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Host-Tourist Interaction in Ethnic Tourism: Challenges and Strategies for Improved Outcomes in the Central Highlands, Vietnam

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“If we believe that tomorrow will be better. We can bear a hardship today”.



Thich Nhat Hanh

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I vividly recall my first visit to the Bebegu Yumba campus (JCU Townsville, Douglas) for enrolment. I was so excited and impressed with the campus's innovative green design because green is my favourite and lucky colour; a green roof of the path from the Central Student building to the Eddie Koiki Mabo library is simple but spectacular. Now, I cannot believe that I have completed my PhD journey with all the ups and downs: excitement, happiness, anxiety, frustration, stress, procrastination, optimism, and inspiration. Yes! I 'nailed it'.

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Calla Nguyen

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STATEMENT OF THE USE OF GENERATIVE AI

Generative AI technology was not used in the preparation of any part of this thesis.

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- Nguyen, K. T. T., Murphy, L., & Chen, T. (2022). Existing ethnic tourism issues in the Central Highlands, Vietnam. *Research findings of Study 1 presented at the community workshop – Ethnic tourism development in the Central Highlands, Vietnam*. Workshop held on 23 December 2022.
- Nguyen, K. T. T., Murphy, L., & Chen, T. (2022). Domestic ethnic tourism market in the Central Highlands, Vietnam. *Research findings of Study 2 presented at the community workshop – Ethnic tourism development in the Central Highlands, Vietnam*. Workshop held on 23 December 2022.

THESIS ABSTRACT

Host-tourist interaction is a core attraction of ethnic tourism, yet both parties may confront challenges in such interactions because of different cultural backgrounds. Consequently, interaction outcomes can negatively influence both hosts' and tourists' perceptions of each other and their experiences in ethnic tourism. While cultural differences do exist between hosts and domestic tourists in ethnic tourism, which is characterised by 'quaint' culture and 'exotic' people, most existing research has focused on interactions between hosts and foreign tourists. This thesis, therefore, shifts attention to the interactions between ethnic hosts and domestic tourists in an intra-national context.

Despite being well-recognised as a means of poverty alleviation in peripheral areas, ethnic tourism should not be solely pursued for economic benefits as an end goal for the host community. To achieve sustainability and destination community wellbeing, it is argued that ethnic tourism can become a tool to contribute to improvements in all community capitals rather than only economic. This thesis examines interaction difficulties and host-tourist interaction outcomes in the ethnic tourism context, with a focus on improvements in community capitals to ensure that ethnic tourism contributes to local destination community wellbeing.

To achieve the overarching aim, this thesis adopted a post-positivist paradigm and employed a mixed-method approach across three studies conducted in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Five specific research objectives were addressed;

1. To understand the fundamental characteristics and features of host interactions with tourists in ethnic villages in the Central Highlands, Vietnam (Study 1A);
2. To explore differences in community perceptions of interaction quality and support for ethnic tourism based on the fundamental characteristics and features and level of tourism development (Study 1B);
3. To investigate the extent to which interactions with hosts influence tourists' perceptions of the perceived long-term outcomes of ethnic tourism (Study 2A);
4. To examine the relationship between tourist motives for visiting ethnic tourism destinations and the fundamental characteristics and features, quality of interactions, attitudinal and behavioural outcomes, and perceptions towards long-term outcomes of ethnic tourism (Study 2B); and
5. To engage with locals of a selected ethnic community to generate strategies to improve host-tourist interaction outcomes and develop ethnic tourism experiences that contribute to local destination community wellbeing (Study 3).

The first study (Study 1A & B) utilised a qualitative research approach by conducting 31 interviews with ethnic villagers (hosts) in four ethnic sites in the Central Highlands. This study used the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory (Pearce & Cronen, 1980) to conceptualise

a framework to guide the investigation of interaction difficulties – sensitive issues between ethnic hosts and Kinh people (domestic tourists). CMM also allowed the author, who is Kinh, to work closely with participants to understand each other, thereby assisting in interpreting data. Manual content analysis and Leximancer 4.5 software were used for data analysis. The findings show that, firstly, host-tourist interactions occurred in different physical settings; private houses, tourist attractions and facilities, and on tours. In such settings, the content of interactions varied from low to high intensity and the hosts encountered varied interaction difficulties with tourists, especially *verbal* (language) and *non-verbal behaviour* and *cultural patterns*. While interaction difficulties occurred across different settings, higher intensity interactions resulted in more positive perceived outcomes. Secondly, all four ethnic communities acknowledged economic returns from tourism participation. However, higher levels of cultural and social capital made certain communities (i.e., Lak and Lac Duong) more interested in actively participating in the decision-making process, rather than only participating in tourism activities. The higher the level of participation in tourism was, the more tolerant villagers were towards tourists in their interactions. As a result, the more positively villagers perceived such interactions, the stronger their support for ethnic tourism.

The second study (Study 2A & B) applied a quantitative approach to collect data from domestic tourists via both on-site and online (Qualtrics platform) questionnaires. A total of 474 questionnaires were collected, of which 438 were valid. This study initially used SPSS Statistics 28.0 to summarise data, then Smart PLS software 4.0 to test the research hypotheses via partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The study highlights the complexity of how distinct characteristics of different physical settings influence the content, difficulties, and quality of interaction. Of the four settings, private house had a positive influence on interaction content and quality, and reduced interaction difficulties. By contrast, public spaces did not significantly influence these factors. Tours and tourist attractions and supporting facilities negatively influenced satisfaction with content but did not significantly influence difficulties and perceived quality of interactions. The fewer difficulties they found, the more satisfied tourists were with their interactions, and the more positively they perceived the overall quality of interactions, regardless of the intensity levels. The negative relationship between interaction difficulties and the quality of interaction was clear and significant. The findings demonstrate the salient positive influence of interaction quality on tourists' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes, and their perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism.

Three distinct motive-based tourist segments, *Explorers*, *Seekers*, and *Enjoyers*, were identified. The main features of each segment were summarised including a profile based on their distinguishing socio-demographic and trip characteristics, differences in host-tourist interactions, and perception of their experience and ethnic tourism outcomes. *Explorers* and *Seekers* were identified for prioritisation to facilitate positive interaction outcomes and contribute to local destination community wellbeing. Both segments were motivated by local scenery, ethnic culture, and interaction with hosts. They were more likely to engage in a variety of interactions with hosts

and less likely to have experienced interaction difficulties. As a result, they perceived there to be more favourable outcomes in such interactions and more positive contributions of ethnic tourism.

The last study (Study 3) applied a qualitative research approach by conducting a community workshop with 34 stakeholders in one of the ethnic study destinations in which research findings were shared to inform and facilitate tourism decision making. This study incorporated the Community Capitals framework (see Flora et al., 2016) and Destination Community Wellbeing (DCW) approach to Tourism Planning (Moscardo & Murphy, 2014) to direct the workshop discussions. Since host-tourist interactions are bidirectional, findings of the two previous studies from both host and tourist perspectives were presented at the workshop to provide a holistic picture of ethnic tourism in the locality, particularly challenges associated with host-tourist interactions and profiles of existing market segments. Workshop participants emphasised the importance of *natural*, *cultural*, and *human capital* to local community wellbeing and that, to address challenges and achieve desired outcomes from tourism, priority actions are required in *human*, *political*, and *social capital*. Workshop participants identified *Explorers* and *Seekers* as priority segments for promoting local natural and ethnic cultural heritage and facilitating positive host-tourist interaction outcomes.

Overall, this thesis provides valuable insights into host-tourist interactions and their outcomes in the ethnic tourism context from the perspectives of both parties. Importantly, the application of the CMM theory to explore the root causes of interaction difficulties enriches its relevance in multi-discipline research. The findings have practical implications for local tourism practitioners and villagers, highlighting the importance of host-tourist interaction in ethnic tourism and providing ideas to improve interaction outcomes. The value of the DCW approach to build capacity for effective local tourism governance was evidenced, however, further steps along this path need to be encouraged in the local communities.

Key words: host-tourist interaction, Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory, ethnic tourism, community capitals, local destination community wellbeing, Central Highlands, Vietnam.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CCF	Community Capitals Framework
CMM	Coordinated Management of Meaning
DCST	Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism
DCW	Destination Community Wellbeing
DFID	Department for International Development
DMO	Destination Management Organization
ESS	Emotional Solidarity Scale
EN	Enjoyers
EX	Explorers
IWGIA	International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs
MCST	Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PERSONAS	User-centered design and marketing (e.g., user persona, customer persona)
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling
SE	Seekers
TCP	Travel Career Pattern
UNHCR	Centre for Documentation and Research
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	The United Nations World Tourism Organization
VFR	Visiting friends and relatives
VND	Vietnam Dong
VNAT	Vietnam National Administration of Tourism
WOM	Word-of-Mouth
Zalo	A free Over The Top application service in Vietnam

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This chapter provides a general introduction to the PhD research on host-tourist interaction in the context of ethnic tourism. The chapter begins by reviewing literature on the research topic and identifying research opportunities. The following section – Research context – provides an overview of Vietnam's Central Highlands, its contemporary tourism sector, and the Vietnam tourism organisational structure. After that, research objectives are established. Theoretical foundation, research paradigm, and methodology are presented that assist in developing a conceptual framework for the research. The last section depicts the thesis structure in a diagram.

1.1 Literature review and research opportunities

1.1.1 *Ethnic tourism*

Ethnic tourism is motivated by tourists seeking 'exotic' cultural experiences through interaction with distinctive minority groups, while simultaneously bringing economic benefits to ethnic minority people through utilisation of their unique culture (Yang, 2016; Yang & Li, 2012). Therefore, ethnic tourism has been widely recognised as a tool for poverty alleviation in peripheral areas, especially in marginalised and poor ethnic communities (Lor et al., 2019; Tian et al., 2023). Three components – exotic culture, local scenery, and host-tourist interaction – contribute to the frame of ethnic tourism that distinguishes it from other forms of tourism (Smith, 1989; Wong et al., 2019; Yang & Wall, 2009a; Zhang et al., 2017). However, there are many terms in the literature such as 'aboriginal', 'indigenous', 'tribal' or 'community-based' tourism that are sometimes used interchangeably to refer to the same phenomenon of 'ethnic tourism' (Ishii, 2012; N'Drower et al., 2021; Ngo & Pham, 2021; Pratt et al., 2013). Importantly, ethnic tourism studies concentrate on visits to 'exotic' and peripheral destinations where local people are often poor, small in number, isolated, and members of ethnic groups (Feng & Li, 2020; Smith, 1989; Wood, 1984). For the scope of this thesis, the definition of 'ethnic tourism' is aligned with Xie's work (2011), emphasising that ethnic minorities are directly and indirectly involved in controlling and/or providing tourism services associated with their unique culture. Moreover, the ethnic minority groups studied in this thesis are indigenous people in the Central Highlands of Vietnam.

Impacts of ethnic tourism have been well researched in the tourism literature. Ethnic tourism assists in preservation of cultural heritage, such as traditional housing (Su et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2017), handicrafts (Ara et al., 2022), cuisine (Fan et al., 2019), music, and other cultural activities (Song & Yuan, 2020). In this vein, it helps increase ethnic identity, grow confidence among young ethnic people (Xie, 2011; Yang, 2016), and build positive long-term host-tourist relationships (Wong et al., 2019). Economic benefits are also recognised as the most popular positive impact of ethnic tourism through the creation of more job opportunities for locals and improved household income,

leading to an enhanced standard of living (Bott, 2018; Feng & Li, 2020; Lor et al., 2019). However, implementing ethnic tourism can simultaneously cause negative impacts, such as cultural commodification and assimilation, loss of authenticity (MacCannell, 1984; Xie & Wall, 2008; Yang, 2011), cleavage of society between people who are involved in tourism activities and those who are not, unequal power relationship between village committee and villagers (Tian et al., 2021), and conflict between state regulations and ethnic autonomy (Yang et al., 2008).

Despite important positive impacts, the negative impacts on the local destinations cannot be disregarded. Furthermore, economic returns should not be an end goal for the host community in long-term development. Song and Yuan (2020) have criticised many ethnic tourism projects for pursuing short-term benefits while neglecting sustainability. A holistic approach to ethnic tourism is required, carefully balancing the different community capitals that contribute to local destination community wellbeing.

Due to the rise of ethnic tourism in China, Cohen (2016) claims that existing studies of this topic are dominated by the China context, particularly the Southwest provinces of Yunnan, Guangxi, Guizhou, and Hunan (Tian et al., 2023), while there is a lack of examination of ethnic tourism in other parts of mainland Southeast Asia – such as Vietnam, Thailand, and Laos. Cohen (2016) stresses that these countries are extremely diverse ethnically – more specifically, the state’s ethnic regimes are marked by two principal traits: a clear distinction between the majority nationality, namely Kinh (Viet), Thais and Lao, and the various ethnic minorities. Hence, further investigation in these mainland Southeast Asia countries is needed to better understand ethnic tourism within diverse contexts.

1.1.2 Host-tourist interaction

Host-tourist interaction is a key to understanding ethnic tourism and its impacts on ethnic destinations (Zhang et al., 2017). In pioneering research on host-tourist interaction, de Kadt (1979) asserted that the three main contexts in which interactions take place, including; tourists and hosts meeting face to face in the process of exchanging information and ideas, tourists purchasing goods and services from the hosts, and simply where tourists and hosts find themselves side by side in the same place. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of interactions has become more complex and diverse in the dynamics of growing tourism. While existing studies have examined various dimensions of host-tourist interactions such as environmental settings (Carneiro & Eusébio, 2015; Murphy, 2001; Pearce, 1990), contact activities (Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Tavitiyaman, 2017; Joo et al., 2018; Kastenholz et al., 2013), or quantity and quality of interactions (Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Lin, 2017), these studies have been limited to the general tourism context rather than ethnic tourism. Moreover, most existing research focuses on the interactions between hosts and foreign tourists, namely intercultural/cross-cultural contact (Reisinger & Turner, 2003), rather than on domestic tourists

interacting with minority ethnic groups. Zhang et al. (2017) call for more attention on exploring 'what is going on' inside to understand the internal logic behind such interactions.

This research aims to fully explore the fundamental characteristics and features and outcomes of host-tourist interactions by simultaneously investigating both physical settings and the content of interaction. To date, studies on what actually occurs within interactions are still scarce, particularly in the ethnic tourism context. First, Reisinger and Turner (2003) showed that host-tourist interactions take place in a wide variety of settings, such as local private houses (Domenico & Lynch, 2007; Zhang et al., 2017), tourism attractions and supporting services/facilities (Carneiro et al., 2018; Carneiro & Eusébio, 2015; Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Tavitiyaman, 2017; Woosnam & Norman, 2010), or public spaces (e.g., beaches, protected areas, on street) (Eusébio & Carneiro, 2012; Woosnam & Norman, 2010). Second, Su et al. (2014) indicated that the content of interactions reflects intensity levels from low to high. Five intensity levels were identified; the presence of hosts and tourists at a destination without active interactions, tourists seeking help or information, business relationships, actively seeking mutual understanding (e.g., chatting, sharing meals, experiencing local customs), and fulfilling long-term social needs (e.g., making friends, exchanging personal contact).

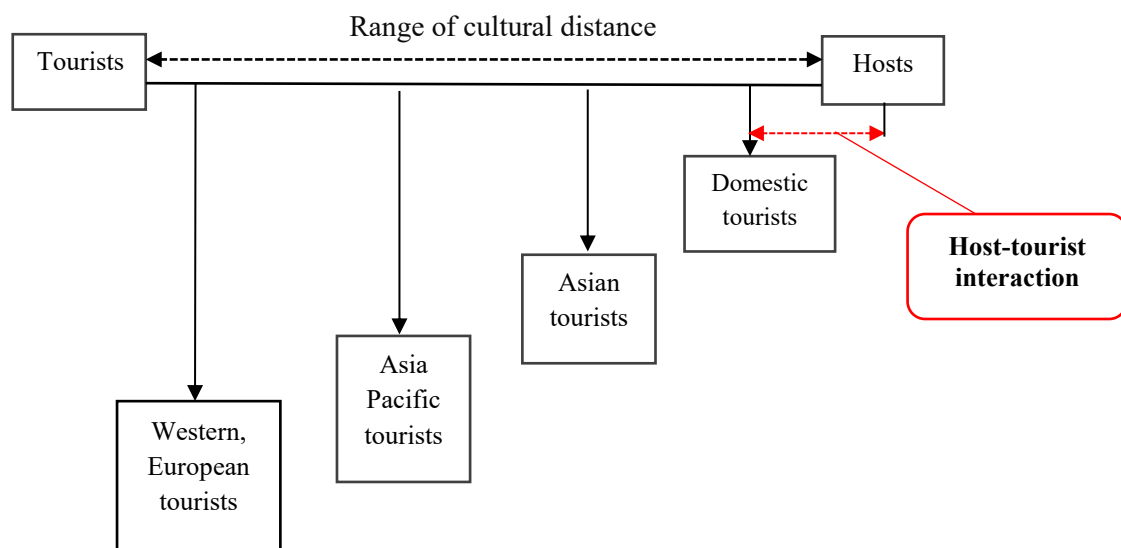
Due to cultural differences, both hosts and tourists may encounter interaction difficulties (Pearce et al., 1998; Reisinger & Turner, 2003). Such difficulties can lead to misunderstanding, friction, offence, or even host-tourist conflict (Bochner, 1982; Moufakkir & Reisinger, 2013; Reisinger, 2009; Tung, 2021). Early research by Pearce (1982) claimed that direct interaction between tourists and the local people of Third World and poor communities often generates discord, exploitation, and social problems. Surprisingly, to date, no specific empirical study has investigated what sort of interaction difficulties both parties may encounter, how these difficulties might be classified, and how they influence interaction quality.

Cultural distance obviously exists between hosts and tourists in the ethnic tourism context regardless of whether tourists are foreign or domestic. The point is that the cultural distance tends to be larger between hosts and foreign tourists than between hosts and domestic tourists. The degree of cultural distance varies according to the degree of differences between cultural groups, for example in verbal and non-verbal communication, relationship patterns, rules of behaviour, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and cultural backgrounds (Baldwin & Hunt, 2002; Reisinger, 2009; Reisinger & Turner, 1998). Furthermore, Sutton (1967) indicated that the greater the differences, the greater the likelihood of encounters leading to misunderstanding and friction. Recognising this, most studies of host-tourist interactions have primarily concentrated on cultural differences between hosts and foreign tourists (Fan, Qiu, et al., 2020; Loi & Pearce, 2015; Pearce et al., 1998; Reisinger & Turner, 1997, 2002). Therefore, this thesis shifts attention to interactions between ethnic hosts and domestic tourists (Figure 1.1) for three specific reasons. First, in the context of ethnic tourism, despite sharing a nation, hosts and domestic visitors, who belong to different subcultures, may react differently to

the same encounters (Loi & Pearce, 2015). Second, it is a fact that domestic tourism is dominant in many regions of the world, including Vietnam. For example, 92.5% of visitors to the Central Highlands region are domestic (compiled from five Departments of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2020). Third, according to the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism's strategy (2021), domestic tourism was a key for revival of the tourism industry in Vietnam in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 1.1

The cultural distance of host-tourist interactions in the context of Asia



Note. Drawn by the author

Although host-tourist interactions have received much attention in both theoretical and applied research, many studies have focused on the influences of interaction quality on hosts' perceptions and attitudes towards tourists or tourism development (Eusébio et al., 2018; Kim, 2018; Moghavvemi et al., 2021; Woosnam, 2012; Xiong et al., 2021) and the impact of tourism on quality of life (Carneiro & Eusébio, 2015). Other research has examined how interaction quality influences tourists' perceptions towards hosts or destinations (Aleshinloye et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2019; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2019), perceived cultural distance (Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Lin, 2017), travel experience, and destination loyalty (Stylidis et al., 2021). Less attention has been devoted to exploring the determinants of interaction quality, which refers to subjective perceptions of positive or negative emotions; for example, friendly or hostile, harmonious or clashing, intense or superficial, equal or unequal, cooperative or competitive (Fan, Qiu, et al., 2020; Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Lin, 2017). Therefore, to address the research gap, it is necessary to investigate the quality of interaction by considering the fundamental characteristics and features (physical settings, content) and difficulties both parties face in their interactions.

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1.1.3 Influences of host-tourist interactions on ethnic tourism

As previously mentioned, the influences of host-tourist interaction have drawn considerable attention in tourism literature. From the host perspective, interaction outcomes can create changes in their attitudes and perceptions towards tourists and tourism development (Sharpley, 2014). For example, Joo et al. (2018) suggested that residents' participation in interaction activities can initiate thoughts and feelings of association towards tourists and thus facilitate positive attitudinal changes. More specifically, the authors proposed types of interaction activities that can improve emotional solidarity (i.e., welcoming nature, emotional closeness, sympathetic understanding) and reduce social distance with tourists (i.e., affinity, avoidance). Moreover, Teye et al. (2002) indicated that positive interaction outcomes such as friendship, usefulness, and enjoyment, are one of seven important factors influencing residents' attitudes towards tourism development. Favourable interaction can therefore contribute to the extent to which residents perceive positive tourism impacts on their local communities, leading to greater support for local tourism development (Eusébio et al., 2018; Park et al., 2015). More broadly, other research (Carneiro et al., 2018; Carneiro & Eusébio, 2015) revealed that satisfactory interactions positively influence residents' perceptions of tourism impacts on overall quality of life - including economic and social opportunities, calm and safety, public facilities and services, and positive feelings.

By contrast, negative interaction outcomes may increase social distance between hosts and tourists (Joo et al., 2018), discrimination and cultural conflict (Tsaur et al., 2018; Ye et al., 2013). Consequently, residents may negatively respond to tourists and tourism development. The most well-known model developed by Doxey (1975), the irritation index (Irridex), indicated that residents' attitudes shift from euphoria to apathy, irritation, and antagonism in concert with the increasing effects of tourism development, including socio-cultural effects arising from host-tourist interactions. The higher the levels of host-tourist conflict, the lower their support for tourism development (Tsaur et al., 2018).

From a tourist perspective, positive host-tourist interactions can enhance the attractiveness of a destination and change pre-travel stereotypes of residents, while unpleasant interactions can lead to frustration and substantiate negative stereotypes (Liu & Tung, 2017). Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, and Lin (2017) showed that tourists who have more positive and in-depth interactions with locals perceived less cultural distance during their travel. As a result, favourable interaction outcomes lead tourists to positively change their perceptions towards hosts and local destinations (Yu & Lee, 2014). Although work by Rasoolimanesh et al. (2019) showed the strong and significant influences of interactions on memorable tourism experiences and tourists' behavioural intentions, like most of the existing research on this topic, the study was conducted in the context of inter-cultural interactions between hosts and international tourists. Recent work (Stylidis, 2020; Stylidis et al., 2021) also demonstrates that interaction quality has a positive impact on tourists' destination image and loyalty. In brief, across the breadth of existing tourism literature, little is known about how the quality of the

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interactions between hosts and domestic tourists affects ethnic tourism outcomes within an intra-national context.

1.1.4 Long-term ethnic tourism outcomes and destination community wellbeing

Undoubtedly many governments have long been prioritising economic benefits to develop ethnic tourism (Okayama, 2018). Although well-recognised as a primary development strategy to support poverty alleviation in poor communities (Feng & Li, 2020; Tian et al., 2023; Truong, 2018), many tourism initiatives have failed to meet the goal of sustainability because of increasing inequalities and conflicts over scarce resources (T. V. Singh, 2012). Furthermore, Scheyvens (2012) argued that there is no guarantee that economic returns will actually be able to alleviate the extent and severity of poverty. Therefore, long-term ethnic tourism development needs to consider socio-cultural, economic, and other issues within the local communities.

Host-tourist interaction outcomes shape perceptions of, and might lead to both positive and negative psychological outcomes for both parties (Pearce, 1982; Pizam et al., 2000; Reisinger & Turner, 2003; Su et al., 2022; Tse & Tung, 2021; Zhang & Xu, 2023). Positive interaction helps to establish long-term host-tourist relationships in the future (Su et al., 2014), contributing to bridging social capital in the community. Yet, due to cultural differences between hosts and tourists, achieving positive interaction is perhaps more challenging in ethnic tourism. This thesis investigates these interactions in the ethnic tourism context to find solutions to improve host-tourist interaction outcomes.

In line with this, another major goal of ethnic tourism is to contribute to cultural capital by assisting in cultural preservation and raising locals' self-awareness of ethnic identity. Okayama (2018) stated that ethnic tourism in Southeast Asian countries has been fashioned mainly by showcasing 'exotic' culture and unfamiliar ways of life to tourists. As such, tourists are provided opportunities to understand the local lifestyle and ethnic cultural values, while the hosts keep their unique culture alive. Positive social, cultural, and economic outcomes of ethnic tourism are fundamental goals of long-term ethnic tourism development that contribute to local community wellbeing.

Unfortunately, like other forms of tourism, employing ethnic tourism as a development tool cannot avoid common barriers. Two core barriers are a lack of knowledge of tourism among destination community stakeholders and the dominance of external agents in the governance of tourism (Moscardo, 2023). Thus, few successful tourism projects are found in peripheral and poor regions (Lor et al., 2019; Truong, 2013). Tian et al. (2021) further asserted that, due to a lack of experience, skills, and funding, ethnic villagers find it difficult to develop ethnic tourism by themselves. Therefore, an appropriate approach to ethnic tourism planning is needed to first enable the locals to improve their interaction outcome with tourists, and subsequently increase the possibility of achieving local community wellbeing and sustainability.

