hall (2008) also share the same observation about the “culturally representative performances”, they suppose that these activities make the volunteer program moving away from conventional tourism with a typical form of cultural consumption.

This part draws the positive impacts of volunteer tourist in terms of culture and society. Speaking of social impacts, the local people perceived volunteer tourism to develop infrastructure, promote healthcare, public health awareness and education. On the other hand, volunteer tourism is an excellent opportunity to exchange culture; moreover, the interest of volunteer tourist on local culture empowers the ethnic people and encourages them to preserve their own way of life. These impacts have a strong connection with the expectation and good will of volunteer tourists, the explanation-building based on the interviews of volunteer tourist.

5.3.2. THE RISKS OF VOLUNTEER TOURISM.

Guttentag (2009) concluded possible negative impacts of volunteer tourist only from secondary data, and he points out the necessary for greater awareness of possible impacts of volunteer tourism. Moreover, most of the previous studies show the negative impacts with the methods being observation or literature review, hardly; any research has these data from local people perspective. This study approaches the volunteer tourism with a balancing viewpoint; the insider participation observation is a robust methodology for the researcher to closely interview local people. Hopefully, he is able to delve into the perception of local people regarding this issue.

Initially, most of local people claim that volunteer tourism is perfect and has no drawback at all.

“No negative impacts because they are respectable people” Khuat (Farmer, 65)

“No negative impacts, we all satisfy; everything is acceptable” Tam (Farmer, 28)

“Volunteer tourists are mere kind; we do not see any case of mission-trip” Ham (Chieftain, 47)

“I cannot find any negative impact” Chau (Farmer, 26)

Volunteer tourists are also skeptic about their influences. Some volunteer tourists show their concern about the popularity of mobile phone in Mai Chau. The change of shop in Hang Kia when they have nothing but in twelve months, they have mobile phones and TV; meanwhile, they do not have enough food on the table. The first time visitor is surprised at the existence of mobile phone network. They are not sure that impacts from volunteer tourist or other outer influence “*Probably, the influence of us, seeing us with the mobile phone, I do not know*” said one respondent. The real concern is the jumping toward the mobile phone; meanwhile, they do not spend enough money for healthcare, which is more beneficial.

Some showed concern about the burden on the local resources. They might use more resource such as water, restroom system than the capacity of local resources. The others doubt about the Westerner influence to the local life style such as behavior or local clothes.

Unlikely the concerns of volunteer tourists, local people see the risks in a different angle.

5.3.2.1. The conflict of local interest

This conflict refers to the comparison of local people when they think that some villages could receive more supports than they could; they consider it as unfair; moreover, a minority of people are skeptical about the using of money.

The first charity activity that Buffalo Tour set up in Mai Chau was funded by Buffalo Tours. This fund sponsored each poor family with a buffalo. In Vietnam, buffalo is a fortune for a farmer family. At the initial step, Van village received the first two buffalos. The plan was to expand to other village gradually; however, other villages saw the fact that only Van village got support so they made complaint about this. They

thought only that village received the funding. This even did not create conflict between villages; however, Buffalo Tour realized this could be risk for the future development of volunteer tourism here and they divert their projects into public projects as today. The lesson learnt is that the volunteer project should avoid the concentration on some small group or individuals in the community; otherwise, it could lead to the conflict of local people.

Dung (Teacher, 28) tells another story on this topic. Her village received a fund from volunteer tourists. The fund is just enough to build the local kindergarten. However, other people in the community thought that the support, which is from the Westerners, must be a lot. Gradually, the rumor came about the misuse of this finance. The reason behind was the lack of information on the project. People start saying that the money was not used as it should be, it goes to the pocket of individual. Finally, the quality of infrastructure is the best answer to stop this rumor. Dung said that the school and other project's quality are highly satisfactory. The rumor people also realized that the project deserved the support. This story also links up to other risk of volunteer tourism.

5.3.2.2. Non-transparent use of direct support

This risks concern about the way that direct money is collected and used after volunteer tourist's distribution.