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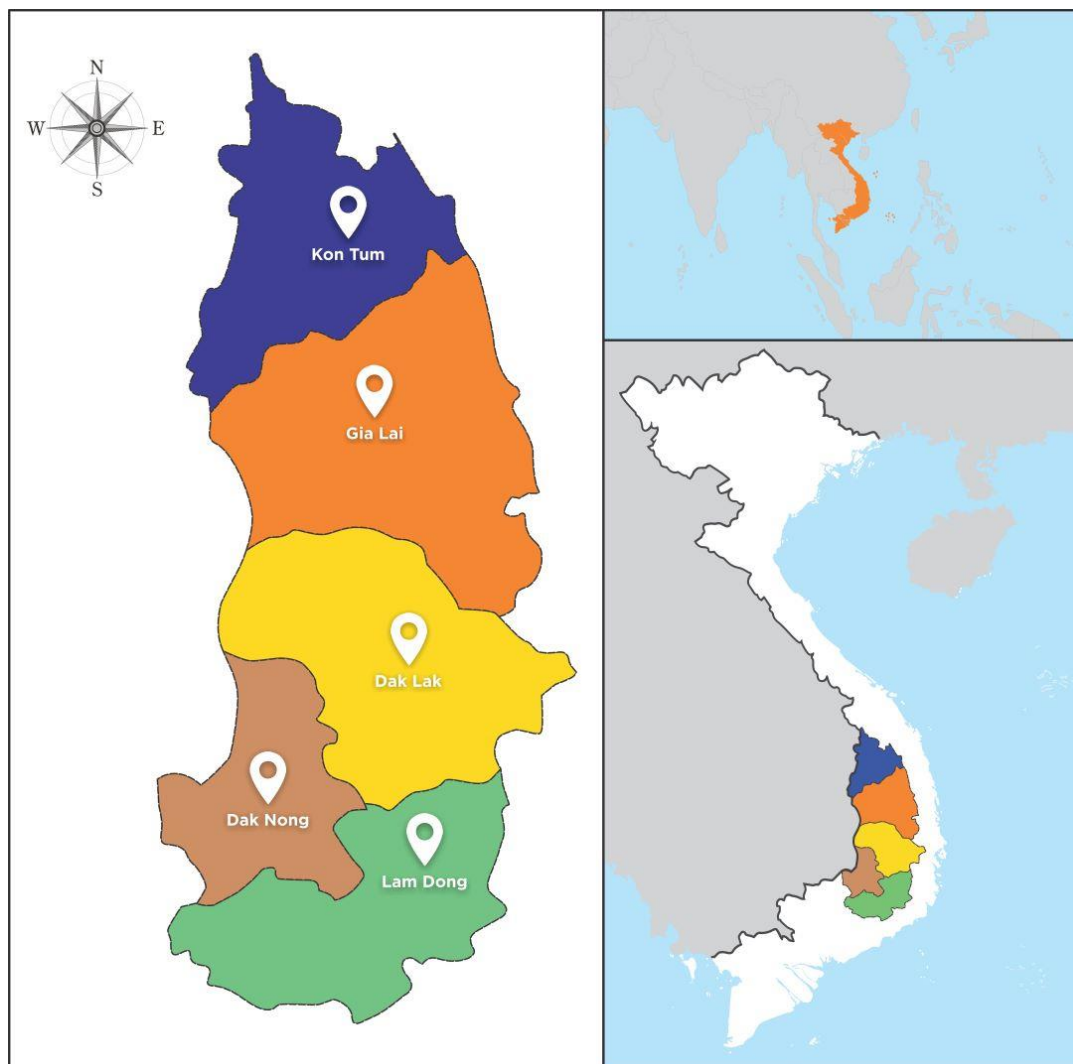
1.2 Research context

1.2.1 Overview

The Central Highlands (Tây Nguyên) region is situated in the West and Southwest of Vietnam, encompassing five provinces: Kon Tum, Gia Lai, Dak Lak, Dak Nong, and Lam Dong (Figure 1.2). The region is an upland area of 54,416 km² with an altitude ranging from 500 to 800m on average, characterised by rugged mountainous terrain crossed by deep river valleys, extensive forests, and a number of fertile high plateaus made up of red basaltic soils (Thong et al., 2016). Notably, it is one of the two largest forest areas in Vietnam (Pham & Roongtawanreongsri, 2022). The Central Highlands has been conventionally regarded as a ‘remote’, ‘backward’, or ‘primitive’ area (*vùng sâu vùng xa*) (Salemink, 2018). This region has a tropical and temperate highland climate with two seasons: dry (from early-May to mid-October) and rainy (from November to late-April) (Pham-Thanh et al., 2020).

Figure 1.2

Map of the Central Highlands, Vietnam



Note. Drawn by the author and Le Nguyen Vu, 2023

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As home to all 54 of the country's ethnic minority groups, the Central Highlands is a multi-ethnic region with diverse culture and customs. The percentage of ethnic minorities comprises 37.5% of the regional population while within the Vietnamese population, ethnic minorities make up 14.6% (Government electronic information portal, 2023). More specifically, this region has the highest diversity of ethnicities in Vietnam and is the only place where all of Vietnam's languages and ethnic groups coexist (Quốc Đông, 2021). However, not all of the 54 minority groups are endemic to the region, many have migrated to the Central Highlands from other regions of Vietnam. For example, the Tay or Thai have migrated from the North, while the M'ngong or Bana are native to the region. Therefore, despite the presence of migrant ethnic groups here, the cultural ethnicity of the Central Highlands is shaped by the characteristics of the native ethnic groups.

Notably, the generic label for the indigenous population in the Central Highlands has changed overtime, including terms such as 'savage', 'highland compatriot' (*đồng bào thượng*), 'coloured people' (*người sắc tộc*), 'tribal', or 'ethnic' (UNHCR Centre for Documentation and Research, 2002). However, the current Vietnamese regime does not apply the term 'indigenous peoples' to any of the minority ethnic groups. The term 'ethnic minorities' (*dân tộc thiểu số*) is used instead, with the Kinh or Việt ethnic majority being distinguished from the 53 officially recognised ethnic minorities (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), 2023; UNHCR Centre for Documentation and Research, 2002).

The unique local ethnic culture is affiliated harmoniously with forests and Gong culture which are core values that position the region's identity and image in the minds of Vietnamese, as well as international, visitors. Importantly, Gong culture was recognised as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO (2005). However, according to the 2020 World Bank report, an estimated 74% of the ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands live below the poverty line. This region has the worst rates of stunting and wasting among children in the country, the lowest rate of primary school enrolment, and less than half of ethnic children are enrolled in lower secondary school. Overall, this region is well-known for its pristine natural resources and exotic ethnic culture, but poor socio-economic conditions.

1.2.2 Tourism sector in the Central Highlands

In the history of tourism in Colonial Vietnam, Da Lat city in the Central Highlands became a European summer capital due to the discovery of the Lang-Biang plateau (Da Lat) in 1893 by Alexandre Yersin, a French doctor and explorer (Bui et al., 2022). Da Lat has since become one of Vietnam's most famous hill stations used by Europeans to maintain health for military personnel negatively affected by the tropical weather (Michaud & Turner, 2006). Since the Vietnamese government implemented the introduction of economic reforms (*Đổi mới*) in 1986, the Central Highlands had started to become more accessible to foreign backpackers. Until 1993, the mountainous areas of Vietnam, including the Central Highlands, gradually attracted both the

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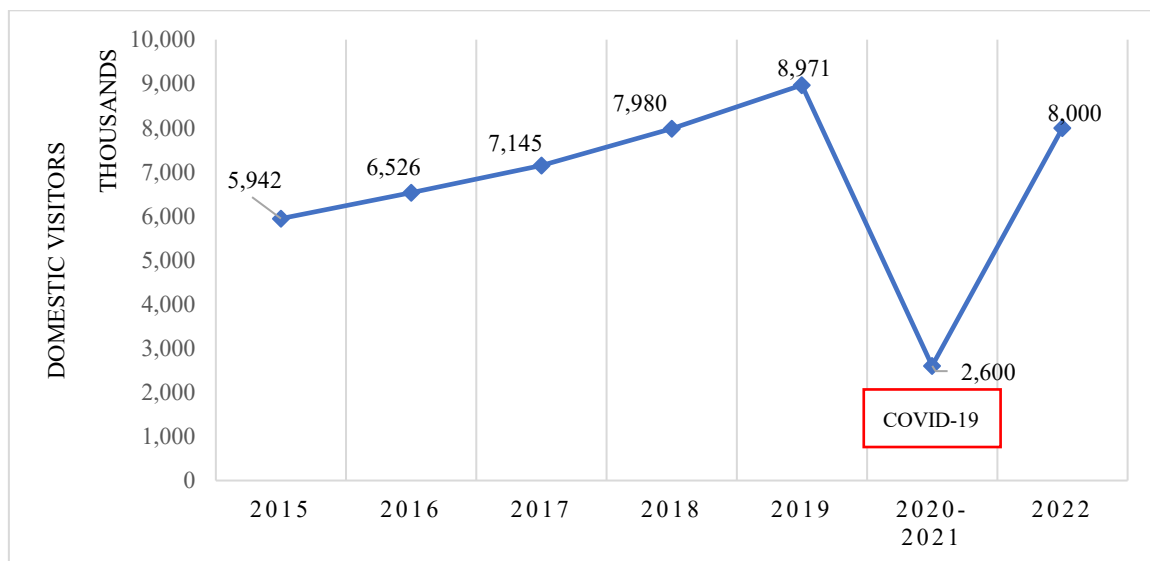
emerging domestic middle class and foreign tourists. However, up to now, the Central Highlands' tourism has not yet been fully exploited except in Da Lat – Lam Dong. Former president Nguyen Xuan Phuc stated, “the Central Highlands is still like a sleeping beauty who has not been able to adapt herself to the changes of the nation and times” (Vietnam News, 2021).

The Central Highlands has a significant potential for tourism because of both natural (e.g., favourable climatic condition, high altitude, mountainous landscapes, geo-heritages, flora and fauna) and cultural resources (e.g., exotic culture, agricultural landscapes) (Hoang et al., 2018). Among these resources, ethnic culture is an outstanding component to portray the region's self-image through traditional costumes, dances and musical performances, architecture, rituals, ceremonies, matriarchal culture, and local way of life. Recently, the *Master Plan for Tourism Development in Vietnam to 2020 with vision to 2030* identifies the Central Highlands as one of the seven key tourism areas of Vietnam (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT), 2013). Ethnic culture is an especially important pillar of sustainable development for this region (Thien, 2019).

Domestic visitors constitute a dominant force in the regional tourism market, accounting for 92.5% of the total (compiled from five Departments of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2020). After the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of domestic visitors made a remarkable recovery with 8 million in 2022, nearly reaching the pre-pandemic level of 8.9 million recorded in 2019 (see Figure 1.3). Domestic tourism demand has played a pivotal role in the recovery of the tourism industry post-pandemic (Tung & Duc, 2023). Therefore, the focus of this thesis is on the interaction between hosts and domestic tourists to understand comprehensively host-tourist interaction in the intra-national context.

Figure 1.3

Number of domestic visitors to the Central Highlands of Vietnam (2015 – 2022)



Note. Compiled from *Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism* of five provinces in the Central Highlands, 2023.

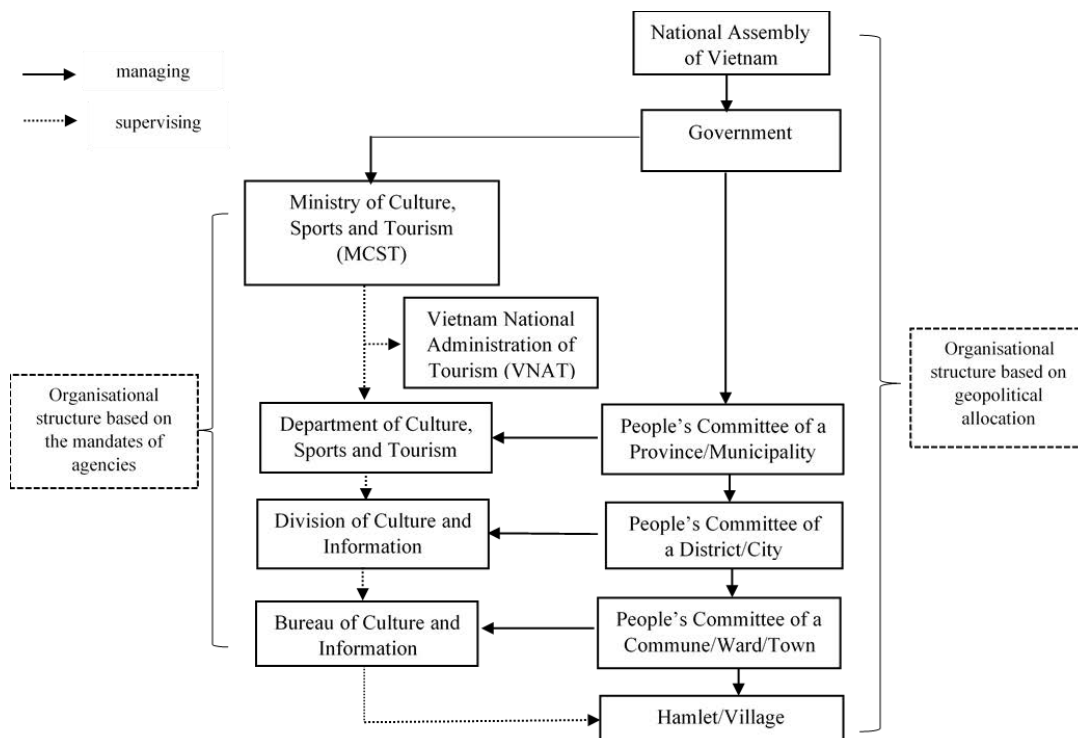
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The organisational structure of tourism in Vietnam is a vertical hierarchical system of responsible jurisdictions (see Figure 1.4). At the national level, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST) takes overall responsibility for the tourism sector in Vietnam. The MCST established the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) which performs a number of tasks and exercises the powers of state management over tourism nationwide (Bui et al., 2022; Hildebrandt & Isaac, 2015). At local levels, the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism (DCST) (provincial level) and lower levels (district, commune) are responsible for specialised technical jurisdictions of the particular sector (e.g., tourism, culture, or sports) over the assigned level and each Provincial People's Committee manages their own tourism department (DCST).

The Central Highlands has no specific tourism structure. Because it encompasses five provinces, this region adheres to the tourism structure established at the provincial and district levels. The DCST integrates both administrative management mandates and technical functions, which means it is responsible for two entities; (i) the Provincial People's Committee for advising and assisting in the tourism-related state administration, and (ii) the sectoral MCST for technical supervision. With the existing organisational tourism structure, developing ethnic tourism in the Central Highlands faces structural weaknesses, such as institutional rigidities, lengthy and complicated decision-making process, or overlapping responsibilities (Hildebrandt & Isaac, 2015).

Figure 1.4

The Vietnam government tourism structure



Note. Compiled by author

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1.3 Research objectives

To address the research gaps, this thesis investigates issues associated with host-tourist interaction and identifies ways to improve interaction outcomes, contributing to the ability of ethnic tourism to be used as a tool for destination community wellbeing. Since host-tourist interaction is bi-directional (Su & Wall, 2010), this thesis investigates such interaction from the perspectives of both hosts and tourists. Inbakaran and Jackson (2005) highlight that various community groups have different attitudes towards regional tourism development. Furthermore, the heterogeneity of community residents makes understanding different attitudes towards tourism within the community more complicated (Zhang et al., 2006). Therefore, comparing various ethnic communities regarding their socio-psychological aspects, perceived interaction quality with tourists, and tourism participation level is necessary to better understand individual community support for ethnic tourism. Similarly every tourist is different, and the tourism industry cannot possibly cater for each individual separately (Dolnicar, 2008). Market segmentation is a strategy to better understand who tourists are (Pérez-Gálvez et al., 2021), thereby selecting the most suitable subgroup of tourists to specialise on and target in order to address local community's aspirations (Moscardo & Murphy, 2016). As a result, strategies will be proposed to accommodate both hosts' and tourists' desires. As such, implementing ethnic tourism can improve the quality of host-tourist interactions, lead to sustainable long-term outcomes for the host community, and attract the right tourists to the Central Highlands.

Three separate studies were conducted to address five main research objectives;

1. To understand the fundamental characteristics and features of host interactions with tourists in ethnic villages in the Central Highlands, Vietnam (Study 1A);
2. To explore differences in community perceptions of interaction quality and support for ethnic tourism based on the fundamental characteristics and features and level of tourism development (Study 1B);
3. To investigate the extent to which interactions with hosts influence tourists' perceived long-term outcomes of ethnic tourism (Study 2A);
4. To examine the relationship between tourist motives for visiting ethnic tourism destinations and the fundamental characteristics and features, quality of interactions, attitudinal and behavioural outcomes, and perceptions of the long-term outcomes of ethnic tourism (Study 2B); and
5. To engage with locals of a selected ethnic community to generate strategies to improve host-tourist interaction outcomes and develop ethnic tourism experiences that contribute to local destination community wellbeing (Study 3).

These five research objectives correspond with the central topic of each study and require the establishment of a research design, a systematic theoretical framework, and an appropriate methodological scheme.

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1.4 The theoretical foundation

To achieve the overall aim, four theoretical foundations were reviewed and integrated as the theoretical bases for the thesis; Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory (Pearce & Cronen, 1980), the Travel Career Pattern (TCP) model (Pearce & Lee, 2005), the Community Capitals Framework (CCF) (Emery & Flora, 2006), and the Destination Community Wellbeing (DCW) approach to tourism planning (Moscardo & Murphy, 2014). The application of CMM informed the exploration of host-tourist interaction issues in the ethnic tourism context. More importantly, CMM provides a guide to types of interaction difficulties which hosts and tourists may encounter in the ethnic tourism context and, given that the author is a Kinh person, assists in the efficient conduct of interviews and analysis of data for a comprehensive understanding of the nature as well as nuanced discourse within complex interactions. CMM was further used to design the tourist questionnaire and develop a construct to measure interaction difficulties from the perspective of tourists.

The TCP model provides a rich conceptualisation of travel motivation and posits that tourist motivation is a dynamic process with tourists exhibiting changing motivational patterns over their travel experience (P. L. Pearce, 2005a). This model helps to explain how different tourist groups' motivations are related to tourists' on-site interactions with hosts and subsequently to their tourism experiences, and attitudes and perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes. The '*spiralling up*' effect of CCF provides an understanding of the interrelationship and synergy among different community capitals. Positive host-tourist interaction helps to build a mutual host-tourist relationship, thereby improving bridging social capital. This is a departure point to make improvements in other capitals within the host community. The DCW approach is an alternative tourism planning perspective derived from the lens of CCF and providing a holistic viewpoint to build the capacity of the locals to find ways to improve their interaction outcomes with tourists. Following that, strategies for improving other capitals can increase the possibility that ethnic tourism positively contributes to local destination community wellbeing.

1.4.1 *Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory*

The Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory is based on the pivotal work of Pearce and Cronen (1980). Pearce and Cronen start with a basic premise that the social worlds we inhabit are constructed through the many diverse forms of everyday communication in which we engage. Communication is a process of *managing meanings* and we manage those meanings through *coordinating* with others. According to CMM, six contextual levels are useful to understand the full meaning of, and to create, effective well-managed communication. These levels include;

- (1) *Verbal and Non-verbal behaviour* – how clearly people understand one another's speech, gestures, posture, signals, eye movement, and words;

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- (2) *Speech acts* – the way meaning is attached to forms of address such as status, level of formality, or respect;
- (3) *Episodes* – a communication routine that consists of a sequence of speech acts, behaviours, rituals, arrangements for eating, sightseeing, tipping, or gift giving;
- (4) *Relationships* – the nature of social bonds, rights and expectations, responsibilities, formation of friendships, and development of business relationships;
- (5) *Life script* – the way people perceive themselves in action, their relationship to others and to the physical environment, social and cultural institutions; and
- (6) *Cultural patterns* – the way the larger community is defined, what is perceived as honesty, guilt, justice or equity within a society, freedom of speech, spiritual beliefs, and attitudes to gender.

In the tourism context, a limited number of studies have employed the CMM approach to investigate different facets of social contact. Early work was conducted by Pearce et al., (1998) to identify cross-cultural contact difficulties for Australian travellers to Indonesia. To minimise the difficulties and promote sustainable host-tourist encounters, the study suggested the development of an in-flight video, a Culture Assimilator booklet, tourist behaviour codes, sets of visitor rules, or advice from professional guides. Later studies inspired by CMM's practical perspectives have proposed interventions (e.g., picture, regulatory and social evaluative controls, and social influencing messages and campaigns) to reduce the flashpoints of tourist-tourist and tourist-host friction in inter-cultural contexts (Loi & Pearce, 2015) and the design of websites providing specific destination information for Muslim travellers (Oktadiana et al., 2016).

CMM theory offers a pragmatic approach for researchers to analyse multiple contextual levels of cultural interactions (W. B. Pearce, 2005). Moreover, the six levels of CMM are also considered to be a rich range of factors for analysing communication in cross-cultural behaviours in tourism (Oktadiana et al., 2016). Importantly, the use of CMM theory in the present thesis was to identify the sorts of interaction difficulties both hosts and domestic tourists face in the ethnic tourism context. From a methodological approach, CMM was also helpful in framing the interview questions and making both the author and participants engage in mutual dialogue while conducting interviews.

1.4.2 Travel Career Pattern (TCP) model

The Travel Career Pattern (TCP) model was developed by Pearce and Lee (2005) based on a “conceptually modified Travel Career Ladder with more emphasis on the change in motivation patterns reflecting career levels than on the hierarchical levels” (P. L. Pearce, 2005a, p. 55). The core idea of TCP is that travel experience influences travel motives. P. L. Pearce (2005a) defines certain TCP key terms (see Table 1.1) to further explain that, although the ladder concept is no longer used, the concept of a travel career is still important. Instead of ascending a ladder from step to step, tourists move within the middle motive layer (MacInnes et al., 2022).

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Table 1.1

Key terms and definitions regarding TCP

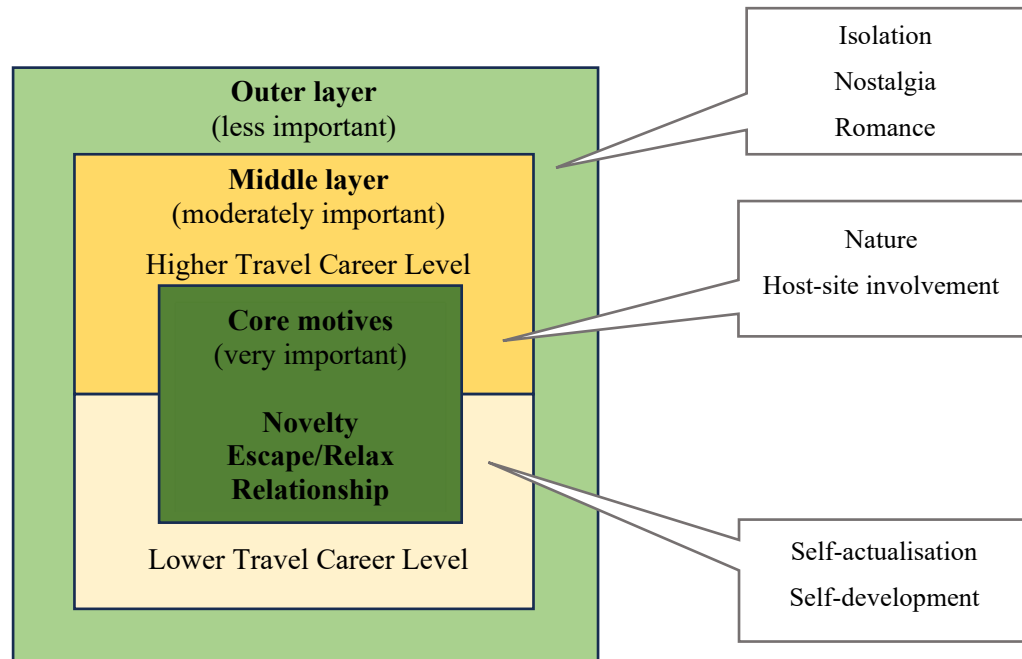
Key terms	Conceptual definitions
Travel need/motives	The forces that drive travel behaviour. These forces are both biological and socio-cultural.
Self/others-oriented motives	Travel motives can be internally oriented or externally influenced.
Motivation pattern	Travel motivation occurs in a pattern of multiple motives rather than in single dominant forces.
Travel career	A dynamic concept arguing that tourists have identifiable stages in their holiday taking. The state of one's travel career, like a career at work, is influenced by previous travel experiences and life-stage or contingency factors.
Travel Career Ladder (TCL)	An older theoretical model describing travel motivation through five hierarchical levels of needs/motives in relation to travel career levels.

Note. Adopted from P. L. Pearce (2005a, p. 55)

The TCP model is depicted as three layers of travel motivation, where each layer consists of different travel motives (Wen, 2017) (see Figure 1.5). In the core layer, the most important motives such as *escape/relax*, *novelty* and *relationship (strengthen)* are equally important across all levels of travel experience. Tourists move from these core motives outwards in the model, towards the middle motive layer. This middle layer is divided into two groups: the first group, *self-actualisation* and *self-development*, is associated with low travel experience, whereas the second group, *nature*, *host-site involvement*, and *relationship (security)*, is associated with high travel experience. The outer layer, *stimulation*, *recognition*, *romance*, *autonomy*, *isolation*, and *nostalgia*, is considered least important across all levels of travel experience (MacInnes et al., 2022; Oktadiana & Agarwal, 2022; Pearce & Lee, 2005). Notably, higher travel career levels put more emphasis on external-oriented motivation factors such as *host-site involvement* and seeking *nature* (Wen, 2017). As a result, the TCP was later updated to suggest that increasing travel experience increases the importance of *host-site involvement* and *nature* while decreasing the importance of *kinship* (enjoying being with similar others) and *self-development* (Pearce, 2019).

Figure 1.5

The Travel Career Pattern model



Note. Pearce and Lee (2005)

The TCP has been widely adopted by tourism researchers and industry consultants because it is an easy-to-understand conceptual framework for presenting travel motivations (MacInnes et al., 2022). Moreover, even if the focus of travel motivation elements may differ between cultures, this model can be extended to cross-cultural contexts, to capture the multiple travel motives of a larger traveller market (Oktadiana & Agarwal, 2022). The middle layer of motives is especially important in reflecting the differentiation and motivational needs of experienced tourists (Wen, 2017). The TCP model was used in this thesis to investigate how tourist travel motivation is related to on-site interactions with ethnic hosts when visiting ethnic destinations - based on the assumption that such interaction outcomes will influence tourists' attitudes and intentional behaviours towards hosts and the ethnic destinations.

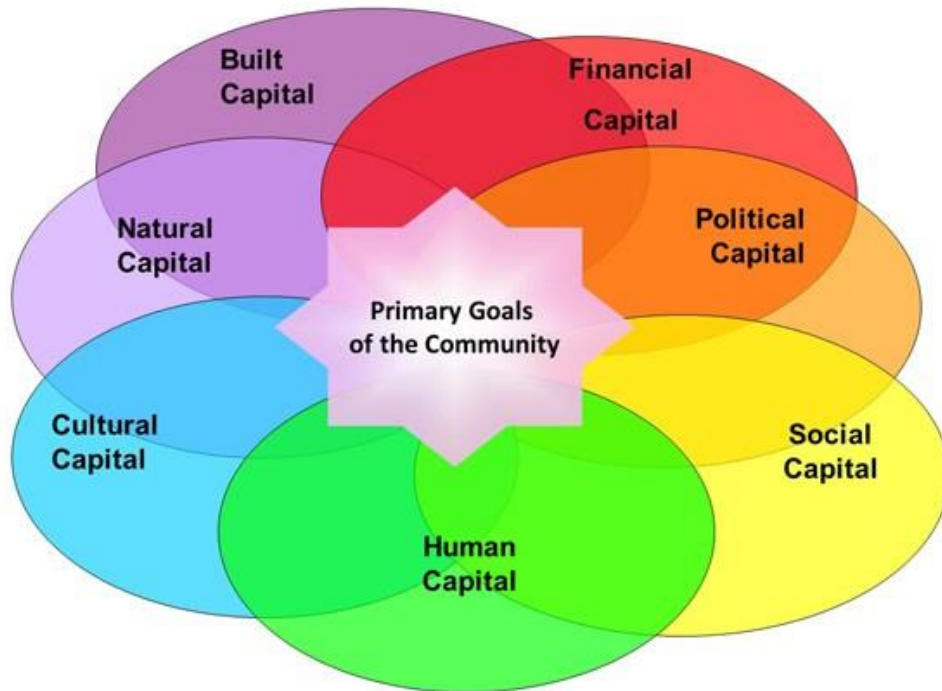
1.4.3 Community Capitals Framework (CCF)

The Community Capitals Framework (CCF) developed by Flora and her collaborators (see Flora et al., 2016) is an alternative method for implementing a systems approach to poverty reduction, effective natural resource management, and social equity (Figure 1.6). Capital is defined as the resources people and/or communities possess. Notably, the CCF shifts from the concept of 'aspect', or 'resource' to 'capital', to emphasise that a capital is a resource which is invested in to create more resources for the short, mid, and long-term (Flora, 2004). Further, Gutierrez-montes et al. (2009) clarified that each community has resources, regardless of whether it is the poorest or most marginalised, that can be used to negotiate its own development and wellbeing.

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Figure 1.6

The Community Capitals Framework (CCF)



Note. See Emery and Flora (2006) and Flora et al. (2016)

The CCF consists of seven forms of community capital: *natural*, *cultural*, *human*, *social*, *political*, *financial*, and *built capital* presented in Table 1.2. The vitality of any community can be linked to the presence and strength of seven community capitals, which can be invested in or tapped for the purpose of promoting the long-term wellbeing of communities (Beaulieu, 2014).

Table 1.2
Community Capitals Framework

Natural capital includes the air, water, soil, wildlife, vegetation, landscape, and weather that surround us and provide both possibilities for and limits to community sustainability. Natural capital influences and is influenced by human activities.

Cultural capital includes traditions, language, value, and cultural heritage. Cultural hegemony allows one social group to impose its worldview, symbols, and reward system on other groups.

Human capital includes education, skills, health, and self-esteem.

Social capital involves mutual trust, reciprocity, groups, collective identity, working together, and a sense of a shared future. It refers to relationships among individuals or groups within the community (*bonding social capital*) and outside of the community (*bridging social capital*).

Political capital is the ability of a community or group to turn its norms and values into standards, which are then translated into rules and regulations that determine the distribution of resources.

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Table 1.2 (Continued)

Financial capital includes savings, income generation, fees, loans and credit, gifts and philanthropy, taxes, and tax exemptions. Community financial capital can be assessed by changes in poverty, firm efficiency, diversity of firms, and local people's increased assets.

Built capital includes information technologies, chemicals, bridges, railroads, oil pipelines, factories, day care centres, and wind farms.

Note. Emery and Flora (2006) and Flora et al., (2016)

Most communities arguably find it challenging to pursue simultaneous investments in the seven capitals. Practically, Emery and Flora (2006) suggested that pursuing positive change in one form of capital can create opportunities for improvements in other community capitals. In other words, increases in stocks of specific capitals will lead to increases in the stocks of other capitals, called the '*spiralling up*' effect. By contrast, decreases or loss in one capital can cause negative changes in another or all capitals, resulting in a loss of hope and direction, known as the '*spiralling down*' effect. Generally, the CCF highlights interdependence, interaction, and synergy among the capitals. The use of the stocks of one capital can have a positive or negative effect on the quantity and the possibilities of other capitals (Gutierrez-montes et al., 2009).

The CCF offers a comprehensive viewpoint for analysing current stocks and impacts from both within and outside the community. Host-tourist interaction outcomes can directly contribute to positive changes in social capital. According to the '*spiralling up*' effect, this improvement can be an entry point to systematically create changes across all capitals of the community.

1.4.4 Destination community wellbeing (DCW) approach to tourism planning

The Destination Community Wellbeing (DCW) approach to tourism planning was proposed by Moscardo and Murphy (2014) to help tourism move towards a greater contribution to sustainability. The destination community is placed at the centre of tourism planning activity, strengthening community engagement across the whole process. Unlike other conventional approaches, where the local community is often informed after key decisions have been made, the DCW approach ensures that the community is involved in every stage of tourism planning process. Therefore, this process is circular rather than linear (Moscardo, 2023; Moscardo & Murphy, 2014).

By incorporating the Community Capitals Framework (Emery & Flora, 2006) and the concept of community wellbeing, the DCW approach argues that tourism planning has to find ways to build community capacity for effective tourism decision-making. Tourism is not seen as primarily a source of financial capital that is assumed to be exchanged for other capitals. Instead of assessing the resources available for tourism, this approach emphasises the assessment of current stock of the various capitals available to destination residents and the major sustainability issues they are facing. Tourism strategies should be considered within the context of destination community wellbeing needs and aspirations (Moscardo & Murphy, 2015).

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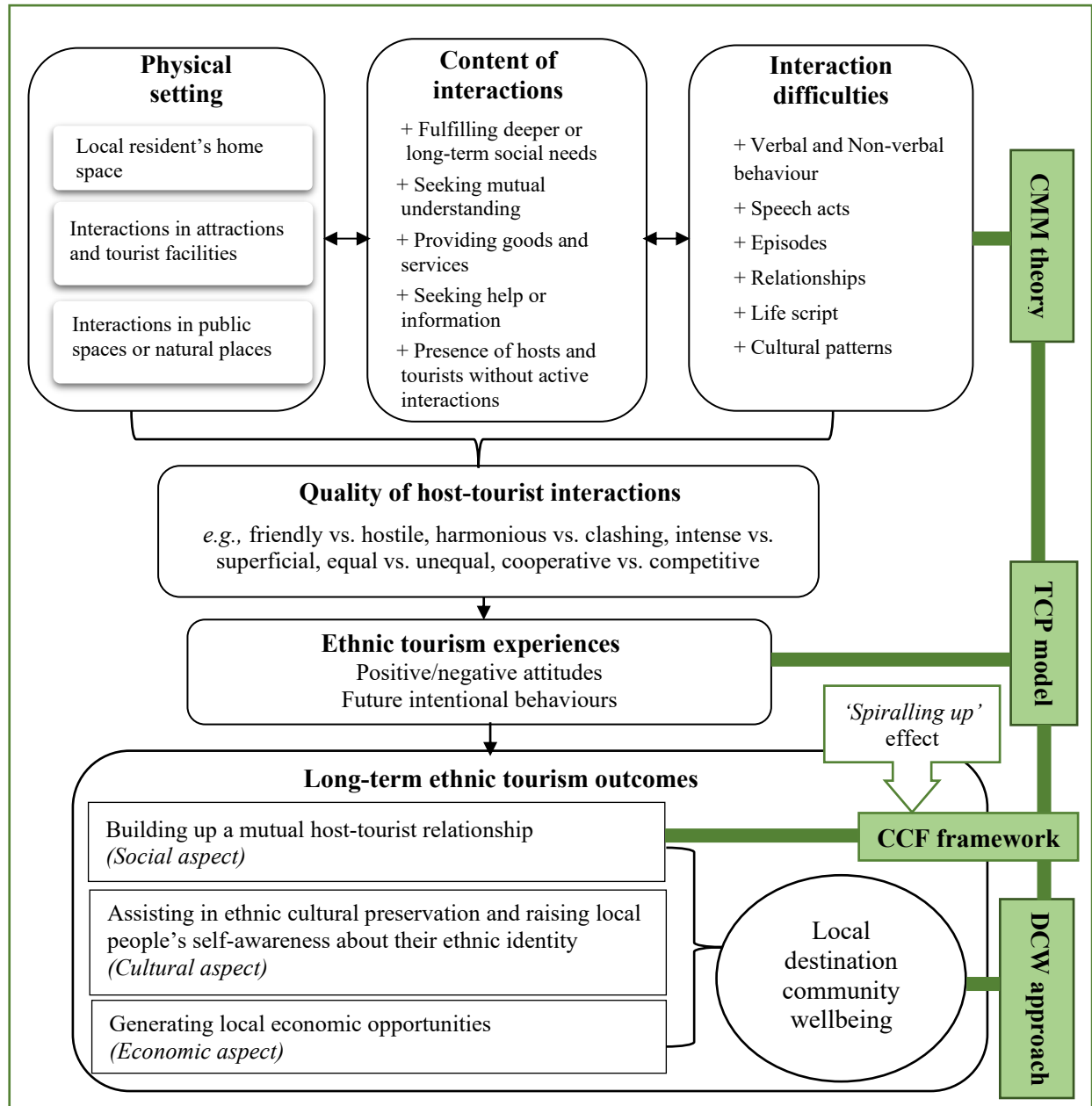
As evidenced from some practical projects related to rural communities (Magnetic island, Can Tho, Atherton Tablelands, Bowen, and Whitsundays), Moscardo (2023) indicated that the DCW approach offers a wider range of more innovative tourism options and clearer pathways linking tourism to specific benefits to the community capitals that contribute to destination community wellbeing. Therefore, the DCW approach holds the potential for application in other settings. This thesis employs the DCW approach to engage a local community in ethnic tourism planning processes with the aim of improving host-tourist interaction outcomes, thereby enhancing ethnic tourism as a tool for sustainability.

Drawing on multiple streams of literature, research opportunities, and integrated theoretical foundations, a conceptual framework was formulated to guide the present thesis, as shown in Figure 1.7.

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Figure 1.7

Conceptual framework for the thesis



Note. Drawn by the author

1.5 Research paradigm and methodology

The academic concept of paradigm was born in the writings about the history of science by the American philosopher Thomas Kuhn in his 1962 book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. This concept “stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by members of a given community” (1962, p. 175). Simplistically, a paradigm refers to a philosophical way of thinking. The importance of a paradigm is to provide beliefs and understandings and, for researchers in a particular discipline - influence what should be studied, how it should be studied,

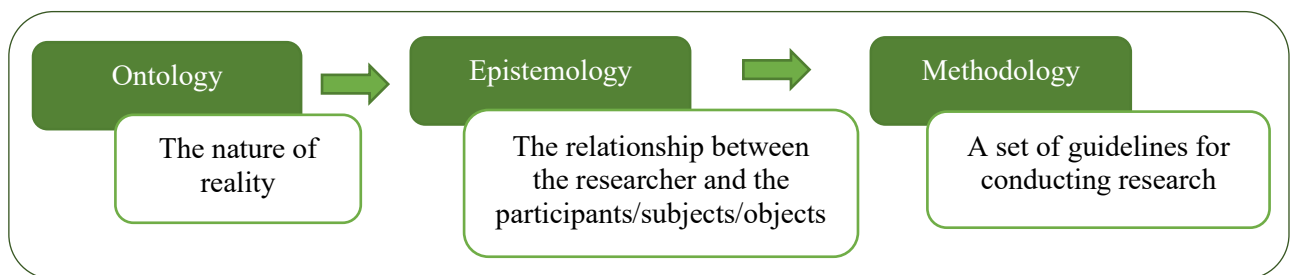
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and how the results of the study should be interpreted (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). For tourism researchers, understanding the basic tenets of the paradigm will ensure that “when you design a research project, you will be able to maintain consistency between the approach being adopted for your data and/or empirical material collection and the subsequent construction of the ‘knowledge’ from your data and/or empirical materials” (Jennings, 2010, p. 34).

Three terms relevant to discussing paradigm are *ontology*, *epistemology*, and *methodology* (see Figure 1.8). *Ontology* is the nature of existence or reality, of being or becoming, as well as the basic categories of things that exist and their relationship. Ontology helps to conceptualise the form and nature of reality and what we believe can be known about that reality (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). *Epistemology* is the study of knowledge, which outlines how researchers obtain facts and justify their beliefs in such facts. Epistemology is important to help the researchers position themselves in the research context so that they can discover what else is new, given what is known. *Methodology* refers to the research design, methods, approaches, and procedures used in an investigation that is well planned to find out something. Pearce (2021) further clarifies that methodology refers to the logistics and the whole design of the study while methods are the tools employed to collect data.

Figure 1.8

Summary of terms and definition regarding the paradigm



Note. Jennings (2010)

The present thesis adopted the post-positivism paradigm. In post-positivism philosophy, reality is not rigid; rather, it is a product of the researchers’ involvement in the research. The composition of reality is influenced by its context and meaning and social concerns are also important, therefore, many approaches to reality are possible (Ryan, 2006). The role of the researcher is as an active interpreter to uncover meanings from people’s multiple interpretations of reality and the researchers’ interactions with the study subjects are acknowledged and allowed (Ryan, 2006). Methodologically, although researchers prefer quantitative approaches, there has been a growth in mixed methods (Jennings, 2010). Therefore, Henderson (2011) suggested that post-positivism also legitimises the potential for using mixed methods which offer a practical approach to collecting data using more than one method. More specifically, this thesis is based on the post-positivism paradigm in order to:

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- encourage the use of mixed natural and cultural settings to consider the contextual elements of the data because the main topic of this thesis is host-tourist interactions. This topic is directly associated with physical settings, content, and difficulties due to cultural differences between ethnic hosts and domestic tourists. An insight into such interactions needs to be considered within the socio-cultural and contextual complexity;
- enable the researcher to reflect on her position related to the topic. An integration of the emic and etic perspectives is useful to investigate the perceptions and experiences of the interactions from both sides - hosts and tourists; and
- see the whole picture and interpret phenomena based on both the researcher's own perspective and solid background in tourism literature. Additionally, it helps the researcher balance personal and professional experiences and theoretical interpretations that enable the possibility of developing solutions to improve host-tourist interaction outcomes.

To address the five research objectives presented in the previous section, a mixed methods approach was used in this thesis (see Table 1.3).

Table 1.3

Methodological summary

Study		Method design	Data collection	Data analysis	Tool
One	1A	Qualitative	Semi-structured interview	Thematic and content analysis	Leximancer 4.5 and manually
	1B			Content analysis	Manually
Two	2A	Quantitative	Questionnaire survey	PLS-SEM	Smart-PLS 4.0
	2B			Segmentation	SPSS 28.0
Three	3	Qualitative	Workshop	Content analysis	Manually

Note. Elaborated by the author

In the first study, a total of 31 interviews were conducted with ethnic villagers in the Central Highlands of Vietnam from December 2020 to March 2021. Semi-structured interviews have the advantage of interaction between the participants and the researcher and reflect conversational exchanges similar to those in a real-world setting (Wengraf, 2001). Study 1A used Leximancer software 4.5 and manual content analysis to explore the nature (physical setting and content) of host-tourist interactions, the difficulties encountered, and the perceived quality of interactions. Study 1B carried out manual content analysis to scrutinise differences in the quality of interaction and community support for ethnic tourism across the studied communities.

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The second study collected 438 valid responses from domestic visitors via both on-site and online (Qualtrics) questionnaires from December 2020 to May 2021. Study 2A used SPSS 28.0 for initial descriptive analysis of respondents and summary characteristics of host-tourist interactions. Then, Smart-PLS software 4.0 was applied to examine the research hypotheses via partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). This study examined the influence of physical settings, content, and difficulties on the perceived quality of interactions and, subsequently, how quality influences tourists' attitudes and intentional behaviours and perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes. To segment domestic visitors based on their travel motivations for visiting the Central Highlands, Study 2B utilised SPSS 28.0 to deal with other statistical analyses to conduct k-means cluster and discriminant analyses as well as Chi-square, and one-way ANOVA tests.

In the last study (Study 3), qualitative data was gathered through a community workshop with 34 stakeholders in one of the ethnic studied destinations on 23rd December 2022. A workshop not only meets participants' expectations to achieve something related to their own interests, but it also provides reliable and valid data about the domain in question for the researcher (Ørngreen & Levinson, 2017). Drawing from N'Drower's indigenous research framework (2020), the workshop approach allows the author to bring the findings of previous studies back to the community for further discussion. Content analysis was carried out to gain comprehensive understanding of community aspirations and suggestions for improving host-tourist interaction outcomes, thereby making positive net contributions to local destination community wellbeing through ethnic tourism.

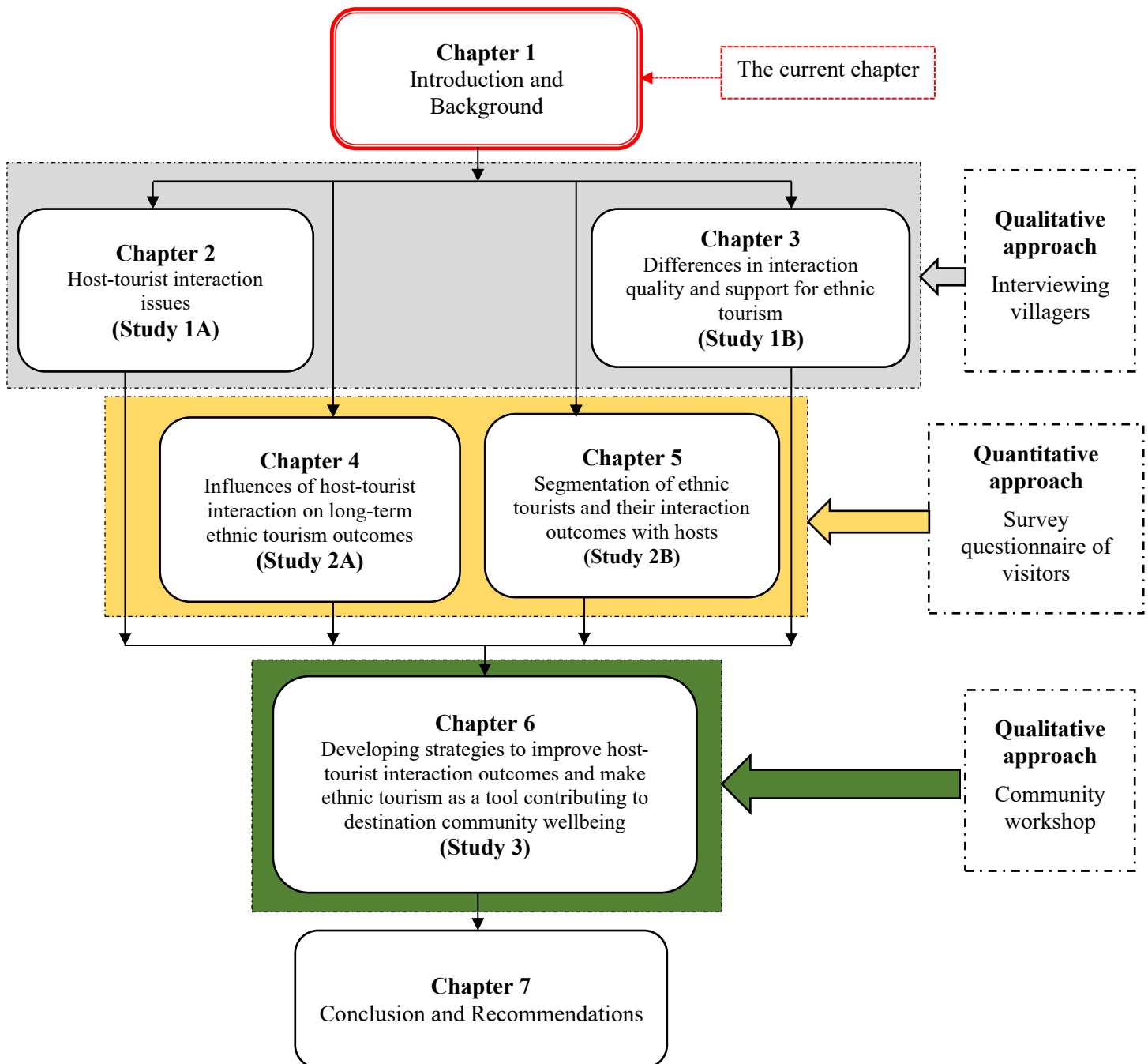
1.6 Thesis structure

This thesis consists of seven chapters (see Figure 1.9). The first chapter (the current chapter) situates the research context and introduces an overview of this thesis. Five main chapters – Chapter 2, Chapter 3, Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6 – representing the three studies, were developed and written as separate journal articles. More specifically, Chapter 2 (Study 1A) was published in the *Journal of Heritage Tourism* (K. T. T. Nguyen et al., 2023). Part of Chapter 3 (Study 1B) is currently under review in the *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*. Part of Chapter 4 (Study 2A) has been presented at the *CAUTHE 2023 Annual Conference* as a working paper. Another part of Chapter 4 is currently under review in the *Journal of Travel Research*. Chapter 5 (Study 2B) is ready for submission to the *Advances in Southeast Asian Studies* in May 2024. Chapter 6 has been accepted as a conference paper at the *73rd Aiest Conference of Ideas 2024 in Bolzano-Bozen, Italy – Aug 2024*. The final Chapter 7 provides a synthesis of the key findings from the studies as well as discussions of the contributions and limitations of the research. This chapter also suggests recommendations for future research directions, thereby contributing to ongoing tourism research.

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Figure 1.9

Thesis structure



Note. Drawn by the author

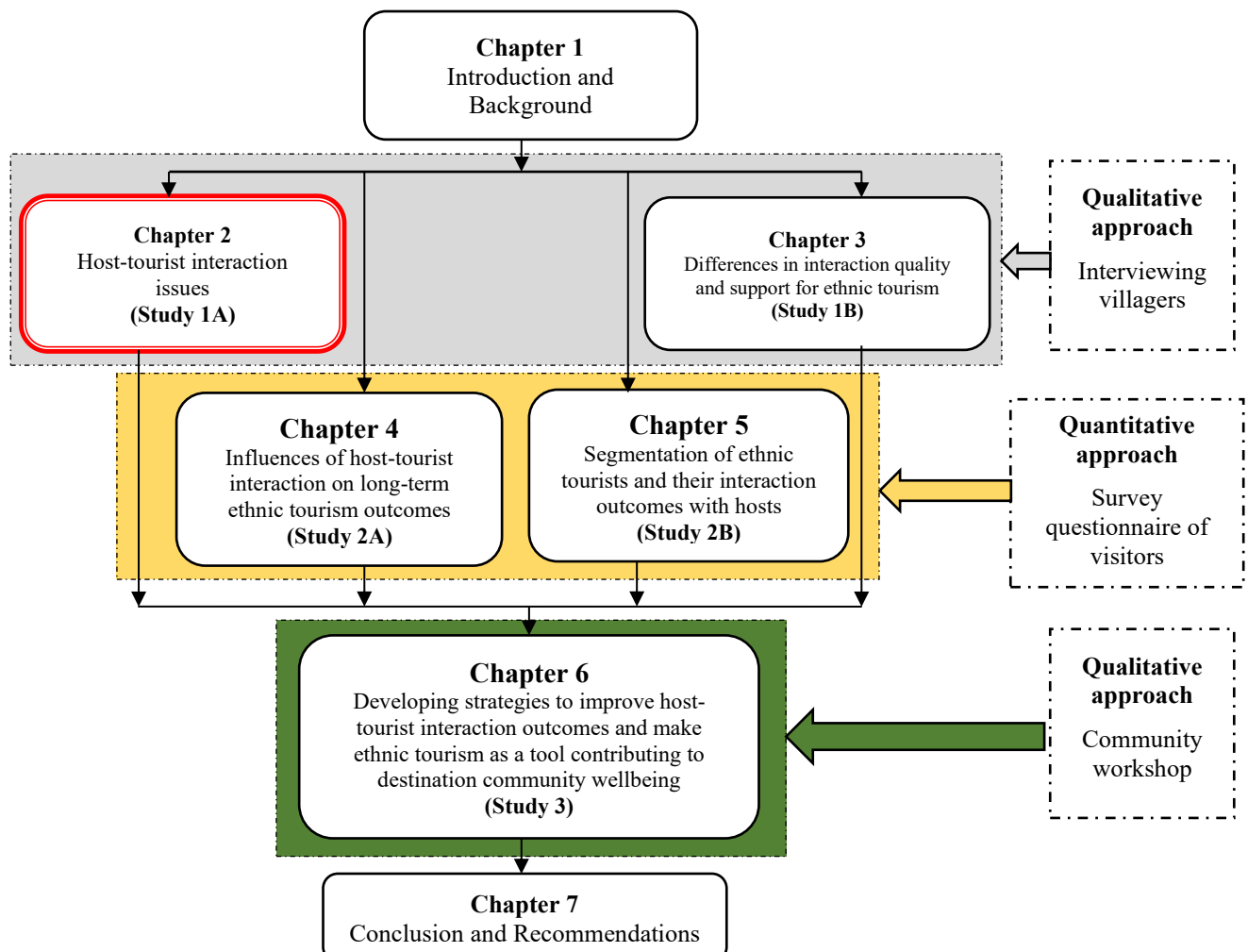
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LET'S LISTEN: THE VOICES OF ETHNIC VILLAGERS IN IDENTIFYING HOST-TOURIST INTERACTION ISSUES IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS, VIETNAM (STUDY 1A)

This chapter presents Study 1A of the PhD thesis. The main purpose of this chapter is to address the first research objective: *To understand the fundamental characteristics and features of host interactions with tourists in ethnic villages in the Central Highlands, Vietnam*. Utilising a qualitative research approach, this chapter provides the results from 31 semi-structured interviews with ethnic villagers and explicitly explains why four ethnic communities were chosen as studied sites for the thesis (see Section 2.3 Methodology). Being an exploratory study, this chapter stands as a key pillar for ‘building’ the whole thesis by assisting in understanding three elements of host-tourist interaction: physical setting, content, and difficulties and how the elements are related to the quality of interaction.

This chapter has been published as a paper in the Journal of Heritage Tourism.

Nguyen, K. T. T., Murphy, L., Chen, T., & Pearce, P. L. (2023). Let's listen: the voices of ethnic villagers in identifying host-tourist interaction issues in the Central Highlands, Vietnam. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2023.2259512>.



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2.1 Introduction

Ethnic tourism has been identified as a tool for poverty alleviation and ethnic heritage preservation in poor regions (Yang, 2016). It is a unique form of tourism motivated by a visitor's desire for first-hand experiences with a distinctive local culture and contrasting way of life (Bott, 2018; Yang, 2016). A key to understanding ethnic tourism is the interactions between hosts and tourists (Zhang et al., 2017). These can play a crucial role in contributing to both minority people's socio-cultural life and positive attitudes towards tourism development, and, for visitors, to a rewarding experience and cultural knowledge of an ethnic destination (Armenski et al., 2011; Eusébio et al., 2018; Su et al., 2014). However, due to cultural differences, the host-tourist encounter may lead to negative perceptions, host-tourist friction, and even irritation (Pearce, 1982; Reisinger, 2009).

Cultural distance is a major reason for interaction difficulties, resulting in inefficient social contact (Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Lin, 2017), perceptions of risk (Lepp & Gibson, 2003), conflict and tension (Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Lin, 2017). Most existing studies (e.g., Carneiro et al., 2018; Fan, Qiu, et al., 2020; Stylidis et al., 2021) have shown more interest in the inter/cross-cultural interaction between hosts foreign tourists, while the interaction between hosts and domestic tourists has received less attention. Reisinger and Turner (2003) argue that the degree of cultural difference between hosts and tourists varies from very little to extreme. In the context of ethnic tourism, tourists interact with ethnic minorities who differ culturally, socially, or politically from the majority population (Cohen, 2001), these ethnic hosts and domestic tourists see each other as culturally different (Trupp, 2014b). Even though residing within the same country, different subcultural groups – hosts and tourists – might generate distinctive responses to observable behaviours in their interactions (Loi & Pearce, 2015). Thus, it is worthy to investigate the interaction between ethnic hosts and domestic tourists in an intra-national context. Moreover, a powerful reason to focus on this domestic–ethnic tourism interaction lies in the simple fact that domestic tourism dominates the market, not just in Vietnam but in many parts of the world.