This is a story from the project coordinator. In one village, volunteer tourists support each poor household with VND 500.000 (USD 25). The project coordinator makes a list of poverty households then sends it to Buffalo Tour. Volunteer tourists distribute the money to these families on the list. Afterward, a high position member(s) of this village gathers all of them and collects from each family USD 22; these households only receive the rest, which is USD 3. The 22 bucks are said to be invested on the

cooperative farming organization of that village. Most of the villager does not oppose that decision because they simply think that they already have USD 3 out of nothing, and that is good enough, but one member rejects and denies that decision. Then the collector shows him the local rule about the donation should be re-contributed to the organization. So what is the result? Somehow, the project coordinator knows about this case and he comes to the village to ensure that these poor households should receive their own fund, which is USD 25 each. Finally, the entire poor household could receive the whole money to which they deserve. These villagers are gentle, but lack knowledge; consequently, if it had not been for the project coordinator, they would have only received USD 3. This example shows what could happen to the support of volunteer tourist where the money is misused. Fortunately, the project coordinator effectively sold this case; but as the researcher, I am not sure if it could happen to other project. So the point here is not recommended to directly giving money to the local people because it could be leaked, instead all the fund should go to the public project under the careful watch of project manager.

5.3.2.3. Other factors

The project coordinator expresses concern about the clothes of some volunteers. The author also observes that the construction group wear clothes that are slightly different to the local people, they prefer short because the weather is quite hot in the summer and they swept a lot during the construction work. The project coordinator asks a question on how this style affects local kids? How the local kids think about Western lifestyle?

A waste of resource. During the field trip, the research found out the case that volunteers sponsored local school textbooks. The textbook seems to be the good

investment for the future; however, it is duplicated with support from local government. This school does not need textbooks. The dean of this school explains the solution to me that they would keep these textbooks for the next years. Another example happened during the health checkup. As a translator, I can tell that there are a small percentage of patients pretend to be sick to get medicine. The good thing is they can use medicine when they are sick, but I worry about the side effect of these medicines. However, these worries might not be true because the nursing group only chooses medicines that are less likely to cause any side effect.

This portion has summarized the risk of volunteer tourism according to the local people perspective. This risk includes the conflict of interest, nontransparent use of resources and so on. It is different from the worries of volunteer tourist and the existing knowledge regarding the risk of volunteer tourist. The ultimate purpose of volunteer tours is to help the local people, without listening to their perspectives; it leads to the fact that “good intention is not enough”. This research at this point rings the bell for more studies on the perspective of local people, since there should be a difference in their perception and the risk, which is only predicted by the volunteer tourist, facilitator or any type of stakeholder, but not a local people.

After being studied, the perception of local people could be summarized in the figure below