Very little focused research has been directly undertaken on host-tourist interactions in ethnic tourism, other than the limited research investigating either host or tourist motivations for their interactions (Su et al., 2014), or examining role-playing by hosts during interactions in local homes (Zhang et al., 2017). The characteristics of such interactions (i.e., physical setting and content), difficulties, and how the quality of interactions is related to other factors in the ethnic tourism, remain under-studied.

Although ethnic tourism has attracted increasing research attention in Southeast Asia (Dolezal et al., 2020), very few researchers have studied ethnic tourism in the Vietnamese context. Meanwhile, Vietnam has a diversity of 54 ethnic groups who speak more than 100 different languages (Nguyen, 2021). The dominant group is the Kinh, accounting for 87% of the total

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population. Each ethnic minority has its own distinct costumes, traditions, and culture that portray a multi-ethnic picture of Vietnam (Kim & Tam, 2019). It has become an ideal destination for a niche tourism market called ‘ethnic tourism’ or ‘tribal tourism’ (Bott, 2018). Cohen (2016) summarised ethnic tourism studies in mainland Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, and argued that, despite being a popular highland destination, Dalat – located in the Central Highlands – is not known for ethnic tourism. Most ethnic tourism research in Vietnam has been undertaken only in Sapa (Bott, 2018; Cuong, 2020; Nguyen, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2020) or recently in Hoa Binh province (Ngo & Pham, 2021). Both study sites are located in the mountainous northern part of Vietnam. Until now, research on the specifics of host-tourist interaction in ethnic tourism is lacking, and no ethnic tourism studies have been undertaken in the Central Highlands.

To fill these research gaps, the current study aims to explore what interaction issues exist between ethnic hosts and domestic tourists in the Central Highlands of Vietnam – a multi-ethnic country. This study contributes to the knowledge on host-tourist interaction in ethnic tourism, particularly within the intra-national context. Applying CMM theory (Pearce & Cronen, 1980) to identify interaction difficulties adds to the utility of CMM in both theoretical interpretive and methodological approaches. Doing so provides insight into such interaction difficulties in order to inform strategies to build sustainable host-tourist relationships in ethnic tourism in the Central Highlands, Vietnam. The following four research questions guided the qualitative study;

1. In what physical settings do host-tourist interactions occur,
2. What is the content of these interactions,
3. What difficulties do hosts face in their interactions with tourists, and
4. How do ethnic hosts perceive the quality of host-tourist interactions?

2.2 Literature review

2.2.1 *Ethnic tourism and fundamental characteristics and features of host-tourist interactions in ethnic tourism*

Ethnic tourism was first introduced by Smith (1977) as “tourism marketed to the public in terms of the ‘quaint’ customs of indigenous and often ‘exotic’ people” (p.2). In tourism literature, terms such as ‘aboriginal’, ‘indigenous’, ‘tribal’ or ‘community-based’ tourism are sometimes used interchangeably to refer to the phenomenon of ‘ethnic’ tourism. According to Xie (2011), the use of the term ‘ethnic’ tourism is to emphasise that ethnic minority people are directly or indirectly involved in controlling and/or providing tourism services based on their unique culture. They may or may not be indigenous to a destination (Yang & Wall, 2014). For this study, the term ‘ethnic tourism’ refers to Xie’s definition (2011), more specifically, the ethnic minority groups are the indigenous people in Vietnam’s Central Highlands, and the focus is on the tourism activities and interaction with domestic visitors, mainly the Kinh.

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The interaction between hosts and tourists has drawn much research attention (Xiong et al., 2021). However, in the ethnic tourism context, there are few studies on the fundamental characteristics and features as well as process of host-tourist interaction (Zhang et al., 2017). While in some locations ethnic people are only a supplementary attraction (Yang et al., 2013), several researchers confirm that ethnic residents are not only hosts and service providers but symbolise the heart of an authentic destination experience (Wei et al., 2020; Wong et al., 2019; Yang, 2016).

The fundamental work of de Kadt (1979) identified three main contexts in which host-tourist encounters occur: tourists and hosts exchange information and ideas face to face, tourists purchase goods and services from the hosts; and tourists and hosts simply find themselves side by side in the same place. According to Reisinger and Turner (2003), host-tourist interaction occurs in a wide variety of physical settings. It takes place at local resident's home (Zhang et al., 2017), tourism attractions and supporting services/facilities (Carneiro & Eusébio, 2015; Eusébio et al., 2018; Woosnam & Norman, 2010), or natural places (e.g., beaches, protected areas) (Woosnam & Norman, 2010) and in the street (Carneiro & Eusébio, 2012).

Placing more emphasis on the content of interactions, Su et al. (2014) categorised host-tourist interactions into five types, ranging from low to high intensity. The ascending intensity levels include; the presence of hosts and tourists at a destination without active interactions, tourists seeking help or information, business relationships, both actors actively seeking mutual understanding (e.g., chatting, sharing meals, experiencing local customs), and both actors fulfilling long-term social needs (e.g., making friends, exchanging personal contact).

In brief, different settings allow both hosts and tourists different opportunities for interacting, whereby the content of interactions varies, resulting in different challenges and outcomes. Rather than considering either the setting or the content of interactions, it is the examination of the complex combination of the two that helps us explore 'what is going on' (Zhang et al., 2017) and what interaction difficulties ethnic hosts possibly encounter with domestic tourists in ethnic destinations.

2.2.2 *Difficulties in host-tourist interactions*

There is a substantial body of research related to interaction difficulties that may occur during host-tourist encounters. Most of the work considers these difficulties in the context of cultural distance resulting from differences in language, customs, values, standards, perceptions of the world, and expectations (Bochner, 1982; Pearce et al., 1998; Reisinger & Turner, 2003; Tung, 2021). Such differences can lead to misunderstanding, misinterpretation, problematic behaviours, and even offence (Moufakkir, 2011; P. L. Pearce, 2005b; Reisinger, 2009; Tung, 2021). The degree of cultural distance might range from very small to extreme, therefore differentially influencing host-tourist interactions (Reisinger & Turner, 2003).

Although early literature has studied 'cultural distance' and 'cultural shock' (Bochner, 1982; Oberg, 1960), the bulk of these studies have been concerned only with the phenomenon's negative

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influences or consequences, or suggested practical interventions. A limited number of studies have clearly categorised interaction difficulties resulting from cultural differences. For example, Pearce (1982) indicated three main types of difficulties in host-tourist interactions: interpersonal communication and behaviour (e.g., language fluency, polite language usage, expressing attitudes, and feelings); non-verbal signals (e.g., facial expressions, eye gaze, spatial behaviour, touching, and gesture); and rules and patterns of social behaviours (e.g., greetings, self-discourse, making or refusing requests). This work examined the problems by observing the social and psychological effects of tourist behaviours in the host community, highlighting the need for more empirical research to examine each dimension of the difficulties. In light of this, Reisinger and Turner (2003) pointed out four major determinants of interaction difficulties, namely temporal, spatial, communication, and cultural aspects. Both studies focused on the interaction challenges in inter/cross-cultural contexts. There is a lack of empirical research investigating whether there are any interaction difficulties between hosts and tourists in intra-national contexts, and how such difficulties might be classified.

2.2.3 *Quality of host-tourist interactions*

Previous research into host-tourist interactions has analysed the influences of interaction quality on resident perceptions of tourism's impact on quality of life (Carneiro & Eusébio, 2015), resident attitudes towards tourists or tourism development (Armenski et al., 2011; Eusébio et al., 2018; Xiong et al., 2021), how to measure residents' emotional solidarity via interaction quality (Woosnam & Norman, 2010), tourist experience and travel attitudes (Fan, 2020; Pizam et al., 2000; Su & Wall, 2010), and tourists' destination image/loyalty (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2019; Styliadis et al., 2021). However, so far little is known about what determines interaction quality. Recent work by Styliadis et al. (2021) revealed that interaction quality positively affects tourists' cognitive and affective image, leading to a positive impact on destination loyalty. However, that study – as well as the majority of existing studies – used a quantitative research method to test the impact of interaction quality on tourism outcomes without any understanding of what defines and contributes to interaction quality.

Reisinger and Turner (2003) claimed there is insufficient information on how to precisely and successfully evaluate host-tourist contact. Yet, many studies have used different dimensions to measure social interaction in tourism, such as type of contact/activities (Eusébio et al., 2018), intensity (Pizam et al., 2000), environmental settings (Murphy, 2001), the host/tourist gaze (Moufakkir, 2011; Urry, 2002), travel motivations, or tourists' perceptions of tourism impacts (Carneiro & Eusébio, 2012). In addition, Zhou (2011) indicated that interaction quality is influenced by factors originating from both tourists and hosts.

In much of the preceding research, measurement of interaction quality was done from the tourists' viewpoint (Fan, Qiu, et al., 2020; Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Lin, 2017; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2019; Styliadis et al., 2021; Wei et al., 2020). Research from the host perspective is scarce except for

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the work of Teye et al. (2002), Eusébio et al. (2018), and, more recently, Xiong et al. (2021). These authors developed measurement scales using different criteria to examine the role of interaction quality in resident attitudes towards tourism development. These criteria included whether the interactions were harmonious or clashing, intense or superficial, enjoyable, positive, useful or whether friendships were developed. However, these authors failed to explain the in-depth interaction between residents and tourists.

In summary, most of the previous studies tested models of the relationship between perceived interaction quality and tourists' overall satisfaction, destination image and loyalty, or residents' attitudes towards tourism development and their perceptions of tourism impacts on the quality of life. The amount of research providing detailed insights into host-tourist interactions remains scarce (Eusébio et al., 2018).

2.2.4 *Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory*

The Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory is based on the pivotal work of Pearce and Cronen (1980). Pearce and Cronen start with a basic premise that social worlds we inhabit are constructed in the many diverse forms of everyday communication we engage in. Communication is a process of *managing meanings* and we manage those meanings through *coordinating* with others. According to CMM, six contextual levels are useful to understand the full meaning of, and to create, effective well-managed communication. These levels include;

- (1) *Verbal and Non-verbal behaviour* – how clearly people understand one another's speech, gestures, posture, signals, eye movement, and words;
- (2) *Speech acts* – the way meaning is attached to forms of address such as status, level of formality, or respect;
- (3) *Episodes* – a communication routine that consists of a sequence of speech acts, behaviours, rituals, arrangements for eating, sightseeing, tipping, or gift giving;
- (4) *Relationships* – the nature of social bonds, rights, and expectations, responsibilities, formation of friendships, and development of business relationships;
- (5) *Life script* – the way people perceive themselves in action, their relationship to others and to the physical environment, social and cultural institutions; and
- (6) *Cultural patterns* – the way the larger community is defined, what is perceived as honesty, guilt, justice or equity within a society, freedom of speech, spiritual beliefs, and attitudes to gender.

Despite its origins as a theory of communication, CMM has been successfully applied in multiple disciplines and has evolved considerably over time into an interpretive theory, a critical theory, and a practical theory (Barge, 2004). For the interpretive and critical aspect, CMM is used to explain people's interpretation about the meaning of their communication and the way they evaluate such interactions to react to others in a multi-level context. Shifting to practical theory, CMM as a

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guide helps practitioners to create something different from and better than conventional practice (Pearce, 2007). Existing studies have suggested different interventions to co-construct new ways of interacting meaningfully, such as community-based parent education programmes, training workshops, focus group discussions, reading labels, nutrition intervention messages to prevent childhood obesity (Bruss et al., 2005), and creativity in therapeutic encounters in the online therapy context during the COVID-19 pandemic (Cronin et al., 2021).

In the tourism context, a limited number of studies have employed the CMM approach to investigate different facets of social contact. Early work was conducted by Pearce et al., (1998) to identify cross-cultural contact difficulties for Australian travellers to Indonesia. To minimise the difficulties and promote sustainable host-tourist encounters, the study suggested the development of an in-flight video, a Culture Assimilator booklet, tourist behaviour codes, sets of visitor rules, or advice from professional guides. There have been later studies inspired by CMM's practical perspectives to propose interventions (e.g., picture, regulatory and social evaluative controls, and social influence messages and campaigns) to reduce the flashpoints of tourist-tourist and tourist-host friction in inter-cultural contexts (Loi & Pearce, 2015) and to design websites providing specific destination information for Muslim travellers (Oktadiana et al., 2016).

The present study used CMM from both theoretical and methodological perspectives. First, as Reisinger and Turner (2003) stressed CMM is an important theory facilitating the analysis of difficulties in host-tourist interactions. Therefore, six CMM levels were used to conceptualise a framework to guide the investigation of interaction difficulties. Furthermore, as an interpretive theory, CMM was used to interpret the meaning of responses to the questions about interaction difficulties. Second, in terms of the methodological approach, CMM assisted in framing the interview questions regarding interaction difficulties – sensitive issues between ethnic people and Kinh people – that ethnic villagers might encounter in their interactions with domestic visitors, that is, Kinh people. Probing questions guided by CMM assisted the author, who is a Kinh person, to elicit more detailed responses from participants instead of superficial answers to the overall research questions. CMM allowed the Kinh researcher to engage in mutual discovery, understanding and explanation to participants, which contributed to the participants happily engaging in mutual dialogue, reflection, and sharing their experiences with the researcher.

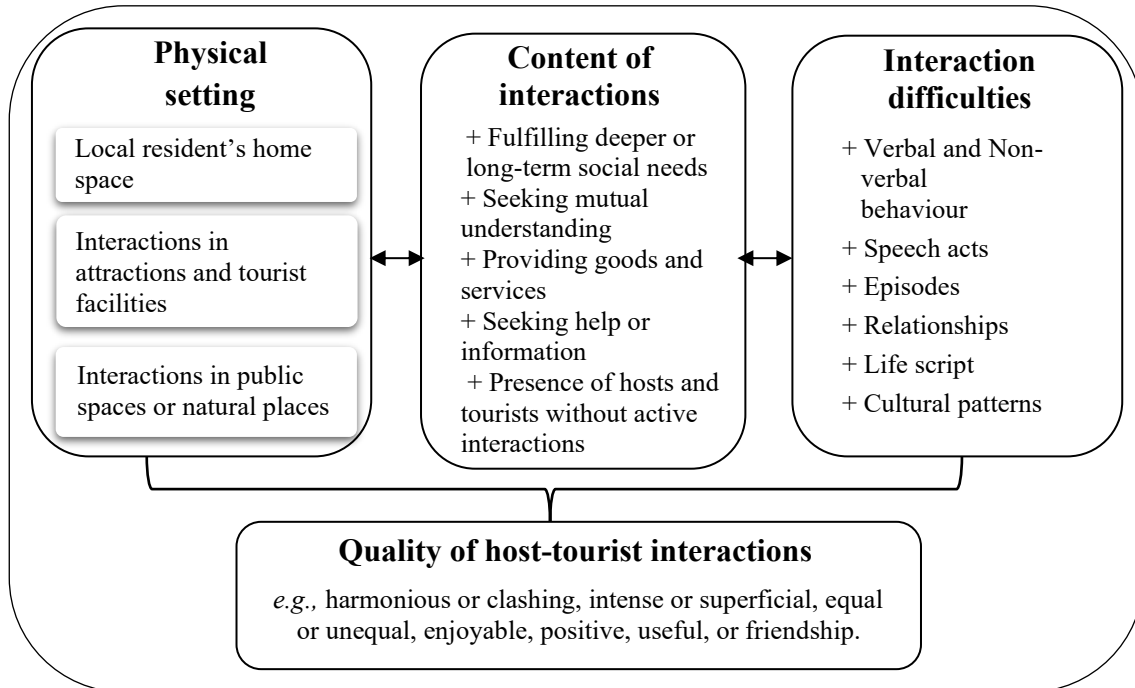
Drawing upon multiple streams of literature and CMM theory, a conceptual framework is provided in Figure 2.1 to propose a clearer understanding of the fundamental characteristics and features (physical setting, content), difficulties, and quality of host-tourist interactions. The physical setting refers to the place where the interaction occurs, while the content refers to a range of interactions at varying intensity levels. The difficulties reflect various challenges the hosts face in such interactions with tourists. The interaction quality refers to the subjective perception of the hosts as to whether interactions are positive or negative. It is noted that, by adopting a qualitative approach, the research

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explores the interrelationship of the nature, difficulties, and the quality of interactions, rather than testing the influences between these elements.

Figure 2.1

Conceptual framework for the present study



Note. Drawn by the author

2.3 Methodology

The thesis utilised a mixed-method approach to investigate issues of host-tourist interaction and identify ways to improve interaction outcomes in the context of ethnic tourism. Host-tourist interaction is bidirectional (Su & Wall, 2010) and the research context is associated with indigenous culture, therefore this thesis was carried out from both emic and etic views. The two views are complementary and gain the cultural understandings of behaviour (Wu & Pearce, 2014). Furthermore, following the Indigenous methodology rooted in cultural elements (N'Drower, 2020), the author first needed to build trust, share respect, and understand the locals' worldviews. The current study employed a qualitative approach, involving fieldtrips to ethnic villages and conducting semi-structured interviews to obtain insights into host-tourist interactions from the emic perspective of the experiences of villagers in ethnic tourism.

2.3.1 Research context

The Central Highlands in the west and southwest of Vietnam was chosen as the research context for two main reasons. First, the region is home to all 54 of the country's ethnic minority groups (Thái, 2018). This region is aptly referred to as 'upland culture', acknowledging its diverse, exotic minority cultures and stunning mountainous landscapes in which the living and social spaces

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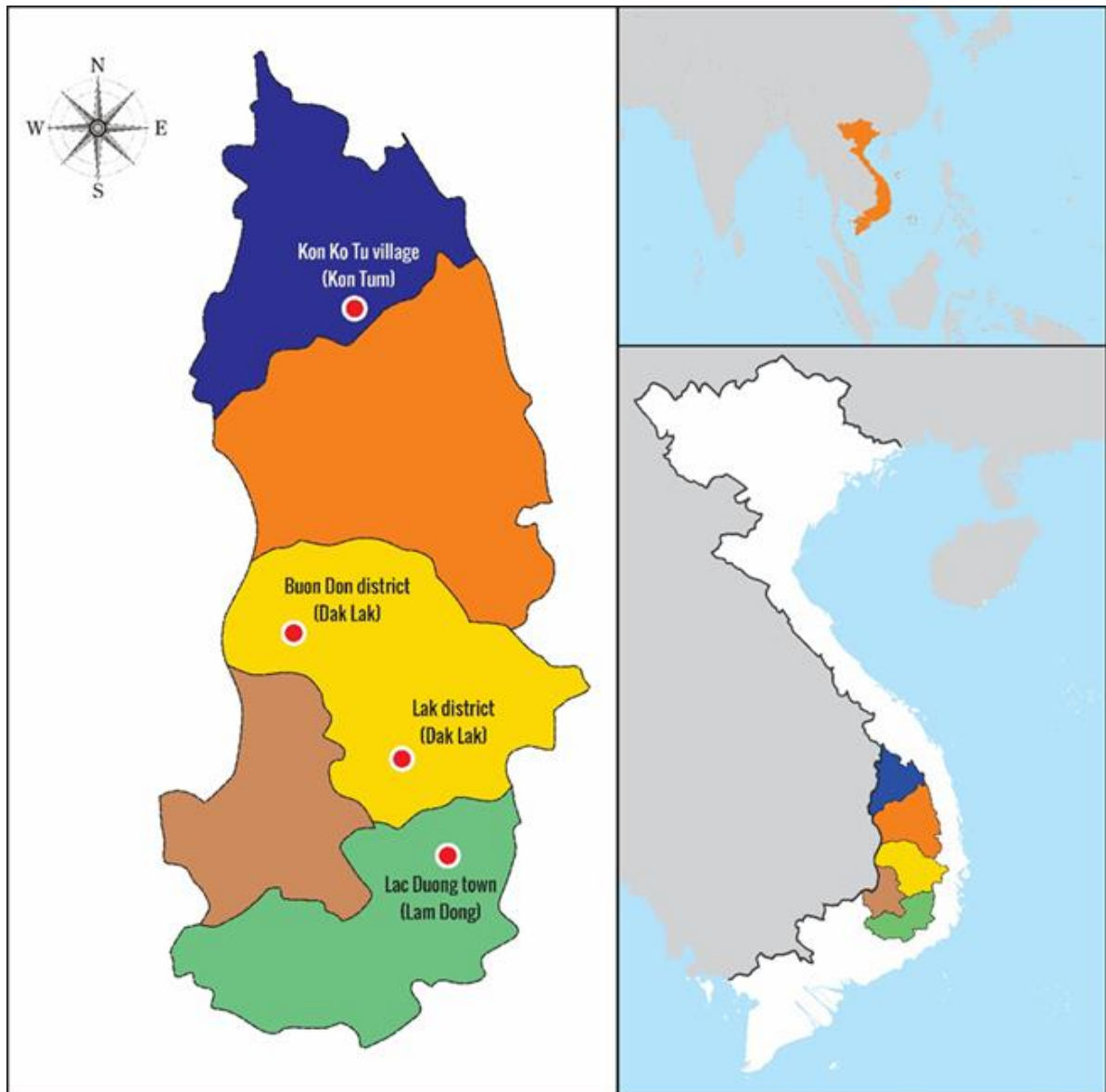
of ethnic groups are deeply associated with the forest (Kim & Tam, 2019; Thái, 2018). Gong culture¹, an important part of the traditional culture of the ethnic communities in the Central Highlands, was recognised as a Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO (2005). Four ethnic sites (Lac Duong, Lak, Buon Don, and Kon Ko Tu), in three out of the five provinces in the region, were chosen as study sites (Figure 2.2). The potential study sites were selected to ensure diversity and variety across the following criteria: ethnicity, stage of tourism development, level of community participation in local tourism, types of tourist icons, and typical ethnic tourism products on offer (Table 2.1).

Second, the region has attracted tourists through a range of visitor experiences focused on ethnic tourism, cultural tourism, ecotourism, leisure and holiday tours, adventurous tourism activities, and more recently agritourism. Among them, ethnic tourism is one of the Prime Minister's informed decisions in developing key tourism products in the region (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT), 2013). Between 2015 and 2019, the number of tourist arrivals increased gradually with an annual average growth rate of 11.6%, with the percentage of domestic tourists accounting for 92.5% of the total. The annual regional tourism revenue growth rate was approximately 10.5% (compiled from five Departments of Culture Sports and Tourism, 2020) and tourism revenues accounted for 14,788 billion VND in 2019, equivalent to 5% of the regional GDP (General Statistics Office (GSO), 2020).

¹ <https://www.unesco.org/archives/multimedia/document-642>

Figure 2.2

The four study sites in the Central Highlands region



Note. Drawn by the author and Le Nguyen Vu

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Table 2.1

Brief profiles of four study sites

Study site	Location	Total population (2022)	% of ethnic minority population	Ethnicity	Tourist icon	Popular ethnic tourism activities/services						
						Homestay	Gong performance	Communal house	Carving wooden sculptures	Handicrafts	Traditional cuisine	Local tour
Kon Ko Tu	is about 14km from Kon Tum city, administered by Kon Tum province.	144 households 760 inhabitants	96%	Bana	Traditional communal house and village landscape	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Buon Don	is about 40km from Buon Ma Thuot city, administered by Dak Lak province.	17,700 households 64,490 inhabitants	47.4%	Ede	Elephant riding		X				X	X
Lak	is about 60km from Buon Ma Thuot city, administered by Dak Lak province.	19,284 households 78,254 inhabitants	63%	M'nong	Dugout boating and elephant riding	X	X	X			X	X
Lac Duong	is about 12km from Da Lat city, administered by Lam Dong province.	3,157 households 12,434 inhabitants	71%	K'Ho	Gong performance		X	X		X	X	X

Note. Elaborated by the author

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2.3.2 Data collection

Being an outsider to the cultural settings, the author initially spent two to five days in each village before conducting formal interviews with ethnic minority participants. She observed the local way of life, consumed tourism products, and randomly chatted with villagers to gain familiarity and develop rapport with the community. These actions help to absorb characteristics of the cultural settings, social information, and local daily life in order to generate a comprehensive understanding of the community (Nguyen, 2021). Additionally, research engagement with indigenous communities needs to be rooted in cultural elements of trust, respect, and friendship according to the Melanesian Research Framework (indigenous research framework) (N'Drower, 2020).

A total of 31 interviews were conducted in the four ethnic villages of the Central Highlands from December 2020 to March 2021. Fieldwork in the first two study sites (Lak and Buon Don) was carried out during the Lunar New Year 2021 (Tết Festival). Following Vietnamese customs of Tết Festival, as well as the core Melanesian Research Framework's principles (N'Drower, 2020), when visiting the village participants' house the author prepared and gifted each village participant with a red lucky pocket, named *lì xì* (a cash of 100,000 VND or 50,000 VND equivalent to 6.0 AUD or 3.0 AUD respectively) as a wish for New Year. The purpose was to express respect and gratitude to the host and host's family on this special occasion. For the two remaining study sites (Lac Duong and Kon Ko Tu), the author conducted fieldwork on normal days. Giftsets were prepared and given to village participants as a way of invitation to participate in the research.

Face-to-face interviews usually took place in the private houses of the locals, tourist attraction points, coffee shops, gong venues, or on tours. After the meet and greet, the researcher introduced herself and the interviews were conducted as an informal, friendly conversation. During interviews, the author used 'small talk' to create rapport with the participants. Instead of following the exact order of the interview guide questions, she asked each section based on the participant's flow of answers and discussed points further to obtain information freely and deeply. In several cases, the author played a role of both an interviewer and a visitor while being involved in ethnic tourism services.

The number of interviews conducted in each village ranged from 7 to 9, depending on when saturation point was reached (i.e., no new information was uncovered) (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). The participants were representatives of four typical ethnic groups (i.e., M'nong, Ede, Bana, and K'Ho) in the region but varied in age, family income, and marital status. They included villagers who were involved in different forms of ethnic tourism and those who were not. These participants had more opportunities to get involved in host-tourist interactions at different intensity levels (Table 2.2). While both convenience and snowball sampling were used to recruit participants for this study, in the case of Kon Ko Tu village, which was completely new to the researcher, a more specific approach was needed. This began with a Letter of Introduction (LoI) originating from Dalat

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University (DLU), where the author is currently a lecturer in the Faculty of Tourism, and a request to officially meet a person in the local tourism administration. The local tourism official then recommended potential participants.

Interviews ranged in length from approximately 26 to 90 minutes. All interviews were tape-recorded for transcription and record storage. Interviews were transcribed verbatim into Vietnamese and subsequently translated into English for the data analysis step. There was no need for a translator as the author speaks both English and Vietnamese fluently. However, in some instances, several participants could not speak Vietnamese fluently during interviewing. The author needed assistance from the participants' family members, who were proficient in both their ethnic language and Vietnamese, to translate the responses into Vietnamese.

In addition to each interviewee's socio-demographic profile, the interview guide consists of eight sections focusing on cultural capital, social capital, community participation in local tourism, perception of tourism impacts, host-tourist interaction issues, quality of interaction, community support, and suggestions for improving the future ethnic tourism. In the current chapter, only responses to the sections of host-tourist interaction issues and interaction quality were analysed. The host-tourist interaction section focused on initially exploring the physical setting and content of the interactions. It then moved on to identifying difficulties the hosts encountered in their interactions with visitors, using questions drawn from CMM theory to probe the six contextual levels of verbal and non-verbal behaviour, speech acts, episodes, relationships, life scripts, and cultural patterns (Pearce & Cronen, 1980; Reisinger, 2009; Reisinger & Turner, 2003). The quality of interaction section discussed with villagers their feelings, any conflict experienced or observed, and their perceptions of how tourists responded to interactions. In summary, three main interview questions were asked as follows (with probes);

- 1) "Tell me more about when and how you interact with tourists (physical settings and content of interactions); and
- 2) "Can you tell me about a specific encounter that you found difficult or challenging?";
- 3) "In general, do you enjoy your interactions with tourists? Do you think the tourists enjoy interacting with you and others from your village? What have you heard from other people in the village about their interactions with tourists?";

The interview script was initially designed in English and then translated into Vietnamese for the fieldwork. To ensure that each question was properly translated, the back-translation technique was adopted.

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Table 2.2

Summary of participants' characteristics

	Code	Study site	Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Level of Education	Length of residence	Tourism (non)involvement
1	KT01	Kon Ko Tu village	Bana	Female	53	Primary school	Since born	Handicraft woman
2	KT02			Female	57	Primary school	Since born	Gong dancer
3	KT03			Male	57	Primary school	Since 1969	Local sculptor
4	KT04			Male	31	Bachelor	Since 2012	Homestay owner and local guide
5	KT05			Female	36	High school	Since born	Grocery shop owner (not involved in tourism)
6	KT06			Female	68	Secondary school	Above 40 years	Formerly homestay owner for more than 20 years (currently not involved in tourism)
7	KT07			Female	30	Diploma	Since born	Homestay owner
8	KT08			Male	58	Secondary school	Since born	Gong performer
9	KT09			Male	67	Primary school	Since 1959	Formerly homestay owner for more than 20 years (currently not involved in tourism)
10	BD01	Buon Don district	Ede	Male	42	Bachelor	Since 2011	A member of local administration (not involved in tourism)
11	BD02			Female	29	High school	Since born	A staff of the ethnic clothing rental store based at Cầu Treo tourist attraction point
12	BD03			Female	46	Secondary school	Since born	Souvenir and local speciality vendor based at Cầu Treo tourist attraction point
13	BD04			Male	47	Primary school	Since born	Mahout at Cầu Treo tourist attraction point
14	BD05			Female	29	Diploma	Since born	A grocery shop owner next to Cầu Treo tourist attraction point (not involved in tourism)
15	BD06			Male	50	Secondary school	Since born	Gong performer (sometimes involved in tourism) and farmer
16	BD07			Male	67	High school	Since 1975	Village head (not involved in tourism)
17	BD08			Female	63	Bachelor	45 years	Cultural researcher and NGOs project consultant (sometimes involved in tourism)

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Table 2.2 (Continued)

18	LK01	Lak district	M'nong	Female	42	Primary school	Since born	Gong dancer and restaurant staff at Lak resort
19	LK02			Male	36	Diploma	Since born	Mahout, local guide, and souvenir shop owner
20	LK03			Male	63	Primary school	Since 1964	Farmer (not involved in tourism)
21	LK04			Male	44	Bachelor	Since born	Former Lak resort staff for more than ten years (currently not involved in tourism)
22	LK05			Female	45	Primary school	Since born	Gardener (horticulture department) at Lak Tented Camp
23	LK06			Male	24	High school	Since born	Waiter and tour guide at Lak Tented Camp
24	LK07			Female	49	Secondary school	Since born	Handicraft woman and farmer (not involved in tourism)
25	LD01	Lac Duong town	K'Ho	Male	28	Bachelor	Since born	Jeep driver at Langbiang tourist attraction point
26	LD02			Male	30	Diploma	Since born	Restaurant staff and Gong performance supervisor at Langbiang tourist attraction point
27	LD03			Male	79	Diploma	Since 1952	Formerly local guide and interpreter more than 30 years (currently not involved in tourism)
28	LD04			Female	34	Graduate	Since born	Local coffee shop owner
29	LD05			Female	38	Undergraduate	Since born	Homeowner and local guide
30	LD06			Male	48	Diploma	Since born	Gong venue and restaurant owner
31	LD07			Male	63	High school	Since born	Gong venue owner and MC at Gong performance

Note. Elaborated by the author

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2.3.3 *Data analysis*

Content analysis of the textual data from the 31 interviews was conducted with the aid of Leximancer 4.5, a computer-assisted qualitative analysis software, which measures both the presence of defined concepts in the text as well as how they are interrelated. The automated ‘default’ settings of Leximancer help to reduce subjective bias and increase reliability due to key concepts and visual maps being generated automatically based on the presence of words or concepts and their semantical relationship (Phi, 2020), thereby allowing the exploratory analysis of a considerable body of text (MacLeod, 2021). There are three important units in Leximancer: word, concept, and theme. The textual analysis is performed using word occurrence and co-occurrence frequency to generate a word co-occurrence matrix from which concepts are identified (Wu et al., 2017). The size of the circles in the visual map has no bearing as to its importance in the text, the circles are merely boundaries; instead, the colour of the themes demonstrates their prominence. Hot colours (e.g., red, orange) represent the most important themes (Leximancer, 2023; MacLeod, 2021).

In this study, depending on the research questions, several technical operations were carried out to improve the validity of the concept maps (Wu et al., 2017). Removal of irrelevant or frequently occurring words that hold weak semantic information was done, such as ‘immediately’, ‘usually’, ‘example’, and ‘other’. Furthermore, for a particular research question about physical setting and content of interactions, words that were repeated frequently such as ‘guests’, ‘interact’, ‘tourists’, and ‘visitors’ needed to be removed because respondents often repeated question content, leading to over representation in the content analysis. For other research questions, the author merged or collapsed words which have similar meanings or were used interchangeably (e.g., ‘visitors’, ‘guests’, and ‘tourists’; ‘word’ and ‘words’; ‘group’ and ‘groups’).

To increase the credibility of the research results, manual content analysis was used to validate the efficacy of Leximancer analysis and assist in comprehensively interpreting the meaning of the outputs, particularly for the interaction quality. To analyse the interaction quality, text transcript was carefully re-read by the author to derive smaller meaning units, supported by CMM theory, as mentioned earlier. A meaning unit is the smallest unit of words or sentences related to each other (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Each meaning unit was highlighted in three colours accordingly to three themes identified to answer the research question. The author’s supervisors then double-checked the entire procedure. Lastly, the research team revisited the results multiple times, discussed differences, and interrogated actual responses to better understand and illustrate the meaning of the themes and concepts.

2.4 Results

Two concept maps were generated from the responses. The first was based on participant responses to the questions focusing on the physical settings and content of interactions. The second was generated from the discussion of interaction difficulties. The third section summarises key emotive themes about quality of interactions.

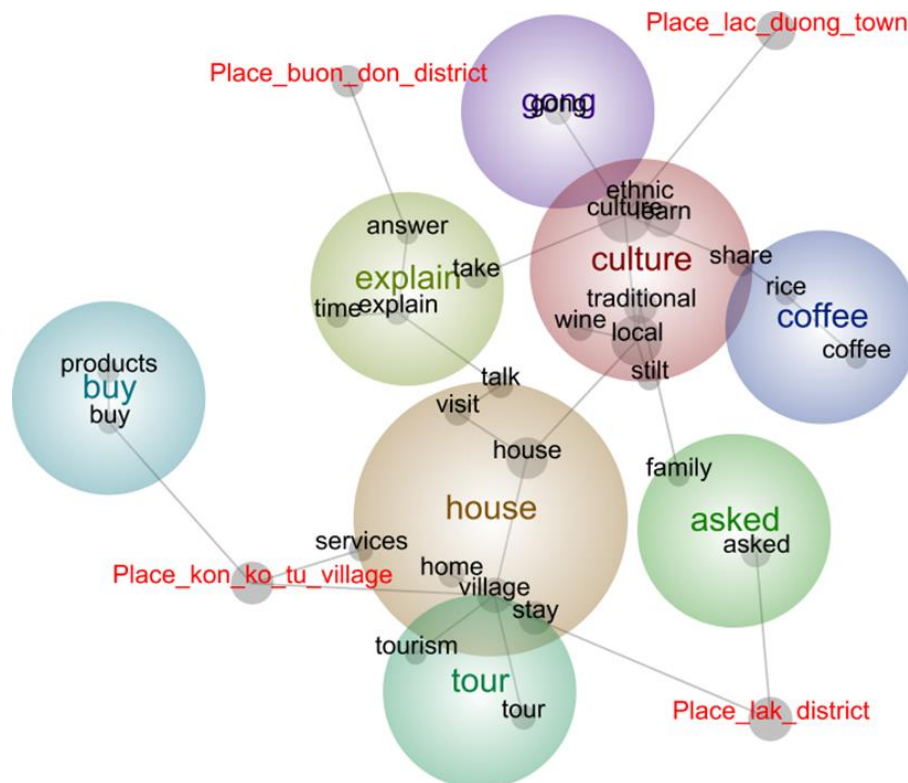
2.4.1 Physical settings and content of host-tourist interactions

Eight dominant themes represent the physical settings and content of host-tourist interactions (Figure 2.3). While the ‘house’ theme identifies the most common setting in which interactions occurred, the most important theme was ‘culture’ – which highlights the interaction content of visitors with hosts to ‘learn’ ‘ethnic’ ‘culture’ or experience the ‘local’ way of life. In these interactions, villagers were often willing to ‘share’ the meaning of ‘stilt’ house architecture, local customs, and the legends of an ethnic area. During some home visits, the hosts invited visitors to taste ethnic ‘traditional’ ‘wine’, called *Càñ* wine, ‘traditional’ cuisine, enjoy a meal or share their ‘culture’ (Figure 2.4). As one participant explained;

“Due to my old age, I cannot trek or climb, presently I only welcome visitors to visit my traditional house, talk, and enjoy local meals together with my family. I invite them to have a seat in my ‘house’ to listen to our customs, the legend of Lang Biang mountain, then taste *Cần* wine made by my daughter” (LD03).

Figure 2.3

The nature of host-tourist interactions in ethnic villages



Note. Concept map generated by Leximancer software 4.5

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Figure 2.4

Host-tourist interaction at a local house



Note. Photograph of the author, participants, and domestic visitors, used with permission

According to respondents, closer interactions occurred when tourists actively ‘asked’ local people about their ‘family’ circumstance, livelihood, current jobs, local food, and local daily life. It is important to note that, in a few cases, hosts had limited interaction with visitors who just passed by their ‘house’, observed handicraft-making procedures, or had a short ‘talk’ about local tourism ‘services’. For example, one villager explained that “*visitors only pass by my ‘house’ on their village tour. I do not talk or interact with them*” (KT05). The ‘gong’ and ‘coffee’ themes reflect different physical settings and interaction content. Some coffee shop owners shared how tourists simply stopped by their shop, had a look, and then tasted a cup of coffee as they casually passed by. Another K’Ho man (LD07) commented on low-intensity interactions at his gong venue: “*I found that visitors here just want to watch gong performances, drink Càñ wine, and play games that make them happy enough*”. By contrast, some hosts referred to the opportunities to talk, drink Càñ wine, and ‘share’ ‘gong’ or ‘coffee’ ‘culture’ with tourists at a ‘gong’ venue (Figure 2.5), local ‘coffee’ shop (<http://www.khocoffee.com>), or on ‘coffee’ tours. These situations allowed hosts to ‘share’ their traditional cultivation practices (e.g., wet ‘rice’ and ‘coffee’) and local specialities (e.g., bamboo tube ‘rice’; green sticky ‘rice’ cake) as representations of ethnic ‘culture’.

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Figure 2.5

Host-tourist interaction at a Gong venue



Note. Photograph taken by the author, used with permission

Hosts also encountered tourists at local ‘tourism’ accommodations (i.e., local resort, Lak Tented Camp), on specific ‘tours’ (e.g., dugout boating, elephant riding (Figure 2.6)), and during other ‘tourism’ activities in the ‘village’ (e.g., sightseeing, watching local daily life, or cultivating). A gardener at Lak Tented Camp said; *“When [guests] see the way I do gardening, some guests asked, “why you mix soil with cow manure?” [...] They asked about family background, go to school or not? If I have not, they will send volunteers to my house to eliminate illiteracy, e.g., they will open a small class to do charity work”* (LK05). In such settings, the villagers *“interacted closely with them [visitors] and shared about our [villagers’] culture. We chat, sing, drink, and share to understand each other ... Some visitors become my friends until now”* (LD03).

The ‘buy’ theme seems to primarily reflect business relationships when the villagers provided local tourism ‘services’ and different ‘products’ (e.g., souvenirs, handicrafts, or groceries). For instance, a Bana man (KT03) shared, *“They [tourists] look at wooden masks and wooden statues hanging in front of my house, as a result they are curious to come in to see, take pictures, and ask about those products; if they like, they will buy them”*. Sometimes, tourists sought information *“[...] places to eat, travel information services, or souvenir shops”* (LD01) and advice from the villagers on their way to ‘buy’ products.

The last theme, ‘explain’, represents the most superficial interactions. Villagers passively ‘answered’, were unwilling to ‘explain’ what visitors asked, or even had no interaction because tourists just came to ‘take’ photos. For instance, in the peak season, an elephant tour shortened its itinerary to

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3-5 minutes, therefore mahouts at Buon Don tourist attraction point did not have ‘time’ to ‘explain’ about the elephant culture during the tour. Even a souvenir shop owner did “*not actively invite or introduce about [her] products; only ‘answered’ to visitors in cases they asked*” (BD03).

Figure 2.6

Host-tourist interaction on an elephant riding tour



Note. Photograph taken by the author, used with permission

2.4.2 Host-tourist interaction difficulties

The ‘language’ barrier is the biggest challenge identified by hosts in their interactions with tourists in the Central Highlands (Figure 2.7). Language difficulties exist because Vietnamese (Kinh language) is the official language, yet ‘ethnic’ ‘villagers’ (especially elderly) living in remote areas either do not fluently ‘speak’ ‘Kinh’ or are unable to communicate in the ‘Kinh’ ‘language’. Consequently, the locals sometimes found it difficult to ‘understand’ what tourists were saying, as illustrated in the following comment;

“Honestly, I want to meet and talk with tourists, but I am afraid of interacting because I am not fluent in Kinh language, I do not know how to express, explain” (KT03).

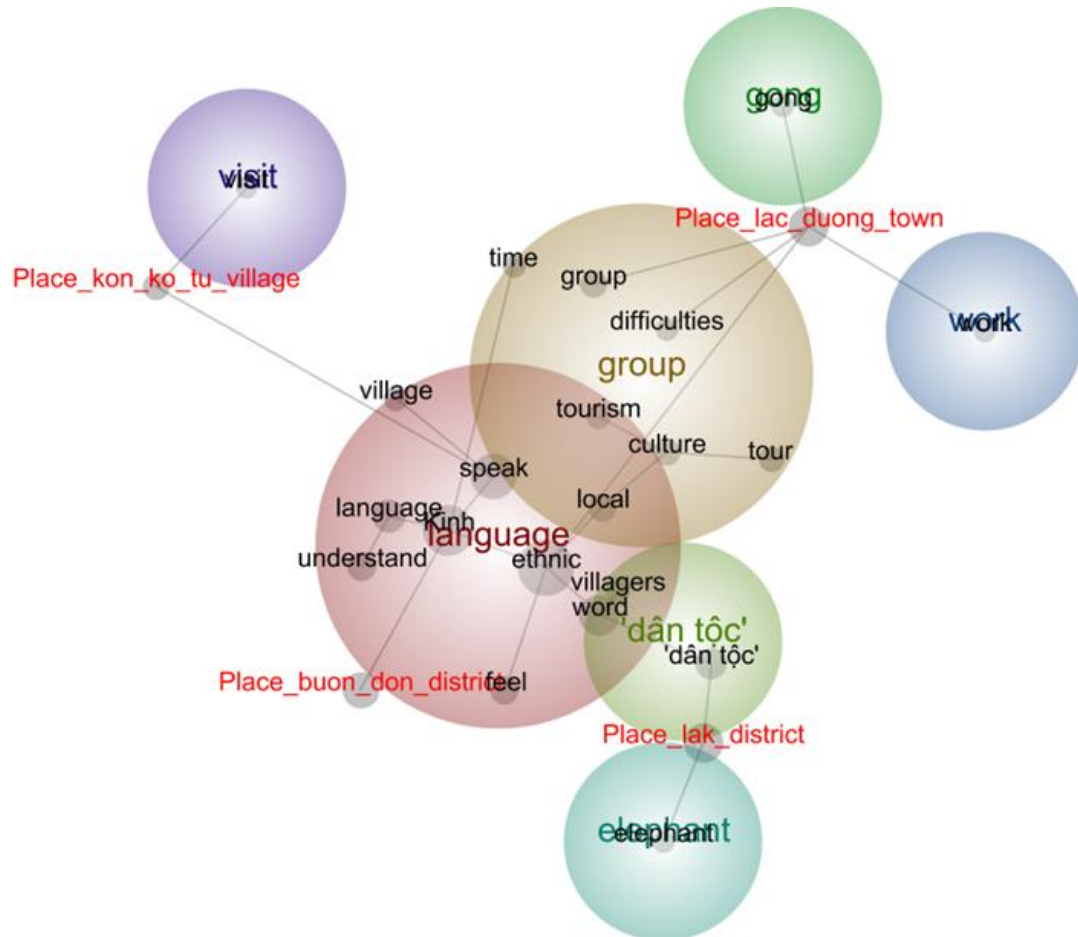
The ‘ethnic’ villagers were likely to ‘feel’ shy, be afraid of interacting, or even avoid communicating with the visitors in the ‘village’; “*sometimes, we even did not ‘understand’ what domestic tourists said in Kinh language, we kept quiet*” (KT01) or ‘feel’ embarrassed due to domestic tourists’ dialects, regional accents. A Bana man (KT09) shared;

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“My wife and I wondered many times why it felt difficult to understand what the domestic visitors asked while all of us are Vietnamese. Honestly, their accent is very different from ours. To reply to the visitors, I might think slowly and guess their gestures”.

Figure 2.7

Host-tourist interaction difficulties



Note. Concept map generated by Leximancer software 4.5

The term ‘dân tộc’ can be considered a derogatory slang term that is sometimes used by Kinh people to address ethnic minorities. Most of the ethnic ‘villagers’ disliked or even hated this ‘word’. According to respondents, using ‘dân tộc’ in interactions implied visitors’ disdainful attitudes and ethnocentric perspectives towards ethnic people. Hence, the villagers felt “*annoyed*”, “*irritated*” (LD07) or “*hurtful*” and even “*do not want to answer in such interactions*” (LK05). Further, a M’jong man (LK02) spoke sadly;

“I feel there is racial discrimination in several host-tourist encounters, for example visitors saw a kind of exotic pigs raised in the village and said - *Oh! Con heo mội* (Oh! A nigger pig), or they called us *mội* (savages, Montagnard), *mấy thằng dân tộc này* (some ethnic minority guys), or *mấy thằng dân tộc* (ethnic guys, jerks). These words reflect the Kinh’s disdain for us” (LK02).

Similarly, when visitors wondered; “*why you are an ethnic minority – ‘dân tộc’, but you speak the Kinh language so well? That question normally makes our pride hurt*” (LK01).

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‘Group’ as a theme explains three different facets of interaction difficulties; inadequate capabilities, unequal relationships, and cultural distance. Firstly, ‘group’ included references to the villagers’ limited capabilities and/or ‘tourism’ skills to properly serve a large ‘group’ of visitors at the same ‘time’. For example, a Bana homestay owner (KT04) said; *“Many guests demand ‘tourism’ facilities or amenities during their ‘tour’ which are beyond our capacity”*. Even staff of the tourist attraction points had different manners towards visitors in different ‘time’ slots. An Ede woman working at an ethnic clothing rental shop shared; *“At first, I was irritated [...] I could explain once, twice, or three times. I cannot say forever. I am bored to explain or reply”* (BD02).

Secondly, the way ethnic villagers perceive themselves or their unbalanced relationship with the Kinh social and cultural institutions led to unfavourable emotions. The respondents stated that ethnic people constitute 53 out of the total 54 ethnic groups in Vietnam – a multi-ethnic country– while the Kinh is only one group of the total (Open Development Vietnam, 2020). An Ede woman (BD08) emphasised with a rough voice;

“The Kinh do not recognise themselves as the Kinh people among 54 ethnic groups, they stressed why did you call us the Kinh? What is the Kinh? We are Vietnamese, Vietnamese ... If so, who are all of us – the rest of ethnic minorities in Vietnam (53 ethnic minority groups)? We are not Vietnamese, are we? We are experiencing racial discrimination” (BD08).

Thirdly, the concept of ‘culture’ within the theme ‘group’ reflects the notion of cultural distance as one of the reasons for interaction ‘difficulties’;

“Visitors’ culture is definitely different from our [M’ngong] culture that is for sure. Consequently, interaction difficulties or misunderstandings will sometimes occur in the interaction between visitors and us [M’ngong villagers]” (LK02).

Additionally, an issue causing serious obstacles in the interactions is that a few local ethnic villagers have forsaken their cultural roots. An Ede woman (BD08) expressed her concerns, *“Gradually, native people no longer remember their cultural roots, their origins”*. Consequently, some ethnic people lacked the knowledge or motivation to explain or introduce their traditional culture to the visitors.

‘Gong’ and ‘elephant’ as themes refer to verbal and non-verbal difficulties (e.g., gestures, sexual harassment) ethnic villagers encountered in gong performances or elephant riding tours. For instance, *“female dancers or performers in our village sometimes experienced some forms of sexual harassment in gong performances”* (LD06). A mahout (BD04) in Buon Don district experienced self-pity and annoyance by visitors’ bad manners during elephant tours;

“Several visitors require to ride male (bull) elephant while others like to ride female elephant [...]. Requiring a male elephant is like gender discrimination..., similar to discriminating against women ... We feel unhappy and even annoyed” (BD04).

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In work-related contexts or home visits, the locals were confronted by some visitors' lack of respect. More specifically, a K'Ho waiter (LD02) said, "*Sometimes customers disparage our outfits or appearance because of our casual clothes while working at the restaurant.*" Another Bana homeowner (KT04) said;

"There is no taboo here when you visit our house. However, guests must respect our private space during their stay. For example, guests should not come to the family's living space. If they need something else, they should notify us in advance. [...] Sometimes visitors come randomly to my house to take pictures without any request".

Regarding difficulties at the management level at 'work', gong venue managers occasionally found themselves in an awkward situation when tour operators asked them to modify their gong performance to match visitors' preferences. "*Some visitors are so harsh and demanding; the tour guide required: 'I want you to do this, do that or Bro! Do something exciting, funny or move to singing session; otherwise, my visitors leave', they did not respect our programme's order*" (LD06). Additionally, several local entrepreneurs struggled to organise their staff and run their business due to a lack of punctuality and sense of responsibility from ethnic villagers working as seasonal staff or casual basis earners;

"Gong performers are seasonal staff and freelancers, whoever pays higher, they will go to work for them. That is our difficulty. Moreover, the performers are used to being unpunctual due to farming habits; consequently, the customers complained about their lateness [...] They are freelancers - if they like, they come on time, if they do not like, they come late or even do not come. It is so difficult to handle" (LD02).

2.4.3 *Quality of host-tourist interactions*

When asked about their level of enjoyment and feelings associated with their interactions with tourists, responses demonstrated a range of emotions from negative to positive associated with various host-tourist interactions. Three main themes '*dislike*', '*feel normal*', and '*like*' represent three different emotional nuances: negative, neutral, and positive of villagers about the host-tourist interactions.

According to respondents, they '*disliked*' interacting with those visitors who "*showed off*", were "*disrespectful*" (BD02) or were "*impolite, noisy*" (LK06). In some instances, the way visitors behaved made villagers uncomfortable and irritated by creating feelings of inferiority. As a waiter (LK06) at a local restaurant shared;

"Other visitors often show how rich they are, their discrimination against us, e.g., they consider us just a waiter. I am a bit sad. Although I know I am working in the hospitality industry, I feel less motivated in my work when interacting with such kind of guests like that."

In another case, a local tour operator (LK02) commented that "serving domestic visitors is very tiring, extremely complicated [...]. Domestic visitors were often demanding ... and simultaneously complained, criticised, asked for more".

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With superficial interactions, visitors simply made a visit, looked around, or used local tourism services as a part of recreational tours to the Central Highlands. They had limited interaction with villagers; consequently, the villagers *'feel normal'* in such interactions (LK01). They even said *"seeing tourists, it just looks like normal as strangers come to visit our village"* (BD05). Another villager disclosed his neutral feelings: *"We feel so-so in our interactions"* (LK03).

Conversely, some villagers *"liked to interact with several tourists who are nice, friendly, outgoing"* (BD02). They felt happy when having intense interactions with friendly, polite tourists in various settings such as gong venues, work-related establishments, or local houses in which they shared their ideas and learned about ethnic culture. These participants *"liked to see visitors visiting our village because our villagers can meet, talk and learn more from them. For those [visitors] who are friendly, we consider them our relatives or family member"* (LK07). In the same vein, a gong performer (KT08) shared: *"I like to participate in gong team and perform gong shows for visitors. I like to see visitors visiting our village [...]. After watching and exchanging gong performances, visitors look happy and satisfied"*. A Bana woman (KT09) described how long-term relationships can develop;

"They [visitors] come back to visit our village, give gifts and clothes to villagers, or donate meat to cook porridge for the entire village's children once or twice annually. During their stay, they cooperated with us, were intense in the interaction".

In summary, the quality of host-tourist interactions was perceived to be positive by most participants with responses including descriptors such as; 'intense', 'friendly' 'happy', 'satisfied', 'equal', 'harmonious', 'willing to assist', and 'like' to interact. Although negative emotions were not prominent in the discussion of overall interaction quality, those sentiments that were expressed (e.g., 'superficial', 'frustrated', 'complicated', and 'demanding') certainly require some thought and consideration in efforts to ensure sustainable host-tourist relationships.