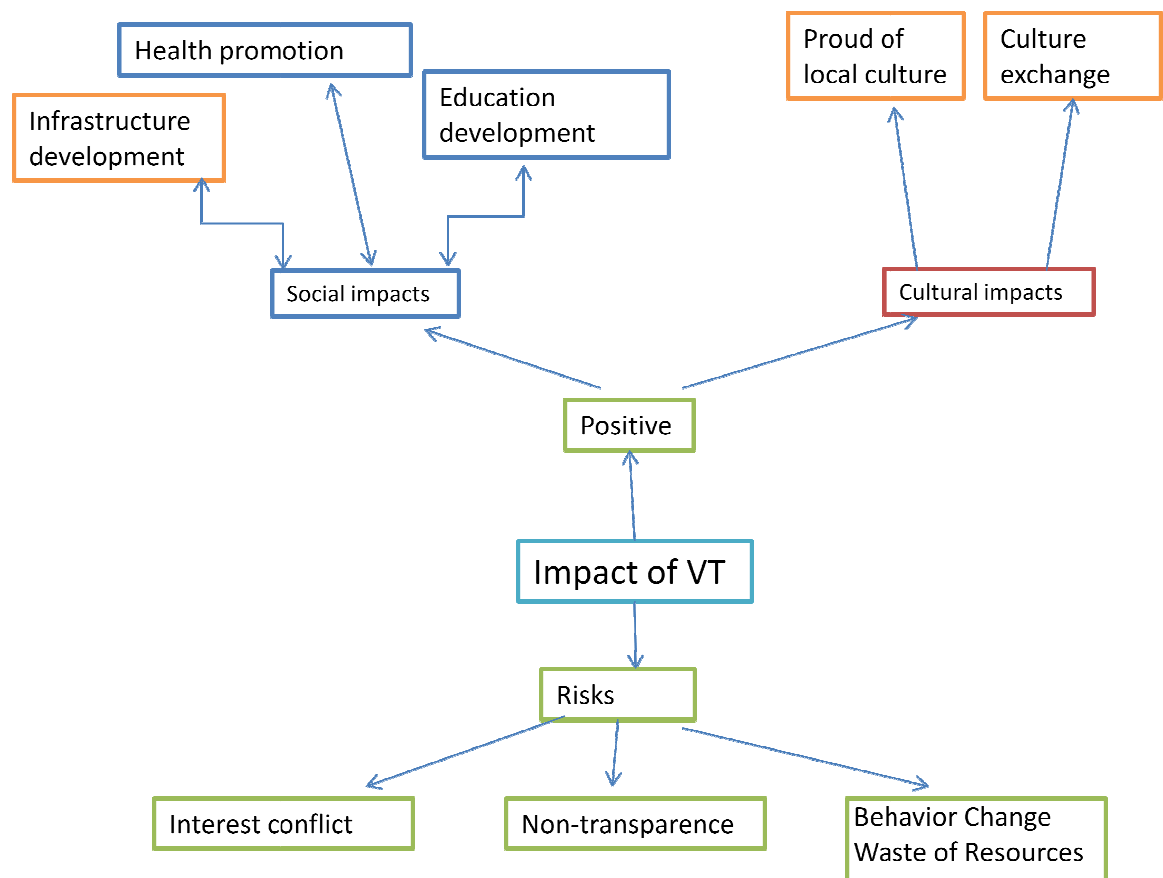


Fig. V.1. Socio-cultural impacts of volunteer tourism (local people)

5.4. Expectation of the local people towards volunteer tourist

What remains is

ed is the expectation of local people. Since the heart of this research is to study on the impacts of volunteer tourism; however, it is logical to include local people expectation. This is the opportunity for local people to speak out their mind.

General speaking, local people would ask for more projects. This delightful sign could indicate that the volunteer tourism in this region still keeps on the right track by focusing on the public projects. The local people also want to expand project field.

“We want more projects, because the living standard of local people here is still quite low, we are still lack of infrastructure and health care. I propose a new project on testing natural water quality. Some villages have a high rate of dirty-water related disorder. It is urgent because people here do not have clean water system; they have to use water directly from the mountain” Duong (Project coordinator, 38)

“We want more toys and blankets for children in the kindergarten” Cuong (Teacher, 26)

“I want more outdoor teaching aids for children. Our children here are seriously disadvantaged, kindergarten is like a small social for children, and we do not have enough teaching aids to efficiently teach the kids.” Dung (Teacher, 29)

“I want the nursing group to come here every year to enhance the health standard of local people” Thin (Head nurse, 48)

In conclusion, the local people expectation is “the more, the better”. However, to the volunteer tourist’s point of view, they want to maintain their contribution as “the less, the better”. Some of volunteer tourists explain the reason.

“I think we should maintain the number of projects. People just do a little thing in different villages, not tons of thing on one village, it could be better than do a lot; otherwise they can depend on us” Nat (student, 16)

“ I do not know; big is very hard because big is easy to fail and when they fail, people ignore it; the small is easy to make a change and hopefully for the small change; it leads to significant change, but small takes very long time” Staff(Tour leader, 35)

Moreover, the volunteer tourist also wants to keep their trip short enough to avoid the negative influence on the local culture.

“The more time we are here, the more impacts we have. If we have for four or five weeks, we might have some harmful effects, for example, I wonder if candy and decayed teeth of local kids resulted from Westerner culture” Staff(Tour leader, 35)

There is a discrepancy in the expectation of volunteer tourist and local people; the first thinks less is good and the second want more. So what is the meeting point? This answer needs a further investigation, but to my point of view, the role of volunteer tourist facilitator should be studied to answer this question. The role of tourism agent or visiting organization plays a vital role in answering this question. They should be the one to find the balance point of volunteer tourism in order to maintain the sustainability of this niche market.

5.6. Limitations of this study

The topics and research group of this study are new and relevant to the volunteer tourist study, moreover it could be used to generate new knowledge. topic is unique. He studies within his country border with main methodologies being participation and observation, a language background of Vietnamese and English and experiences of working in the tourism industry creates significant advantages to collect the empirical data for this topic. However, this topic still has notable limitations.

The conceptual framework is weak and not general enough. The good things of this conceptual framework are mind-map design, clearly idea, and summaries of relevant literature by the time of literature review. Nevertheless, the research of volunteer tourist and its impacts keep going every week so it is not generalized enough for research to data. Its content could be more sophisticated than that. The explanation of this drawback is the purpose of this research is the exploration, so the framework only serves as a guideline during the fieldwork and the researcher expects to find more ideas, which is out

of this framework. Other reason is that “the theoretical framework of volunteer tourism is still in their infancy” (Angela, 2011), so it is either difficult or not actually necessary to build a comprehensive framework for exploratory study.

The generalization of this finding is another disadvantage. It is the typical drawback of case study, which is used as the research design for this topic. This research design is better to gain an in-depth data about local people’s perspective. Additionally, the author does not focus on the generalization in this research; he looks forward to expanding or combining the findings of this research with other relevant studies for further research. Meanwhile, in the findings, this research also lays a foundation to several comparisons with other studies.

The shortage of quantitative data. Should this research include more number and figure about volunteer tourism in Mai Chau, it would be more comprehensive. The researcher also manages to gather this data during his field trip, but there is census system for volunteer tourism in the research area. Even Buffalo Tour does not have a tracking system for this number due to the changes of managers.

Dual-language is also an obstacle of this research. Most of the raw data of interviews is in Vietnamese; the translation of raw data is, more or less, unintentionally effected by the author idea, which could create some bias. Other than that, there is no way to conduct this study in only one language. In order to limit his bias, all the raw data are analyzed in the original language; the author only translates them when it comes to the final step of writing a thesis. The author is not English native speaker, so that some “interesting” meaningful expressions could be found in this research.

This chapter includes answers to research question and limitation of this research. Generally, the volunteer tourist and their impacts receive a favorable support from local people. It is crucial to keep in mind that volunteer tourist here have a number of risks,

which are, fortunately, solved by the local community. There is a conflict of expectation between local people and volunteer tourists' opinion, the role of the facilitator is essential to decipher this conflict. The chapter ends up with some limitations such as weak conceptual framework, lack of quantitative data, language bias.

CHAPTER VI - RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

To bring to conclusion, the local people fully support the development of a volunteer tourism in Mai Chau; meanwhile a minority of them perceives some hindrances of volunteer tourism. Studying this topic of local people's perspective on volunteer tourism, the author comes up with recommendations, some of which even go beyond the scope of this research but it is necessary to mention.

Regarding volunteer tourism research, by the time of writing this research, one more study on local people came out. The research's title is "The Influence of Residents' Perceptions on Their Support Towards Volunteer Tourism – Case Study: Sapa, Vietnam." (Ha and Thao, 2012) However, there is still the lack of research on this topic as compared to other research topics of volunteer tourism; there is a need to do more research on this area, otherwise, volunteer tourism and research on this topic run the risk of neglect on the local desire.

If it is not for their own requirement, the local people should not upgrade their facility to serve the volunteer tourists. The volunteer tourist enjoys the originality of local community; they prepare to stay with limited resources. Meanwhile, the local people struggle to upgrade their basic infrastructure because they think volunteer tourists like it. By doing so, they, somehow, lose their authentic identity which is the core value of tourism product. In other word, they waste their investment for the thing that does not work.

The facilitator in Mai Chau is doing in the right track. The critical point of his success is the high involvement of local people in the process on the ground. Without the engagement of local people/person, it is extremely hard for the project to reach the people in need, and when the problem arises, their involvements could help to create an

effective solution. There are many advantages of involving local people in the process of volunteer tourism. On the other hand, the facilitator also makes sure that the profits from volunteer tourism are fairly shared to the local people.

Is the engagement between education tour and volunteer tour good model for successful volunteer tourist experience? Most of the groups to Mai Chau are an education group, they from different schools coming to Mai Chau for volunteer tourist. We see here a mutual benefit; volunteer tourists learn lessons from the local people and local people receive a support from them. This is a win-win situation and compelling research question.

Conclusion

This research was designed to explore answers to the question: What do local people think about volunteer tourism in terms of sociocultural impacts on their communities, where the answer is often: “it is kind of good with some risks.” This research study involved a long journey to expose and evaluate such answers. The study follows the trail of a single case study strategy. The main methods used were interviews and a participant observation. The foremost sources of information were other research articles, volunteer tourists, local people and volunteer tourist organization. The nature of this journey was an exploration, with the results raising some fascinating points along the way. These were how local people perceive the risks of volunteer tourism, the discrepancy in their expectations and those of the volunteer tourist, and the central role of facilitators. Along this journey the explorer-researcher has a couple of advantages as compared to other researchers. The topic is rarely covered, as a result there is a shortage of research on local people’s opinion of volunteer tourism, and the qualitative method is relatively unique as compared to the quantitative data approach of the majority of other research studies on local people’s perspectives. In this, participant observation has great

value when the explorer has the opportunity for a closer look into the relationships between volunteer tourism and local people.