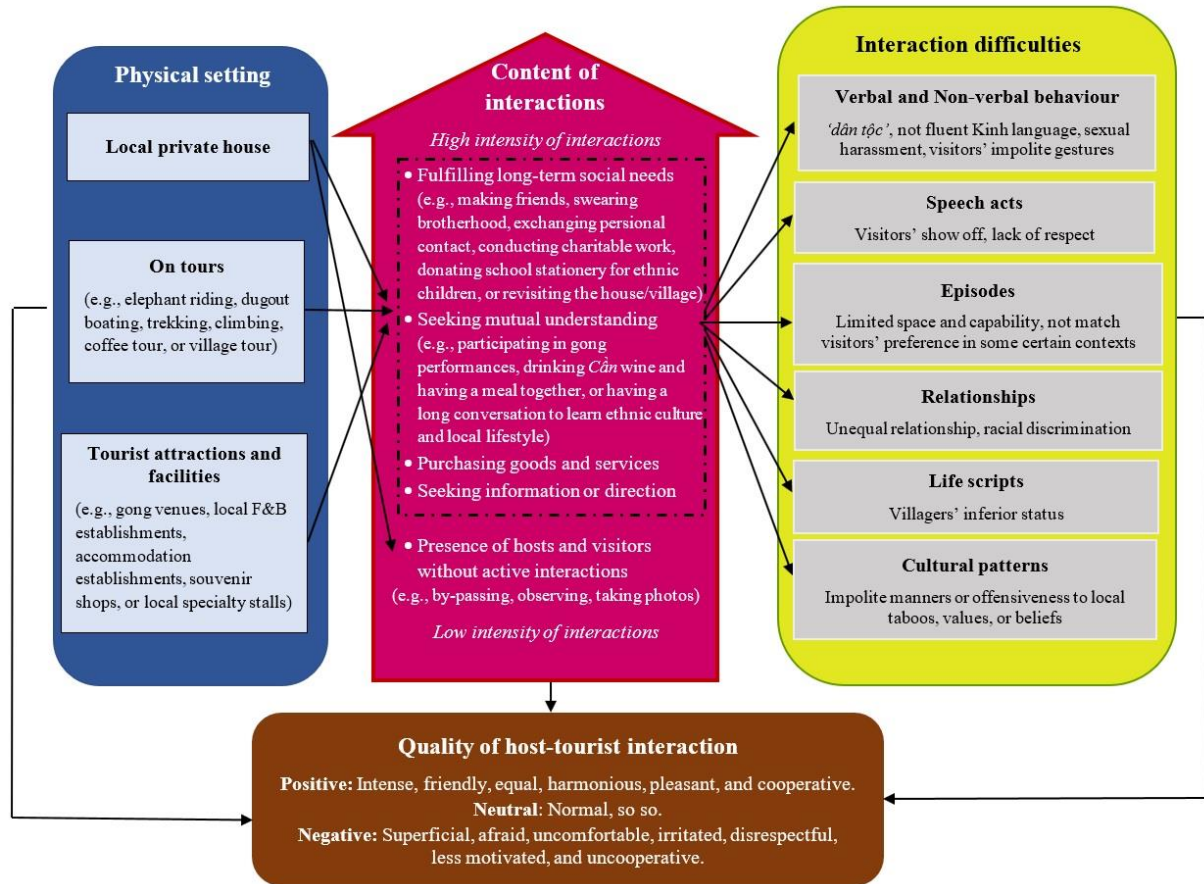
2.5 Discussion and Conclusion

This study highlighted the diverse content of host-tourist interactions, from low to high intensity, in three main physical settings; local private house, tourist attractions and facilities, and on tours. In such settings, the villagers confronted a variety of difficulties aligned with CMM theory. The key findings are visually summarised in Figure 2.8 to illustrate the interrelationship between physical settings, content, difficulties, and the perceived quality of interactions.

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Figure 2.8

The interrelationship of physical setting, content, interaction difficulties, and the quality of host-tourist interactions



Note. Elaborated by the author

With diverse functions, the local private house is a space in which ethnic hosts not only dwell but also make or show handicrafts, provide gong performances, sell local food and beverages or souvenirs and/or groceries, or even share meals and their private spaces for homestay arrangements. The interaction intensity in this setting varied. At the lowest level, visitors just passed by the house, had a look, or took photos without interaction with villagers. The villagers saw their *relationship* with the visitors as host-stranger. Consequently, the interaction quality in these instances was perceived as neutral or even negative. The finding demonstrates that some host-tourist interactions in local houses did not necessarily seem to be as close as previously found (Domenico & Lynch, 2007). At a more intense level, the hosts interacted with visitors when providing local tourism information, gong performances, local food and beverages, handicrafts, or souvenirs/groceries. In such interactions, some villagers just considered their *relationship* with the visitors as seller-buyer. Meanwhile, other villagers were willing to build friendships with visitors who chose to stay at the local houses. This finding supports Pearce's work (1990) indicating an ambiguity appears between the roles of business relations and friendship when visitors stay at the host's place (i.e., farmstay).

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Other villagers, particularly the older generation, sometimes could not understand Kinh (Vietnamese) very well, resulting in difficulty in *verbal behaviours* with visitors. The villagers felt shy and often afraid of communicating. Another challenge is about *episodes* (spatial and temporal) in which the villagers' house was too limited in *space* and capacity to serve a large group of tourists at the same *time*. Therefore, the resulting interactions tended to be brief. At the highest level, the hosts intensely interacted with visitors by sharing meals, providing extended visit services or homestay. Due to cultural differences, misunderstandings in social rules and conventions can happen when strangers share personal facilities and live in close physical proximity (Pearce, 1990). Nonetheless, the current study found that in the context of ethnic tourism, despite *language barriers* and *cultural differences* (e.g., eating practices, daily routine), both parties could fulfil long-term relationships (friendship, brotherhood) when they had enough time to mutually understand each other and develop empathy, making the hosts feel more cooperative and more engaged in the interactions.

On tours with tourists who were either part of a package tour or simply followed other tourists, the villagers found the interaction quality superficial. For those with whom the villagers closely interacted, the quality of interaction was sometimes negative due to interaction difficulties. Once again, *verbal behaviour* is a challenge for the villagers in their host-tourist interactions. The inappropriate usage of 'dân tộc' by the tourists caused serious offence to the ethnic hosts. The hosts also faced challenges in *episodes*, there were challenges in adapting tour times and lengths in attempts to fit into the tourists' schedule, in some cases leading to limited interaction and more superficial outcomes. Due to *cultural patterns*, the locals often felt uncomfortable and irritated with visitors' impolite manners or offensiveness in relation to local taboos, values, or beliefs. This study reaffirms that while 'exotic' culture and 'quaint' people may be important pull factors attracting tourists to ethnic destinations (Qian et al., 2018; Yang & Wall, 2014), they are perhaps one of the main causes of interaction difficulties.

At tourist attractions/facilities, villagers encountered visitors while providing information or selling goods and services in which their *relationship* with visitors simply was seller-buyer. Hence, villagers found such interactions superficial. By contrast, close encounters that made villagers feel intense and harmonious occurred when both villagers and visitors participated in gong performances, exchanged information and ideas, drank *Cà* wine, and exchanged gifts. This point refutes previous research (Carneiro & Eusébio, 2012; de Kadt, 1979) which claimed that only superficial host-tourist interactions occur at tourism attractions/supporting services. It may also indicate a difference between host-tourist interactions in ethnic vs. mass tourism contexts.

In other cases, like some instances on tours, despite intense interactions at tourist attractions/facilities, the quality of interaction can be negatively influenced by difficulties. *Non-verbal behaviours* engendered extreme annoyance in the villagers when intoxicated male visitors made

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inappropriate gestures towards female dancers at gong performances. Villagers reacted angrily to impolite tourists who showed off or performed disrespectful *speech acts* towards ethnic people. Regarding *life script*, many villagers perceived themselves as inferior to visitors in the interactions and were therefore shy when interacting with visitors. Others found that some visitors were disdainful or had stereotypes in mind of the ethnic people they met. These incidents can lead to an invisible gap between hosts and visitors and cause detrimental effects on their face-to-face interactions. It seems to remain a gap and unequal social position between the ethnic minorities and the Kinh majority (Nguyen, 2021).

To sum up, the study demonstrates a diversity of interaction content in each physical setting. We suggest to simultaneously consider both the setting and content to evaluate whether or not the interaction is intense. We need to consider three elements: physical setting, content, and difficulties to evaluate the quality of interaction. Closer interactions may lead to more positive outcomes, but this statement is only true if the hosts encounter few interaction difficulties. In other words, the more difficulties villagers encountered, the more negatively they perceived their interaction experiences, regardless of intensity.

This study corroborates previous research by highlighting a variety of interaction difficulties occurring in host-tourist interactions (e.g., Carneiro et al., 2018; Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Lin, 2017; Loi & Pearce, 2015; Reisinger & Turner, 2003). Local private house is confirmed as a distinctive physical setting in ethnic tourism, as evidenced in earlier research (e.g., Su et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2017). Interestingly, the study found that the gap between hosts and visitors can be narrowed, whereby negative outcomes can be reduced in a particular setting (i.e., local house) which offers both parties the opportunity to make an effort to understand each other. With respect to CMM theory, there are consistent difficulties across the three settings. Among these, *verbal and non-verbal behaviours* and *cultural patterns* are the most challenging for villagers in host-tourist interactions. This study expands our understanding of language issues in social contact, and contradicts previous findings (Su et al., 2014; Su & Wall, 2010) which found that there were no major linguistic barriers in local resident-domestic tourist interactions. Further, to the best of the authors' knowledge, this is the first study to highlight the language issues of ethnic host-domestic tourist interactions in Vietnam's Central Highlands.

2.6 Implications and Limitations

This study empirically enriches the existing body of knowledge on host-tourist interaction in the ethnic tourism context, particularly ethnic hosts-domestic tourists, by investigating the interrelationship between physical setting, content, interaction difficulties, and the perceived quality of interaction. The descriptive framework of our discussion provides a helpful guide to understanding

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host-tourist interaction issues and to guide further research. Both physical setting and content help to explore ‘what is going on’ in the interactions.

Applying CMM theory helps to interpret and understand more thoroughly the themes of interaction difficulties aligned with the six CMM components across the three settings. This study is the first to employ CMM to explore interaction difficulties in the ethnic tourism context. This study has contributed back to both CMM theory and tourism studies by revealing the relationship between physical setting and content in more complex ethnic host-domestic tourist interactions in contrast to previous applications to more structured and/or one-on-one social interactions, for example between parent-obese children (Bruss et al., 2005), professional/consultant-client (Pearce, 2007), or therapist-client (Cronin et al., 2021).

Notably, we strongly believe CMM is meaningful in exploring the root causes of interaction challenges during cultural contact. Even within the same country, the hosts still confront varied interaction difficulties with domestic tourists of different socio-cultural backgrounds. Further, this theory can be practically applied to design interventions to minimise interaction difficulties in future research.

Further investigations are strongly recommended on how to minimise interaction challenges and on assessing the extent of their effects on hosts’ perceived interaction quality and attitudes towards local tourism development. Host-tourist interaction is bi-directional (Su & Wall, 2010) and the interaction outcomes heavily depend on both hosts and guests (Fan, 2020). Thus, future research should seek insight into the interactions from the perspectives of visitors.

The study suggests that local policymakers and tour operators promote a diverse content of interactions in different settings, which visitors can experience when travelling to the Central Highlands’ ethnic villages. Local villagers should give visitors a chance to learn about ethnic culture and improve their interaction quality by being more actively engaged in the interactions. Interventions for both parties such as workshops, culture assimilator booklet, ethnic cultural interpretation (Bruss et al., 2005; Loi & Pearce, 2015; Pearce et al., 1998) based on the utility of CMM can be considered to minimise interaction difficulties.

The present study has four limitations. First, the language barrier was an unavoidable challenge for the researcher while interviewing ethnic villagers in Vietnamese. Obviously, those ethnic villagers not proficient in Vietnamese had difficulties in thoroughly expressing their views, whereas the researcher sometimes struggled with elaborating on the questions, or understanding the way participants were responding. This challenge was identified in previous studies (Ngo & Pham, 2021; Nguyen, 2021; Su et al., 2014).

Second, a limited number of villagers were involved in the interviews, thus the reported results cannot be taken as representative of the whole picture of host-tourist interactions, despite rich

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information acquired in each interview as well as data saturation. Third, ethnic households that were involved in local tourism and preferred to interact with foreign visitors for many years before the COVID-19 pandemic usually had more positive emotions about their interactions with foreign rather than with domestic visitors. Yet, due to the second wave of the pandemic in Vietnam, these households had to serve the domestic, therefore, the result of overall interaction quality may have been impacted by these participants' bias. Lastly, the usage of Leximancer software in data analysis may have certain limitations, for example, visual concept maps may not entirely illustrate the meaning of the data. Therefore, the researcher's role in interpreting the results is key (Engstrom et al., 2022).

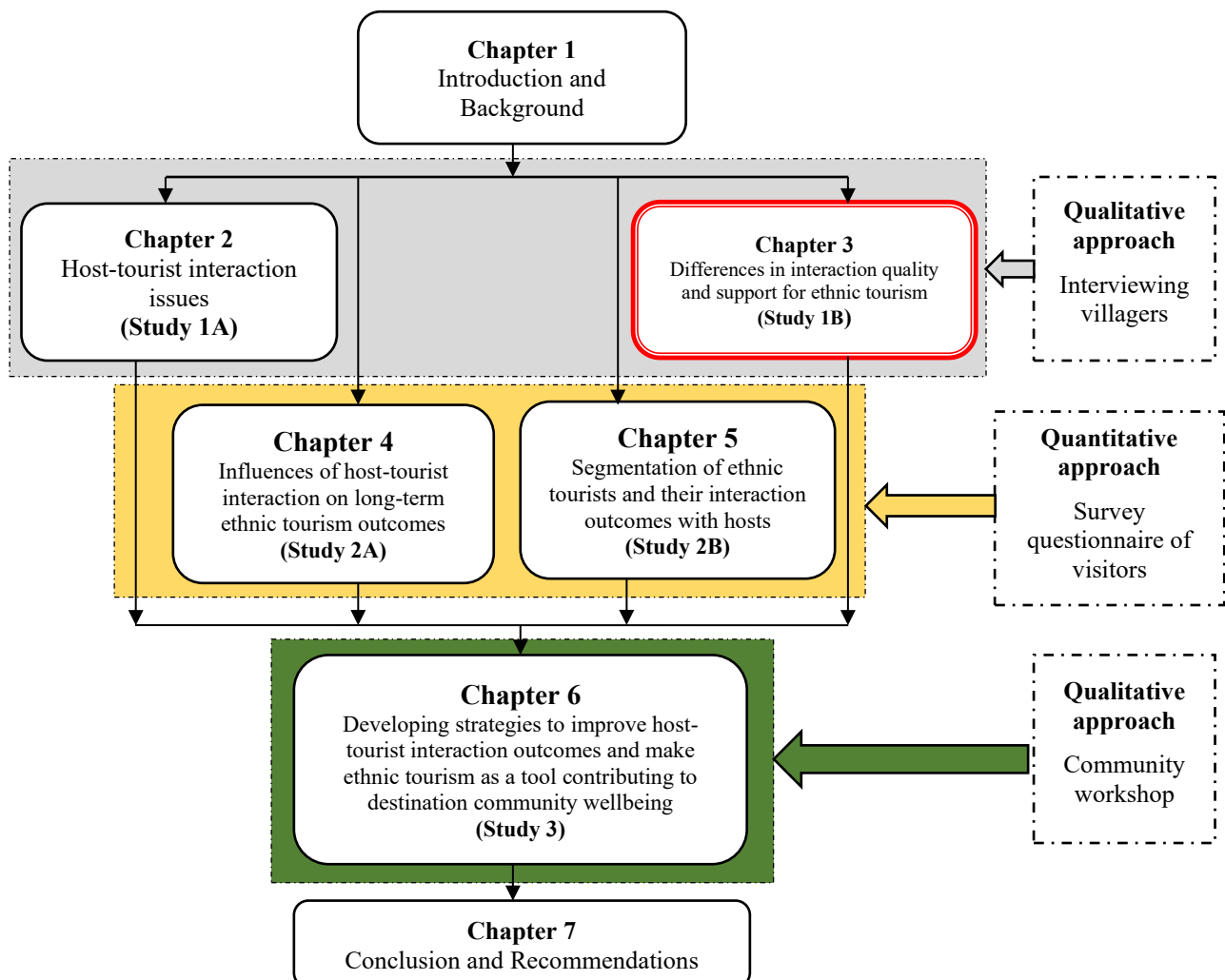
Elephant riding tours, in which villagers interacted with domestic visitors, are an important but contentious ethnic tourism product and cultural heritage of the Central Highlands. How to manage elephant focused tourism experiences is a controversial issue in sustainable tourism practice and a subject of much debate among local tourism stakeholders. More discussions need to be undertaken to find ways to preserve cultural heritage, secure local household income, and achieve long-term sustainable tourism. Addressing N'Drower's indigenous research framework (2020), it is important that the study results should be taken back to villages for further discussion to develop practical solutions. In this way, the research outcomes provide value to local villagers through its practical contributions.

CHAPTER 3

DIFFERENCES IN THE QUALITY OF INTERACTION AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR ETHNIC TOURISM? THE VIEWS OF MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS IN VIETNAM'S CENTRAL HIGHLANDS (STUDY 1B)

This chapter, as outlined in the thesis structure, focuses on Study 1B of the PhD thesis. The main purpose of this chapter is to address the second research objective: *To explore differences in community perceptions of interaction quality and support for ethnic tourism based on the fundamental characteristics and features and level of tourism development.* The current chapter analyses the responses of interviewees reported in Study 1A to other interview questions regarding cultural capital, social capital, community participation levels in tourism, perceptions of tourism impacts, and community support for ethnic tourism. Only the responses to interaction quality are reused for a general comparison among the four ethnic communities. The key aim of this chapter is to delve thoroughly into each ethnic community in order to explore differences among the four communities.

The main findings of this chapter are reported in a paper currently under review by the *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*.



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3.2 Introduction

Over the past five decades, there has been increasing attention on community support for tourism (Fan et al., 2019; Lee, 2013; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Sharpley, 2014; Zhang et al., 2020). The issue is central to sustainable tourism development both in developing countries and peripheral regions in advanced economies (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Wang et al., 2020). Featuring the ‘quaint’ customs of indigenous and ‘exotic’ people (Smith, 1977), it is important to achieve the support of the community for ethnic tourism. Yet ethnic people usually have limited control over tourism resources (Yang & Wall, 2009b), and their aspirations are not adequately addressed in implementing ethnic tourism (Fan et al., 2019).

Many studies have investigated resident support for tourism via perceptions towards tourism development (Almeida-García et al., 2016; Liang et al., 2021; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Ribeiro et al., 2020), or attitudes to economic (perceived costs and benefits) and emotional aspects (place identity and place dependence) (Wang et al., 2020). Zhang et al. (2006) emphasised that behaviour of the host community in interacting with tourists is important for long-term tourism development. The interaction outcome influences hosts’ perceptions of tourism impacts (Carneiro et al., 2018) and their attitudes towards tourism (Sharpley, 2014). A community is heterogeneous, thus people within the community have different interests in participating in tourism (Sirakaya et al., 2002) and different attitudes towards tourism development. There is a significant lack of research focusing on differences in community support for tourism among various communities due to their different tourism participation levels, perceived interaction quality with tourists, and socio-psychological factors (i.e., cultural and social capital, perceptions of tourism impacts). According to Sofield (2003), conducting multi-location projects instead of single-site ones can help address the limitation of current research on community participation in tourism.

The Central Highlands of Vietnam is well-known for its pristine natural resources and exotic ethnic culture, but poor socio-economic conditions. Importantly, the space of Gong culture² was recognised as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO (2005). It shapes a unique cultural space for the region compared to other regions in Vietnam. However, the Central Highlands is one of the poorest areas in Vietnam with a poverty rate (28.8%) almost double the national average (World Bank, 2020). It is necessary to foster local participation and support for ethnic tourism in this region because ethnic tourism is rooted in local culture and contributes to cultural preservation. It can provide employment opportunities, better infrastructure, and potentially improve local livelihood through economic returns (Yang & Wall, 2009b; Yang et al., 2022).

This chapter examines four ethnic sites – Kon Ko Tu, Buon Don, Lak, and Lac Duong – in the Central Highlands of Vietnam as case studies. Besides many similarities among the four localities in

² <https://www.unesco.org/archives/multimedia/document-642>

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the same region, each place has its own distinguishing features. Different ethnic groups result in differences in social networks and connections (social capital), and different languages, traditional costumes, cuisines, and spiritual beliefs (cultural capital). More importantly, local communities may have various interests in tourism participation as well as engage differently in interaction with visitors. The chapter aims to explore (1) in what ways community support for ethnic tourism is influenced by interaction quality and different community-related factors, and (2) how community support for ethnic tourism varies among four ethnic communities. By doing so, this study can contribute to a more in-depth exploration of community support for tourism. The author hopes to focus on the potential ethnic communities and better cater for their interests and aspirations in ethnic tourism development in Vietnam's Central Highlands.

3.3 Literature review

3.3.1 *Ethnic tourism, local community, cultural and social capital*

Ethnic tourism is an important strategy for cultural preservation and poverty alleviation (Feng & Li, 2020; Yang et al., 2022) in areas that are home to disadvantaged minority groups. The central issue in ethnic tourism development is how to maximise economic benefits and minimise loss of traditional culture (Xie, 2011; Yang & Wall, 2009a). The term 'ethnic tourism' is sometimes interchangeably used with 'aboriginal tourism', 'indigenous tourism', or even 'community-based tourism' to reflect the same phenomenon. However, the key point is that in ethnic tourism the people on which tourism activities are based are not necessarily indigenous (Yang & Wall, 2009b); they are small, often isolated, and ethnic minority groups (Smith, 1977).

Local people and their 'exotic' culture are an emphasis of ethnic tourism. The term 'community' referring to local people can be defined in multiple ways depending on the research field and situation (Moscardo et al., 2017). In this study, 'community' is defined similarly to Moscardo and Murphy's approach (2015) referring to those who live and work within the spatial boundaries of a tourist destination, including local tourism enterprises, tourism staff, and local residents.

'Exotic' culture is a part of a community's cultural capital, which is defined as "the stock of cultural value embodied in an asset" (Throsby, 1999, p. 6). Social capital emphasises the connections and networks among people and organisations within a community – *bonding* (e.g., friends, family, neighbours and colleagues) and outside of the community – *bridging* (e.g., other communities, stakeholders). The *linking* form of social capital refers to relations between individuals and groups at different levels of societal power hierarchy (e.g., authority, government, NGO). According to Shoeb-Ur-Rahman et al. (2021), both cultural and social capital are directly linked to the facilitation of community participation in tourism development.

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3.3.2 *Community participation in ethnic tourism*

The concept of ‘community participation’ has appeared as a variety of terms, such as public participation, community involvement, community control, or community partnership (Moscardo & Murphy, 2015; Shani & Pizam, 2012). No matter what term is used, Cornwall (2008) suggests that the implications and interpretation of this term need to consider three issues; *who participates*, *participating in what*, and *for whose benefit*. More specifically, the important point of ‘community participation’ is the way a community mobilises their own capabilities in managing their resources, making decisions, and controlling activities that affect their lives (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2018). Local communities can lack direct participation in decision making but still benefit from tourism development via different forms of employment opportunities (Alshboul, 2016) or micro-entrepreneurship (Kumar et al., 2022).

Pretty (1995) described community participation in detail using a seven-level ladder from ‘bad’ to ‘good’ forms; manipulative participation, passive, material incentives, functional, interactive, and self-mobilization. These levels refer to ascending degrees of external involvement and local control as well as reflecting the power relationships between them during participatory process. Besides many advantages of community participation in tourism, it sometimes causes conflict in practice because no community is a homogeneous group (Moghavvemi et al. (2021). The level of attachment to, feelings towards, involvement in, and commitment towards – community, differs across individuals with divergent personalities. Community attitudes towards tourists and tourism are also diverse (Moscardo & Murphy, 2015). Different interest groups expect different types of community participation to achieve their own aims (Tosun, 2006).

Lor et al. (2019) argued that top-down decision-making is frequently blamed as a major cause of community disempowerment. Nevertheless, their research findings demonstrated that, although local villagers were willing to participate in and support increasing tourism, they encountered a barrier – how to channel government support to become profitable while retaining the industry's bottom-up villager-led development, particularly in Huanggang (Guizhou, China). In the same vein, Tian et al. (2021) found that using community-level participatory platforms to connect local actors to tourism development is ineffective in some rural agricultural villages in which kinship is the main driver of social relations. Therefore, encouraging community participation in tourism should consider each community's socio-psychological factors and its interests.

3.3.3 *Host-tourist interaction in ethnic tourism*

Host-tourist interaction is a fundamental aspect of ethnic tourism (Su et al., 2014). Both hosts and tourists have various forms of participation in and interaction with each other through on-site tourism activities. Such interactions were found to be positively correlated with host communities' attitudes, expectations, and support for tourism (Sharpley, 2014; Teye et al., 2002). For example, by employing Emotional Solidarity Scale (ESS), Woosnam (2012) highlighted that positive interaction increases emotional solidarity of hosts towards tourists, particularly emotional closeness (i.e., feeling

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close to visitors, making friends with visitors). Residents' level of emotional closeness will significantly predict their attitudinal level of tourism's contribution to the community and their attitudes about tourism development. Satisfying encounters may reduce conflicts between hosts and tourists, subsequently resulting in more positive host perceptions of tourism impacts and more favourable attitudes towards tourism development (Carneiro et al., 2018). Recently, an empirical work by Xiong et al. (2021) demonstrated that pleasant interactions with tourists are likely to promote residents' positive attitudes towards tourism development at the destination.

Arguably, quality of interaction is interrelated to physical settings, content, and difficulties which hosts may face with visitors (discussed in Chapter 2). As a result, different socio-cultural contexts and levels of community participation in tourism may lead to differences in the fundamental characteristics and features of host-tourist interactions. Evidence of previous research (Fan et al., 2019; Sharpley, 2014) shows that maintenance and improvement of the relationships between hosts and tourists, especially enhancing hosts' support for tourism, are of critical importance for the long-term success of tourism. Therefore, this chapter further explores whether the fundamental characteristics and features as well as quality of interactions across various communities can result in differing hosts' perceptions of and support for tourism.

3.3.4 *Impacts of ethnic tourism on local communities*

Ethnic tourism has brought both positive and negative impacts to local communities and settings. One of the most common benefits is economic, including more employment opportunities, higher income, and local livelihood improvement (Ishii, 2012; Theerapappisit, 2009; Van den Berghe, 1992). Ethnic tourism might help disadvantaged communities achieve poverty alleviation (Feng & Li, 2020). Furthermore, many studies reveal the positive socio-cultural effects of ethnic tourism such as its culturally constructive contributions, enhancing local people's awareness of their culture pride (Xie, 2011), maintaining the political stability of a locality (Yang & Wall, 2009b), and positively contributing to the locals' quality-of-life (Yang & Li, 2012).