The research starts with literature review. Reviewing the current research articles on volunteer tourism, the researcher realized the importance of his topic, which focuses on the local people perspective. The researcher also delves into research methodologies used in other projects in order to find the most relevant mean to his research. The fieldwork was carried out in Mai Chau, which is one of the famous volunteer tourist destination in the North of Vietnam. The results are mostly gathered from interviews of 20 local people and 10 volunteer tourists. Local people show their fully support to the development of volunteer tourist. Local people consider volunteer tourists as an enthusiastic and skillful worker, friendly people. Moreover, local people look up to volunteer tourist as a good role model and a good people. This study also double checks with the expectation of volunteer tourists. It could be said this image is also reflected on the expectation of volunteer tourists. Speaking of the involvement of local people, the informants participate at different levels, which are project-related participation as well as voluntary support.

Generally speaking, the sociocultural impacts of volunteer tourism are positive. In terms of social impacts, local people believe that volunteer tourism helps them to improve infrastructure, to promote health awareness, to encourage local education. Cultural impacts includes cultural exchange, culture proud and preservation. The interesting point of this research is that it also discoveries the risk of volunteer tourism in Mai Chau. Initially, local people tend to deny the existence of it. However, the minority of informant shared valuable stories with the researcher. Those risks are the conflict of local interest, non-transparent use of a direct support and a waste of resource. Fortunately, those risks are solved within the local community. For example, the project

coordinator, who are local people, managed to direct these supports into right receivers. The lesson learnt is that direct support should be avoided at all cost, alternatively, the investment has better to focus on the public projects. These risks are quite different from other studies, which are mostly comes from a perspective of volunteer tourist, thus, this research again underlines the need of more researches from the local people's view, otherwise, volunteer tourism could be in trouble with those potential risks. The last part of this research approaches expectations of local people towards volunteer tourism projects. Local people say that they want more projects, both in quantity and variety types. Nevertheless, the volunteer tourists want to maintain the acceptable number of projects. More researches could be carried out to find the meeting point of expectations from both sides.

APPENDIX I. INTERNSHIP APPLICATION TO BUFFALO TOUR

Dear Sir/ Madam

Application for Internship

I am writing to apply for an internship position in Buffalo Tours. I am a postgraduate student at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific in Beppu, Oita, Japan studying my Masters of Sciences in Tourism Administration and Policy. My thesis work is on the impacts of volunteer tourism through local people's perspective, case study is in Mai Chau.

I received your contact from Facebook Fanpage, namely Buffalo Volunteers. According to this page, Buffalo Tours is very inspiring travel agent with a leading role in Volunteer tourism in Mai Chau, and I am glad that I am one of your fans. Attached is my research proposal that outlines research objectives, research methods, significance of my research and an introduction letter from my supervisor.

My research requires observation and interview methods. Working with other volunteer tourists to Mai Chau will help me to observe about the potential impacts of them on the local people, the reaction of local people to volunteer tourists; moreover, it would be a crucial initial step to conduct my interviews with local people and volunteer tourists if possible. Moreover, working as an internship in Hanoi office would be invaluable opportunities to have an inside view and hand-on experiences regarding the development of volunteer tourism. Therefore, I would extremely appreciate obtaining participation in either your volunteer tour(s) or internship in Hanoi office.

In return, upon your request, I would like to mention Buffalo Tours in my final thesis as an information sponsor, additionally; the logo and introduction of Buffalo Tours

would be included in any of my presentations in Japanese market and research society.
All the collected information is only used for research purpose.

Please let me know if you need anything else from me to make your decision. I hope to finish my internship by the middle of November 2011. Please know that your decision would make all the difference for my thesis research.

Yours sincerely

Nguyen Hoang Phuong, Masters student, APU

APPENDIX II. DATA DISK

Data disk aims to give the reader multimedia empirical evidences covering nine subjects, which are mentioned in the main part of thesis.

1. Mai Chau Town landscape.
2. Buffalo Tour: a short clip aims to introduce about volunteer activities of Buffalo Tour, which is the subject of organization framing method of this study.
3. Construction Tour: a footage concerns volunteer construction tour in Mai Chau (courtesy of Buffalo Tour).
4. Medical trek Tour: footages with regard to medical tour in Mai Chau (courtesy of Buffalo Tour and Wordnomads).
5. Image of volunteer tourists: pictures of two volunteer groups, to which the author escort during his field trip.
6. Infrastructure development: the impact of volunteer tourism. This section covers pictures in terms of either facilities build by volunteer tourists or their construction process.
7. Health promotion: the impact of volunteer tourism. This folder accesses the health checkup of volunteer tourists, as well as the health education.
8. Education encouragement: the pictures regarding the empirical evidence of this positive impact of volunteer tourism.
9. Culture exchange: this part contains the exchange activities between volunteer tourist and local peoples.

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