By contrast, some studies highlight the negative consequences of ethnic tourism. An early study by Smith (1977) revealed that ethnic tourism can undermine traditional culture and cause problems for host communities such as social tension and erosion of identity. Others exposed environmental destruction (Yang & Li, 2012), cultural commodification or even traditional performance exports as a tour to support regional marketing efforts (Xie, 2011). Additionally, while implementing ethnic tourism, disempowerment of local inhabitants can occur in any villages in which there is mistrust among community individuals and low levels of social capital (Taylor, 2017; Tian et al., 2021).

Within the tourism literature, there is a growing consensus that a community's perception of tourism impacts influences their support towards tourism (Kim et al., 2021; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Sirakaya et al., 2002). Those who directly benefit from tourism, especially economically, tend to

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tolerate negative impacts and show more support for tourism (Liang et al., 2021). Even those who are not involved in tourism may still believe that all locals benefited from tourism through enhanced public sport and recreation facilities, better-quality infrastructure, and richer education and health services (Liang et al., 2021). Overall, if the perceived positive impacts outweigh the potential negative consequences, local communities are likely to support tourism development (Ribeiro et al., 2020).

3.3.5 *Community support for ethnic tourism*

The significance of community support for tourism has been widely recognised in both research and practice (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Ribeiro et al., 2020; Sharpley, 2014; Tian et al., 2021). A definition of community support refers to resident's behavioural intention or behaviours towards tourism development in the community through their support or opposition (Fan et al., 2019). The bulk of existing studies use community support as a critical dependent variable. These studies mostly measured community support via testing a single key factor such as; residents' personality (Moghavvemi et al., 2021), differences in locality characteristics (i.e., economic, socio-cultural, and environmental) (Stylidis et al., 2014), their perceptions of positive and negative tourism impacts (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Ribeiro et al., 2020), benefits and costs of tourism (Lee, 2013), or the quality of host-tourist interactions (Carneiro & Eusébio, 2015). Ngo and Pham (2021) pointed out that the indigenous hosts' support for tourism is influenced by their perceptions of tourism and self-identity.

Fan et al. (2019) claimed that only a few studies have thoroughly explored three or more attributes of community support for tourism simultaneously, with the exemption of the work of Lee (2013), Olya et al. (2018), and recently Kim et al. (2021). However, these three studies either only examined Western countries (Lee, 2013), or investigated one single community (Kim et al., 2021; Olya et al., 2018). The heterogeneity of community residents makes understanding various attitudes towards tourism in the community more complicated (Zhang et al., 2006). A gap exists in exploring the insight of community support for ethnic tourism by investigating diverse factors across different communities in a multi-ethnic region.

In previous quantitative research, resident support for tourism has been structuralised into various dimensions such as the willingness of indigenous villagers to be warm and friendly to tourists, namely *hospitality*, and their enthusiasm in presenting and recommending their authentic culture and lifestyle to tourists, namely *authenticity* (Fan et al., 2019). Or the work by Sirakaya et al. (2002) focused on residents' support for tourism development in two particular aspects: *infrastructure and tourism attractions* and *hospitality industry*. Resident's support in these studies is influenced by general perceptions towards tourists, tourism impacts, employment status, membership in community organization, and awareness of tourism development projects. With such quantitative studies, however, we do not know if there are any other factors influencing residents' supportive attitudes to ethnic tourism development. Sofield (2003) suggested a key way to overcome the limitation of some existing

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research on community participation in tourism is not only by longitudinal qualitative research and revisiting previous studies, but also by undertaking multi-location rather than single-site projects.

3.4 Research context

The Central Highlands region is well-known as a mosaic of different ethnic minorities of Vietnam. Among the 15 native groups living harmoniously in this region, the Bana, Ede, K’Ho, and M’ong are the largest ethnic minority populations (Asian Development Bank (ADB), 2019). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Central Highlands received approximately 9.8 million tourists in 2019. Of these, domestic tourists account for more than 92% of the total³. The region is less than a one-hour flight from Hanoi capital (the North) or only one-half hour by airplane or eight hours by bus/car from Ho Chi Minh city (the South). Four ethnic sites in three out of five provinces of the Central Highlands were selected as study sites (see Figure 3.1). Each location possesses its own outstanding features for developing ethnic tourism (see Table 2.1, Chapter 2, page 33).

Figure 3.1

Map of four ethnic sites associated with iconic features



Note. Drawn by the author and Le Nguyen Vu

³ compiled from five Departments of Culture Sports and Tourism, 2020

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3.5 Methodology

A qualitative research approach has been employed to explore any differences in local villagers' support for ethnic tourism among the four ethnic localities in the Central Highlands. The four cases represent diverse ethnic localities in the region. Face-to-face interviews with ethnic villagers from Study 1A (Chapter 2) were used to collect data. The data collection procedure was reported in detail in Chapter 2. In the current chapter, the responses to the remaining sections of the interview guide were analysed in addition to interaction quality. Notably, the interaction quality was assessed by looking at the differences between the ethnic communities with respect to the overall sentiment expressed about their interactions with tourists (i.e., interview question 3 in Chapter 2). The responses to seven specific interview questions of the interview guide were analysed, as follows;

- "As a member of ethnic community, what aspects of your culture do you share with visitors?";
- "Tell me more about your role, sense of belonging and connections in the community, and your connections to others outside the community?";
- "Tell me about your level of involvement in local tourism industry?";
- "In general, do you enjoy your interactions with tourists? Do you think the tourists enjoy interacting with you and others from your village? What have you heard from other people in the village about their interactions with tourists?";
- "In what ways do tourists and the tourism industry impact your ethnic culture and village?";
- "Do you support ethnic tourism in your village? Are you in favour of tourism in your village?"; and
- "What are your suggestions for improving the future ethnic tourism in the village?".

Qualitative content analysis of the responses was carried out. First, the complete transcripts of seven main questions were initially read to identify the key ideas, words, and phrases. The seven questions were to answer seven core themes respectively: 'cultural capital', 'social capital', 'community participation', 'interaction quality', 'perceptions of tourism impacts', 'support', and 'suggestions for tourism'. Key word search was used to accurately capture sub-themes. These key words directly and/or indirectly reflect each core theme. Subsequently, these sub-themes with key words were discussed with other researchers and simultaneously considered with the author's observation and her contextual understanding during fieldwork in order to verify both the themes and sub-themes accordingly. Finally, cross-case comparison was implemented to identify similarities and differences among four ethnic sites to address the research objectives.

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3.6 Results

3.6.1 Kon Ko Tu

Participants in Kon Ko Tu – the Bana – are proud of contributing to ‘mountainous culture’ values of the Central Highlands region. These values included Gong culture, communal house, traditional festivals (buffalo-stabbing, new rice crop), traditions and rituals, handicrafts, and local cuisines (*Cần* wine, bamboo-tube rice, charcoal chicken). The Bana also stressed that “*Bana language*”, “*matriarchal tradition*”, and “*costumes*” contribute to their distinctive culture.

Regarding social capital, Kon Ko Tu possessed high levels of bonding. There were strong ties and thick trust among the community because “*All my siblings and relatives are living in the village*” (KT02) and the majority of community were Catholics, therefore “*We trust each other, we do not talk over or have negative thoughts about each other*” (KT02). For bridging and linking forms of social capital, villagers also received material assistance from some outside charitable organisations. Only one household in Kon Ko Tu had previously contracted with a tourism company. Recently, Kon Ko Tu started to implement a community-based tourism project guided by the local government.

Tourism is new and at the early stage of development in Kon Ko Tu (Thái, 2018). Participants were mostly involved in the local tourism sector by providing tourism services such as handicrafts (e.g., brocade weaving, bamboo knitting, and wooden sculptures), Gong performances, tour guide services, local meals, and accommodation (Figure 3.2). Notably, they only participated in such activities whenever there were bookings in advance, that reflecting the passive participation level in tourism. For example, a dancer shared;

“I am a farmer [...]. I occasionally participate in gong team when visitors book a show. After finishing our Gong performance, we will share money with each other. Income from playing gong is a very small part of my family income” (KT02).

Despite running homestay businesses, many households rely chiefly on farming, not tourism to earn a living. For example, a homestay owner shared: “*I only open my homestay and coffee shop when the visitors make a reservation. Otherwise, I close and go farming*” (KT07).

Since tourism is new to the ethnic community, Kon Ko Tu participants were more likely to feel positive in their interactions with visitors but shyness and situational dependency. More specifically, a male Gong performer shared: “*I like to participate in Gong team and perform Gong shows for visitors. I like to see visitors [...]. I feel happy and like to drink Cần wine with them*” (KT08). However, a homestay owner said, “*quality of host-tourist interaction depends on who I interacted with*” (KT07).

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Figure 3.2

Examples of community participation in tourism in Kon Ko Tu



Note. Photographs of the author and from VietnamDiscoveryTeam.vn, used with permission

Consistent with the passive participation level in tourism, participants mostly had no idea or skipped the question about tourism impacts, only a few participants perceived both positive and negative tourism impacts. Interestingly, those who were no longer and who currently involved in tourism emphasised, *“Tourism is not the main source of my family income”* (KT09). They shared more, *“At this moment, my village has just started doing tourism, so it hasn’t been impacted negatively yet”* (KT08).

As a result, the majority of participants expressed their support for tourism, but their voices were relatively weak and ambivalent. For example, their connotations are *“If I have a chance”* (KT08) or *“Honestly, we’re afraid of doing tourism, don’t know how to participate in tourism”* (KT03). The participants’ support originated from their initial perception of benefits and availability of jobs in local tourism. Therefore, they suggested preserving traditional stilt house architecture, establishing tourism functional groups within their community, and enacting rules or regulations to protect their culture.

3.6.2 Buon Don

The cultural capital of Buon Don is strongly associated with elephants. As a villager shared, *“For me, our unique culture includes elephant riding, elephant racing festival, and C  n wine. When*

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hearing about Buon Don district, people immediately think about elephants” (BD04). Nevertheless, Buon Don participants generally lacked cultural pride, as a young Ede girl (BD05) said; *“honestly, there is nothing of local culture to introduce to visitors”*.

The connections within the community are the weakest among the four places. According to participants, despite living harmoniously in their village, *“quarrels”* and *“arguments”* sometimes occurred (BD02). In terms of bridging and linking social capital, Buon Don, received the financial support from ADB (Asian Development Bank) in 2019, but there is no ongoing cooperation with any outside organisations, rather they allow the outside companies to exploit and control their natural and cultural resources to get money in turn.

In Buon Don, respondents participated in ethnic tourism at passive and material participation levels (Figure 3.3). No ethnic households run tourism ventures by themselves. The Buon Don tourist attraction point is operated by an external company. According to respondents, those who know how to play Gong randomly gathered in a Gong team to serve visitors whenever there were bookings. They got paid cash-in-hand once finishing the Gong performance. As an Ede man disclosed;

“Sometimes, we perform Gongs to serve tourists in the tourist attraction point. They pay us 100,000 VND (6 AUD) or 150,000 VND (9 AUD)/show/night (lasting 1-2 hours)” (BD06).

Participants also shared that, villagers sometimes attended the meetings organised by local administrators or village committee, but they seemed uninterested in discussing or giving their voices, as an Ede villager disclosed; *“I neither care nor know how to develop local tourism. I don’t have any ideas”* (BD02).

Participants, whose elephants are leased to the Buon Don tourist attraction point or other local tourism companies, worked full-time as mahouts. For instance, an Ede mahout said;

“I own an elephant and sign a contract with the tourist point about elephant riding service providing [...]. Working as a mahout is the main source of my family income. Our household income is over 10 million VND (618 AUD) per month” (BD04).

Others, whose house and land are situated inside the tourist attraction area, rented their property out and annually collected money in turn. It was observed during fieldwork that other villagers, who remained living in the centre of the tourist area, set up stalls along the main roadside to sell local agricultural products, opened grocery shops, or provided parking services.

With limited interactions, Buon Don participants felt their interactions with visitors were both positive and negative. For instance, a vendor said; *“personally, I like my current job as a saleswoman and interacting with tourists”* (BD03). Conversely, another participant shared; *“to be honest, I do not like to talk or chat much with visitors because I am tired [at work]”*. A senior lady tended to sum it up; *“the interaction between local people here and tourists is perceived as the interaction between buyers and sellers [...]; just a superficial interaction”* (BD08).

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Figure 3.3

Examples of community participation in tourism in Buon Don



Note. Photographs of the author and participants, used with permission

Like Kon Ko Tu, most of participants in Buon Don had no idea about tourism impacts, whereas a few participants identified both positive and negative impacts. The only positive benefit identified by the participants is economic, but the benefit is only for a small portion of the local community as supplemental income. For instance, “*villagers participating in the gong team have chances to [...] earn extra money*” (BD07). However, the interviewees expressed their concerns that “*strangers take advantage of tourism to break up the community solidarity*” or “*land subsidence and alluvial riverbank recession*” because elephants ride visitors a lot along riverbank for sightseeing.

Participants expressed divergent viewpoints on support for tourism. One group was perhaps hesitant to participate in or support local tourism development due to internal factors such as limited finance or abilities: “*... depending on my ability*” (BD06) and external factors, e.g., ... “*floods in the rainy season*” (BD05). Another group seemed to support tourism because of material benefits. As an Ede man shared;

“I support to develop local tourism. Thanks to tourism, the villagers sell their agricultural products, souvenirs to make more money. It is so good!” (BD07).

To further develop tourism in Buon Don, several participants suggested the need for leadership for tourism projects, tourism training, and local tourism promotion.

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3.6.3 Lak

Lak villagers were happy to share their local culture associated with dugout canoes and elephants. A M'nong man (LK02) said; *“Lak lake makes a picturesque landscape for our village”*. He further stressed, *“Elephants and forests are symbols of the Central Highlands. If there is no elephant or forest, the Central Highlanders would no longer exist”*.

Compared to Buon Don, the community ties in Lak were stronger. As a M'nong participant (LK06) said: *“whenever they ask me for help, I am willing to give them a hand, especially in farming, harvesting seasons, or important events (e.g., building a house, weddings, funerals)”*. Due to poverty, Lak villagers received material assistance from some charitable organisations or individuals. For example, *“this year, two or three charity organisations visited our village and donated rice, noodles, sugar, milk ...”* (LK03).

In Lak, three-quarters of participants were full-time staff in local tourism enterprises. Another group of households individually owned and operated their small-scale tourism enterprises, including food and beverage, souvenir shops, and tour programme agency (e.g., trekking, village visit, elephant riding, and dugout boating tours) (Figure 3.4). For these households, they endeavoured to protect their ethnic culture and engaged in tourism activities primarily for economic return. A local entrepreneur shared;

“I am an elephant owner, a mahout, and also a local guide while my wife is running our own tourism business (i.e., souvenir shop, cafe shop, village tour, elephant-riding tour). Tourism is the main source of my family's income [...]. I want to expand our family's tourism business by ourselves, I need more time”. (LK02)

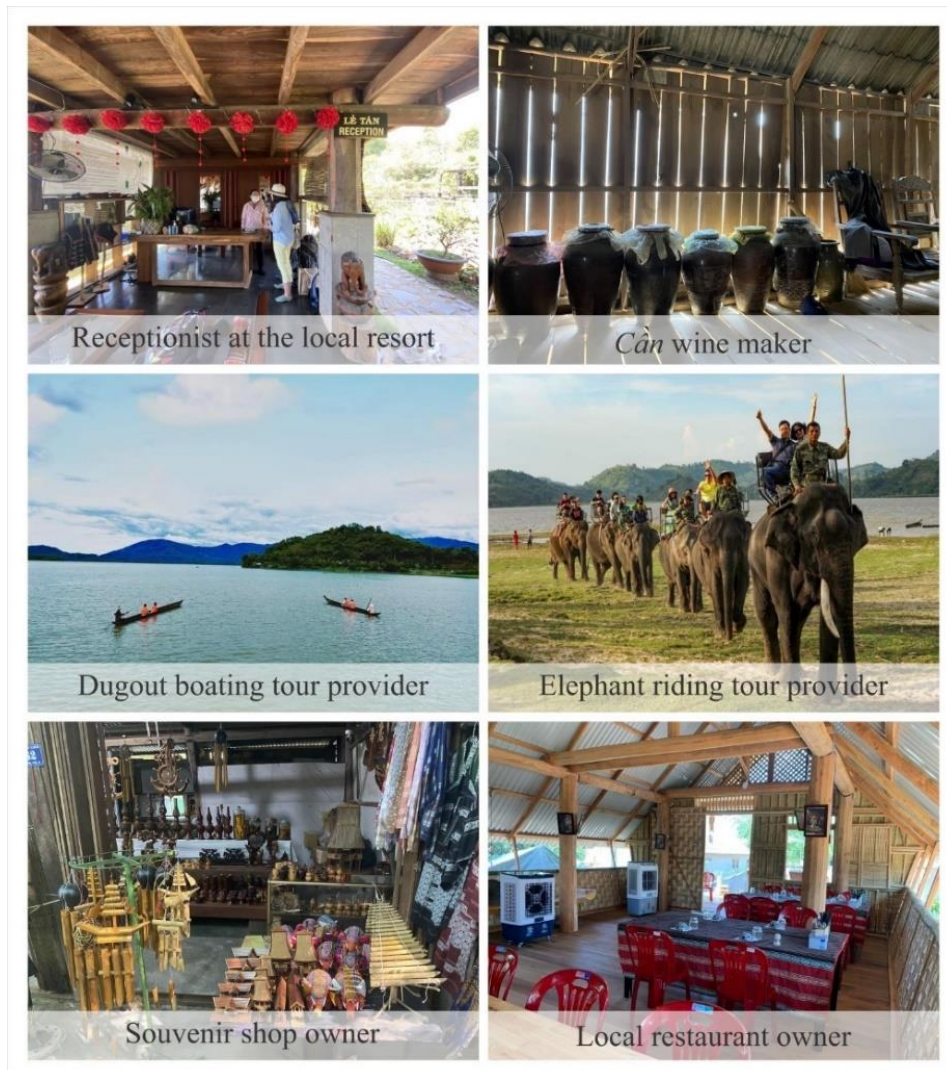
In this vein, as a local tourism entrepreneur, he also participated in workshops organised by the local tourism department or NGO organisation (e.g., Asian Animals) to demonstrate his interests, and further discuss the local tourism development strategy. He said; *“I don't like to continue to provide elephant-riding tour like this. I already suggested to the Elephant Conservation Center and Animals Asia to provide elephant-friendly services.”* (LK02)

Due to participation in ethnic tourism at the material incentives and functional levels, Lak villagers appeared keen on interacting with visitors. Participants were more likely to feel positive in the interactions but exhibited passive management of such instances. For example, a participant shared, *“I feel our interaction is harmonious and equal”* (LK01). Another male participant as a local tour operator expressed his contrasting sentiments; *“indeed, serving domestic visitors is very tiring, extremely complicated [...]. Domestic visitors often demand for more ... and simultaneously complain, criticise”* (LK02).

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Figure 3.4

Examples of community participation in tourism in Lak



Note. Photographs of the author, participants and domestic visitors, used with permission

Most interviewees tended to perceive positive tourism impacts (economic returns) rather than the negative. A M'ong woman (LK01) said, *"I think tourism doesn't impact negatively much on local culture or lifestyle"*. Another man (LK04) agreed, saying, *"I don't think tourism brings any negative impacts to the locality"*.

Unlike Kon Ko Tu and Buon Don, there were many young villagers involved in a variety of tourism-related employment or small-scale ventures in Lak. Participants kept raising awareness and encouraging the youngsters to participate more in ethnic tourism because they found, *"It is very beneficial for our [villagers'] children and next generations [...]. Let the young people do it"* (LK05). Meanwhile an experienced mahout, who is providing elephant riding tours, was willing to advise and inspire younger men;

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“For younger mahouts, who haven’t learned communication skills, they easily show their annoyance and irritation in front of visitors in many situations. Therefore, I usually shared and explained to them [...]” (LK03)

Generally, most participants in Lak district are passionate and want to embrace tourism - as a M’ning man said; *“I am very keen on participating in tourism”* (LK02). However, they do not know how to get more involved in ethnic tourism. They need training and coaching for basic tourism employment skills and running small-scale business. They also suggested researching and diversifying new ethnic tourism products and services.

3.6.4 Lac Duong

Like other ethnic minorities, K’Ho participants in Lac Duong stated that Gong culture, traditional festivals, and local cuisine are integral parts of their cultural capital. Further, they were highly aware of their cultural pride with *“the legend of land – Lang Biang plateau [...] As an indigenous son of this land, I am very proud of our cultural arts and traditions left by our great-grandparents and ancestors”* (LD06). Additionally, *“simple, rustic charm in daily activities”* (LD04) and *“hospitable lifestyle”* (LD02) also contribute to their cultural richness.

Community cohesion among local tourism businesses was quite weak due to their business competitiveness. For example, a Gong venue owner (LD06) shared, *“Sadly, I found that all Gong venue owners here are disunited and spatially separated within the village”*. Yet the bridging social capital in Lac Duong is much stronger than in other places. Participants connected actively with outside organisations, such as travel agencies, freelance tour guides, and hotels. Another Gong venue owner (LD07) responded; *“My business has collaborated with travel agencies and tour operators: Van Tin, Thanh Do, Happy Day, Da Lat trip”*.

Regarding community participation in tourism, many ethnic inhabitants were holding positions of both staff and management levels in tourism industry-related employment (Figure 3.5). They were jeep drivers, tour guides, restaurant staff, gong team supervisors or restaurant managers. A K’ho participant said, *“I work full-time at Langbiang tourist attraction point as a jeep driver. It is my main job”* (LD01). At a higher participation level, some villagers provided village tours and home-visits, in which the host shared ethnic culture during a meal with *Cần* wine. Others run their own tourism ventures. As a K’ho man said; *“Currently, I am the owner of the local restaurant - Bon Langbiang Village and also the Gong performance venue. We have been running it for nearly three years to provide traditional cuisines and perform Gong shows to visitors.”* (LD06)

Many of the participants actively negotiated commissions with tourism agencies, tour guides, and mediators in order to maximise their volume of visitor arrivals. They were confident to connect with both national and international organisations to run marketing campaigns, expand their social media network, and promote business performance.

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Figure 3.5

Examples of community participation in tourism in Lac Duong



Note. Photographs of the author, participants and domestic visitors, used with permission

Compared to other ethnic places, Lac Duong community has engaged in tourism for longer and at higher levels. They tended to display greater confidence when interacting with visitors. Accordingly, participants were more likely to be positive with active management of such interactions. For example, a local coffee agri-tourism entrepreneur said: *“I am harmonious, enthusiastic in host-guest interaction, but sometimes I just want to be alone to focus on my work. Visitors who want to meet and talk to me, they usually make an appointment in advance or join in our talk shows. Normally, I don’t have time to talk to each of guests individually.”* (LD04)

Along this line of thought, participants generally believed that *“Tourism brings both positive and negative impacts on our culture and local daily life”* (LD06). As a Gong venue owner (LD07) shared, *“I think tourism brings us many positive impacts: creating more jobs, improving the local families’ income, improving their livelihoods a lot which farming cannot help them”*. On the other hand, negative impacts of tourism on the local community were also identified. For instance, *“Some teenagers rely on tourism too much because of making money easily. Gradually, they are too lazy to do other jobs”* (LD05). Or *“Gong performances are commodified too much”* (LD04).

Generally, villagers have been involved in and economically benefited from local tourism over many years. They had a very solid voice and strong support for ethnic tourism. As a participant insisted;

“I do support local tourism development because it helps promote the local economy and create more job opportunities” (LD06).

Participants emphasised the need to protect ethnic culture. As a villager stressed; *“Culture is our soul. I wish to protect and promote our ethnic culture through tourism”* (LD04). Due to highly

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active participation, other participants in Lac Duong strongly support and realise how to facilitate ethnic tourism. Generally, participants in Lac Duong were eager to get involved in both tourism activities and “*willing to participate in decision-making process or tourism development project*” (LD05). The participant proposed “*local government to facilitate and manage better the way Gong performances are organised over here*” (LD06) to provide the authenticity of Gong performance to visitors. They also suggested eliminating the ‘middlemen’ phenomenon in Gong performance services. The local government should support local enterprises by tax policy and guarantee the local laws and regulations creating a fair competition for all local tourism businesses.

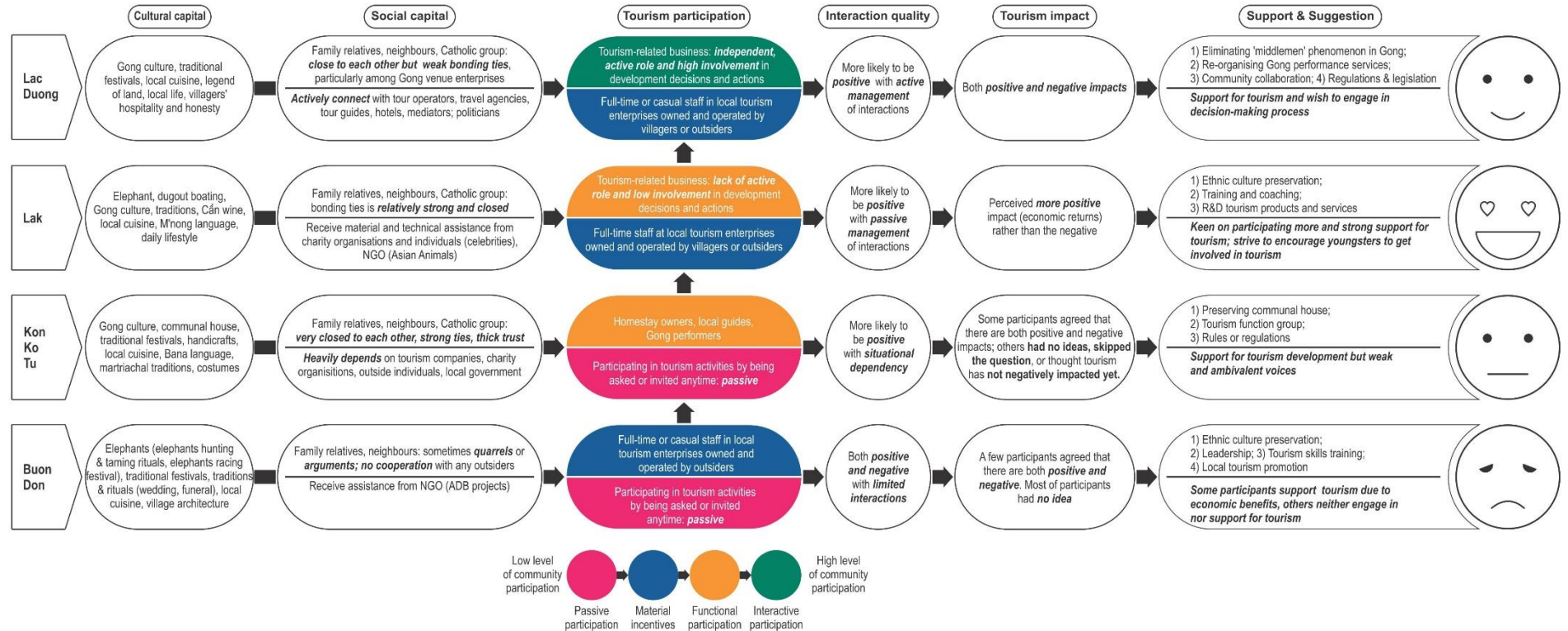
3.7 Discussion and Conclusion

Examining community support for tourism is not a story of ‘a new wine in old bottles’. Over the years, both researchers and policymakers have consistently advocated for increasing community participation and support for tourism development to achieve sustainability goals. They try to find ways to get the local community more involved in the tourism design and implementation process. Yet it seems meaningless if the local community itself is not interested. The study findings are summarised in Figure 3.6 to help answer two research questions, thereby understanding the current situation of the four ethnic communities in the Central Highlands with respect to their tourism participation, interactions with visitors, and different attitudes towards supporting ethnic tourism development.

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Figure 3.6

Different communities' support for ethnic tourism in the Central Highlands, Vietnam



Note. Drawn by the author

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First, the community support for ethnic tourism is influenced by its cultural capital, social capital, levels of tourism participation, interaction quality with visitors, and perceived tourism impacts. According to study findings, the ethnic culture in Kon Ko Tu has retained its authenticity compared to the other places as a result of its relative isolation and limited involvement in tourism. The bonding ties within their community are the strongest, yet villagers heavily rely on outsiders (e.g., NGO, tourism companies, local government) in both implementing and decision-making process for ethnic tourism. Tourism is still something new to the local people. They are participating in tourism at passive or functional level to get extra income. Villagers find their interactions with tourists more likely to be positive but situational dependency in such interactions. They believe that tourism has not negatively affected their community yet. Consequently, participants are unsure whether they want to be more involved in tourism or not, and thereby have “*no idea*” or are ambivalent about supporting tourism.

Among the four ethnic communities, only Buon Don villagers appear to have less cultural pride and enthusiasm for cultural preservation than other communities. The social capital and participation level in tourism of Buon Don villagers are the lowest. Despite owning elephants, the ways Buon Don villagers participate in tourism are much more passive than those in Lak. For instance, the Buon Don villagers lease their elephant(s) to the outside companies and work as mahouts while Lak villagers actively provide elephant-riding tours, local guide services, and mahouts. Due to low levels of social capital and constrained business skills, Buon Don villagers are perhaps not interested in higher tourism participation and experience limited interactions with visitors. Consequently, the quality of interactions is found to be both positive and negative. Only a small portion of participants involved in tourism perceive economic benefits, while those who are and are not involved simultaneously perceive negative tourism impacts on their socio-culture and environment. Consequently, the local community in Buon Don is less supportive of tourism than other communities.

In contrast, participants in Lak and Lac Duong strongly acknowledge the importance of cultural capital in developing ethnic tourism. Both communities are well-connected with outsiders, but the bonding social capital in Lac Duong is weak, particularly within Gong venue enterprises. Unlike the two former places, participants in both Lak and Lac Duong have strong participation in both tourism-related employment and small-scale tourism businesses. They tend to perceive interactions with visitors positively, but Lac Duong plays a more proactive role in managing such interactions. Both communities are more supportive of tourism despite their perceptions of both positive and negative tourism impacts. Their supporting attitudes come from their strong perceptions of cultural capital, active connections with outside organisations, positive interactions with visitors, perceived economic benefits, and high participation levels in tourism. The finding reaffirms previous studies suggesting that more perceived benefits can contribute to a greater degree of support for

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tourism development (Kim et al., 2021; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Xiong et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2020).

Villagers in Lak and Lac Duong engage in tourism at the highest level. Yet, it is argued that a high participation level in tourism is like a double-edged sword for the communities. On the one hand, both communities are more aware of the importance of their cultural capital in developing ethnic tourism. Higher bridging social capital with visitors and other tourism stakeholders is facilitated. On the other hand, the bonding social capital becomes weaker due to increasing competitiveness, as in Lac Duong, and consequently a small group often controls the community (Flora, 2004).

The second research question is addressed by comparing different supportive attitudes towards ethnic tourism in the four communities. Participants in Buon Don somewhat support ethnic tourism but seem not to engage in tourism activities so far. However, those in Ko Ko Tu are ambivalent about supporting tourism. Participants in both Lak and Lac Duong are highly supportive of developing ethnic tourism in their localities. Notably, Lac Duong participants exhibit higher activeness and participation levels in tourism as well as more active management of interactions with visitors. Compared to Lak and other communities, Lac Duong is more confident in decision-making processes and proposes more strategic suggestions rather than specific ones. The significance of this study reveals that community attitudes towards ethnic tourism have a parallel relevance to different community-related factors including cultural and social capital, tourism participation level, interaction quality with visitors, and perceptions of tourism impacts. The findings corresponds with views about the diverse characteristics of tourism communities (e.g., Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Wu & Pearce, 2014; Zhang et al., 2006).

This study demonstrates that a local community with low bonding social capital (i.e., Buon Don) perceives tourism brings economic benefits to only those who are involved in tourism, while the negative ones impact the whole community in terms of both socio-cultural and environmental aspects. This finding contradicts Liang et al. (2021), who claim that all local residents believe tourism has positive impacts on the whole community regardless of their involvement or non-involvement in tourism. In line with Nunkoo and Gursoy (2012) and Rahman et al. (2021), despite perceptions of both positive and negative tourism impacts, communities who strongly recognise the role of cultural capital and the strength of bridging social capital are more engaged in tourism participation. As a result, they more strongly support ethnic tourism development because they believe tourism is a good way to make money and contribute to preserving their ethnic culture.

Since communities are heterogeneous, we should pay more attention to different socio-psychological aspects of the local community in order to meet their interests and aspirations. The quality of interactions with visitors is aligned with the community characteristics and their

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participation level in tourism. Therefore, bottom-up participatory planning should be implemented step-by-step according to the existing socio-psychological factors and participation levels in tourism of each community, allowing ethnic tourism projects to succeed in practice (Moghavvemi et al., 2021). For example, Lak villagers have strong cultural capital and a desire to engage in tourism but lack experience and have limited networks with outside organisations. They are also struggling with how to participate more in tourism. Despite being more likely to experience positive interactions with visitors, the villagers take a passive part in managing such interactions. Perhaps they lack knowledge of tourism and skills (e.g., communication, hospitality, and business skills), which poses a challenge to them in conducting ethnic tourism projects on their own. Support from outside organisations/investors/stakeholders is required in this case, yet they must listen to community voices. The findings reaffirm Moscardo and Murphy (2015) assertion that ‘what destination communities want’ should be at the heart of the tourism strategy process to achieve the goals of sustainable tourism development.

3.8 Implications and Limitations

This study adds two contributions to the current tourism literature. First, it explains the antecedents of community support for tourism by considering various socio-psychological factors of the community (cultural capital, level of social capital, and their perceptions of tourism impacts), community participation level in tourism, and their interaction quality with visitors. Importantly, in the ethnic tourism context, villagers have no doubt about the profit-oriented benefits, yet they are more appreciative of ethnic cultural preservation via tourism. Again, preserving cultural heritage and alleviating poverty are central to ethnic tourism implementation (Feng & Li, 2020; Ma et al., 2021; Yang & Wall, 2009b). Second, this study addresses Sofield’s suggestion (2003) to investigate community participation and support for tourism in multiple locations rather than a single site to overcome the limitations of previous studies. It also contributes to existing tourism literature about community support for tourism, especially in the context of ethnic tourism in non-Western countries (Fan et al., 2019; Tian et al., 2023).

This research helps local policymakers or tourism practitioners select targeted communities based on their existing socio-psychological aspects and interests. The tourism implementation, as well as the way to approach an ethnic community, should differ across different communities in order to achieve stronger community support for ethnic tourism. Moreover, based on the lesson of Lac Duong, we believe that encouraging higher participation in tourism is strongly recommended for empowering the local community, but the policymakers should create legislation and protocols to ensure equal benefit distribution and fair play in business competitiveness. Therefore, the locals can maintain strong bonding social capital for long-term tourism development. Significantly, the study findings assisted in choosing a specific community to conduct the workshop, thereby developing

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strategies to improve host-tourist interaction outcomes and make a positive contribution to local destination community wellbeing in the study 3 (Chapter 6).

It is noted that there are three limitations associated with this study. First, four ethnic minority groups in four locations were selected to represent diverse ethnic communities' views about their support for ethnic tourism. However, the findings based on participants may not represent the whole population in each community. Second, language issues are admitted since the author is Kinh majority and in some instances required assistance in interpretation to understand the respondents speaking their own languages. Third, the fieldworks to Kon Ko Tu and Lac Duong were conducted during the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic in Vietnam, consequently participants' perceptions about tourism impacts in the two study sites might be more considerably influenced than others.

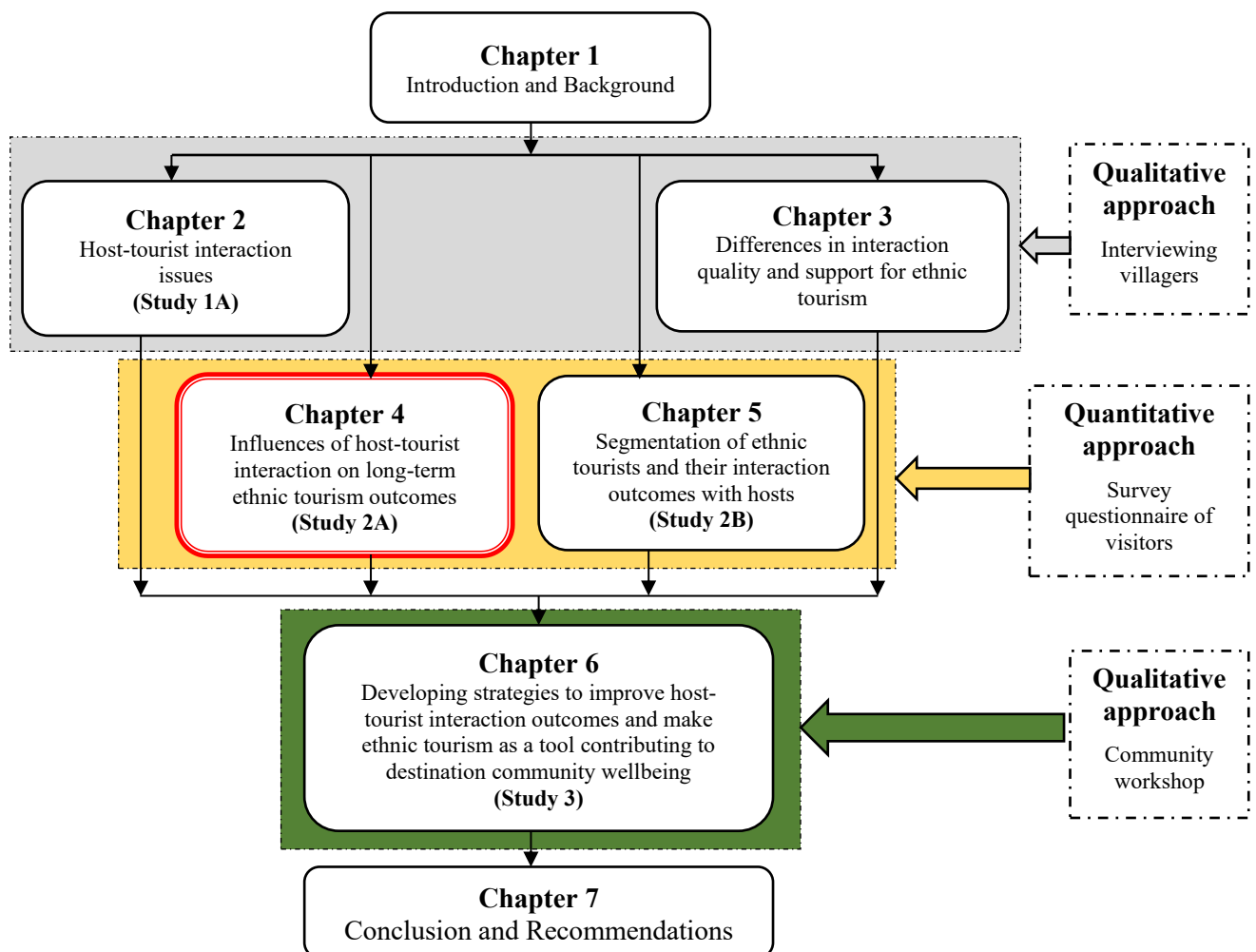
Future quantitative studies with a broader range of resident stakeholders could examine how different dimensions of community in terms of cultural capital, levels and forms of social capital, tourism participation, and interaction outcome, influence their supporting attitudes towards ethnic tourism development. However, an in-depth understanding of local community attitudes and suggestions is a useful source when researching ethnic tourism planning and strategies in the future so that local community can achieve sustainability goals.

CHAPTER 4

THE INFLUENCE OF HOST-TOURIST INTERACTION ON VISITOR PERCEPTION OF LONG-TERM ETHNIC TOURISM OUTCOMES IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS, VIETNAM (STUDY 2A)

The present chapter reports Study 2A of the PhD thesis. This chapter aims to address the third research objective: *To investigate the extent to which tourists' interactions with hosts influence the perceived long-term outcomes of ethnic tourism*. Based on 438 valid questionnaire responses from domestic visitors, this chapter offers a sophisticated empirical investigation into the influences of four distinct physical settings on content, difficulties, and quality of interaction through hypotheses. These hypotheses were developed by integrating the literature review with the findings of Study 1A and B. This chapter also examines the influences of content and difficulties on the perceived quality of interaction and subsequently how the interaction quality influences tourists' attitudes and intentional behaviours and perception of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes.

Some of the results have been presented at *CAUTHE 2023 Annual Conference* in Perth, Australia as a working paper. The remaining results of this chapter are currently under review as a journal article in the *Journal of Travel Research*.



Chapter 4

4.1 Introduction

Host-tourist interaction is a central component of tourism experience and can influence – either positively or negatively – tourist satisfaction with a trip (Eusébio et al., 2018; Styliadis, 2020; Styliadis et al., 2021; Yoo & Sohn, 2003). The different cultural backgrounds of tourists compared to hosts means that interactions can lead to different results, on the one hand tourists may find the interaction to be a rewarding learning experience that reduces their perceived cultural distance towards hosts; on the other hand tourists may experience negative emotions resulting from misunderstandings and interaction difficulties (P. L. Pearce, 2005b; Reisinger, 2009; Tung, 2021). The quality of interactions can directly influence tourists' behavioural intentions and the overall tourism experience (Pearce, 1982; Reisinger & Turner, 2003; Sharpley, 2022). Furthermore, Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, and Lin (2017) re-affirmed the consensus that interaction quality plays a salient role in affecting individual's perceptions.

In the context of ethnic tourism, Su and Wall (2010) indicated that positive interactions between hosts and tourists will improve tourist experiences and facilitate positive economic outcomes for a destination. Yet interaction difficulties resulting from cultural differences may also lead to negative interaction outcomes such as hostility, frustration, stress, and even shock (Pearce, 1982; Reisinger & Turner, 2003; Steiner & Reisinger, 2004). The question is how to achieve positive interaction quality. Physical settings provide tourists different opportunities to interact with the locals (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). In each setting, the interactions occur within a wide range of low to high intensity levels, reflecting the diverse content of interactions (Su et al., 2014). Both physical settings and content reflect the nature of interactions that helps to explain 'what is going on' in such interactions. Based on this understanding, to achieve positive interaction, it is necessary to maximise engaging content of interactions and minimise difficulties which tourists may face in such interactions.

Previous research on host-tourist interactions most often focuses on the frequency (e.g., Carneiro & Eusébio, 2012; Woosnam & Aleshinloye, 2013) and content/intensity levels of interactions (e.g., Carneiro et al., 2018; Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Lin, 2017) and examine how the quality relates to tourists' perceived cultural distance and travel attitude (Fan, Qiu, et al., 2020; Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Lin, 2017), travel decisions (Wong et al., 2019), or overall satisfaction and destination loyalty (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2019; Styliadis et al., 2021). To date, the relationship between physical settings, content, and resulting difficulties in host-tourist interactions has not been fully investigated. Further, there has been little research into how interaction quality influences tourists' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes and perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes.

The Central Highlands region is well-known as a land full of mountains, primitive forests, and home to all 54 of Vietnam's ethnic minority groups. Minh (2019) stated that a diversity of ethnic

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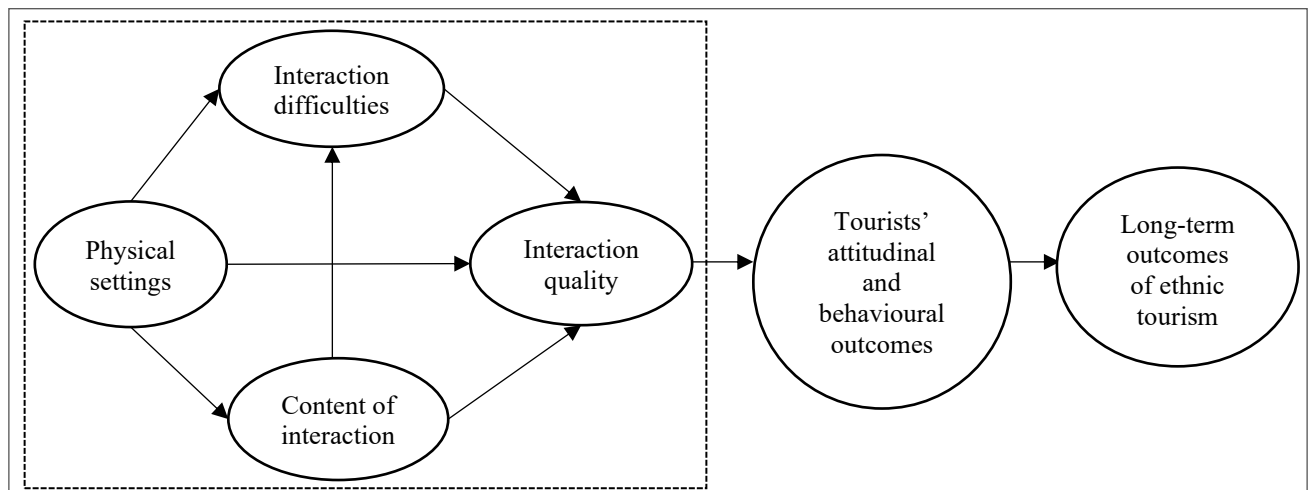
culture is an important factor for regional tourism development. Furthermore, this region has potential to attract more visitors due to the fast growth of the Vietnamese tourism industry. Vietnam has been recognised as an emerging tourism market in recent years and one of South-east Asia's top tourist destinations (Bui & Phi, 2022). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Vietnam recorded 85 million domestic tourists in 2019, with a total population of nearly 96.5 million people (Worldometers, 2023). After lifting pandemic-related restrictions, there was a significant recovery in Vietnamese domestic tourism with a total of 101.3 million domestic tourists recorded in 2022 surpassing the figure of 2019 by 19.2% (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT), 2022). Therefore, given expected increases in visitation to the region post-COVID 19, it is necessary to improve the quality of host-tourist interaction to build sustainable ethnic tourism.

The study aims to investigate the influence of host-tourist interaction on tourists' perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes in the Central Highlands, Vietnam. Results will provide insights which can be used to deliver more positive outcomes for tourists and hosts and contribute to positive long-term ethnic tourism outcomes in the region. To achieve this aim, a conceptual model was developed in Figure 4.1, which was derived from the overall conceptual framework of the thesis (Figure 1.7, page 19), to address two questions;

1. How do physical settings, content, and interaction difficulties influence tourists' perceptions of the quality of host-tourist interaction, and
2. How does perceived interaction quality influence tourists' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes, and their perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes?

Figure 4.1

Conceptual research model



Note. Elaborated by the author

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4.2 Conceptual background and hypothesis development

4.2.1 *Host-tourist interaction in ethnic tourism*

When participating in tourism activities, tourists encounter the residents of local communities in different physical settings with a variety of interaction content (Carneiro et al., 2018; Reisinger & Turner, 2003; Su et al., 2014; Woosnam & Aleshinloye, 2013). Liu and Tung (2017) indicated that settings and content are elements integrated into the whole interaction experience. The quality of host-tourist interaction can be influenced by physical settings (Liu & Tung, 2017; Murphy, 2001) and/or content (Eusébio et al., 2018; Su et al., 2014). For example, tourists may stay at local private houses (e.g., homestay, guest house, or farmhouse) to have meals and long conversations with the host family (Zhang et al., 2017) that reflect their desire for mutual understanding (Su et al., 2014; Su et al., 2022). They may also be keen on learning to speak an ethnic language (Wong et al., 2020). Tourists also participate in local tours (Bott, 2018), traditional events/rituals, musical performances or interact superficially with the locals at tourist attraction locations/supporting facilities when consuming ethnic tourism services (de Kadt, 1979; Eusébio & Carneiro, 2012; Su et al., 2014). Additionally, tourists can spontaneously encounter the locals in public spaces (e.g., on the street, local/night market) (Eusébio et al., 2018) where the interaction content is simply to seek information or directions. Sometimes there is joint presence without any active interaction (de Kadt, 1979).

It is argued that intense interactions often occur in specific physical settings that enable both hosts and tourists to have more contact with each other. As a result, more positive attitudes to each other are developed through the interactions (Armenski et al., 2011). Yet in some interactions, due to cultural distance, both hosts and tourists may encounter interaction difficulties which cause negative interaction outcomes (Loi & Pearce, 2015; Pearce et al., 1998; Reisinger & Turner, 2003; Ward et al., 2005).

An approach to identifying and understanding interaction difficulties can be adopted from the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). The CMM theory developed by Pearce and Cronen (1980) is useful in identifying interaction difficulties in different contexts and understanding the full meaning of host-tourist interactions (Pearce et al., 1998; Reisinger & Turner, 2003). According to CMM, there are six contextual components to be considered: (1) *Verbal and Non-verbal behaviour* - how clearly people understand one another's speech, gestures, posture, signals, eye movement, words; (2) *Speech acts* - the way meaning is attached to forms of address such as status, level of formality, or respect; (3) *Episodes* - sequences of behaviour may be organised differently, e.g., rituals, arrangements for eating, sightseeing, tipping, or gift giving; (4) *Relationships* - nature of social bonds, rights, and expectations, responsibilities, formation of friendships, and development of business relationships; (5) *Life script* - the way people perceive themselves in relation to others and the physical environment, social and cultural

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institutions; and (6) *Cultural patterns* - the way the larger community is defined and informs culture, e.g., the definition of honesty, guilt, justice, freedom of speech within the society, spiritual beliefs, or attitudes to gender.

If and when difficulties occur, host-tourist interaction may create disappointment, feelings of discouragement, and dissatisfaction (Pearce, 1982). Consequently, the perceived quality of interaction can be negatively impacted. To measure the interaction quality, previous studies have used overall satisfaction with the interaction via 7-point Likert scales from 1 = *very unsatisfied* to 7 = *very satisfied* (e.g., Carneiro et al., 2018) or levels of agreement from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree* regarding the statements of ‘developing friendships’, ‘positive interactions’, and ‘enjoy interacting’ (Xiong et al., 2021). However, Huang and Hsu (2010) argued that interaction quality is based on tourists’ subjective perception of the interaction, reflecting their positive or negative experience in such interactions. Semantic differential scales have been used in measuring the quality of interaction because adjectives in the scale (e.g., intense, cooperative) can capture the dynamics or the attributes of social interaction. Recently, when testing the effect of host-tourist interaction on tourists’ perceived cultural distance, Fan, Qiu, et al. (2020) measured interaction quality via five pairs of contrasting sentiments with a 5-point semantic differential scale adopted from Huang and Hsu’s work (2010); *equal-unequal*, *friendly-hostile*, *harmonious-clashing*, *intense-superficial*, and *cooperative-competitive*. By examining host-tourist interactions in the ethnic tourism context, this study attempts to investigate the relationship among physical settings, content, difficulties, and quality of interaction. The hypotheses were generated as follows.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): The physical settings in which interactions with ethnic hosts occur influence the (a) content, (b) difficulties, and (c) perceived quality of host-tourist interaction.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): The content of interactions influences (a) difficulties and (b) perceived quality of host-tourist interactions.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The interaction difficulties negatively influence the perceived quality of host-tourist interaction.

4.2.2 *The relationship between interaction quality and tourists’ attitudinal and behavioural outcomes*

In early work by Pearce (1982), he indicates that tourists’ attitudes are changed as a consequence of day-to-day encounters with the locals, especially when the encounters occur between those who have different cultural backgrounds. Through such encounters, tourists may reconsider their biased ideas or prejudices towards local residents as well as the destination (Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Lin, 2017; Yu & Lee, 2014).

Rasoolimanesh et al., (2019) considered host-tourist interactions as a fundamental element to tourist engagement in a destination that directly affect post-trip behaviours such as spreading

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positive word of mouth, sharing their positive experiences, revisiting a destination, and recommending the destination to others. For example, the friendliness and laughter of a tribal community are a highlight of tourists' visitation and a reason why they return. Specifically, tourists experienced emotional connections with tribal people on the beach singing the Fijian farewell song resulting in lots of tears and promises to keep in touch and return (Pratt et al., 2013). Therefore, most past studies have recognised the importance of interaction quality to predict tourists' further behavioural intention (Maleki & Gholamian, 2020; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Styliadis et al., 2021; Tasci & Gartner, 2007; Wong et al., 2020; Yap et al., 2018). In the ethnic tourism context, Su and Wall (2010) pointed out tourists' favourable interactions with hosts and that satisfaction with travel experiences not only increase their on-site expenditures but also enhance long-term evaluations towards an ethnic destination.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Perceived quality of host-tourist interaction influences tourists' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes.

4.2.3 Tourist perceptions of long-term outcomes of ethnic tourism

Tourism experiences arise when tourists relate to or participate in particular activities/events at a destination (Ooi, 2022). Interacting with local people is inherent in tourism experiences. The experiences not only shape tourists' on-site behaviours but also affect their attitudinal and behavioural intentions towards the hosts as well as the destination post trip (P. L. Pearce, 2005c). In terms of personal benefits, some favourable tourism experiences, especially in host-tourist interactions, can help tourists fulfill their personal goals, life purpose, or social objectives (Ooi, 2022; Sharpley & Stone, 2010).

In ethnic tourism, tourists expect to pursue experiences that bring them closer to the host's cultural values (Yang, 2011). Positive perceptions of interaction quality and favourable attitudes and behaviours of tourists may generate positive perceptions towards long-term ethnic tourism outcomes regarding social, cultural and economic aspects of sustainable development (Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Lin, 2017; Lama & Sarkhel, 2022; Su & Wall, 2010). First, interactions in ethnic tourism may not only reveal differences between themselves and ethnic hosts but also help to create social bonds and bridge cultural differences (Su et al., 2014). In such instances, tourists acquire more knowledge of the local way of life and fulfill their social needs, thereby establishing a mutual relationship with hosts.

Second, the interest in 'exotic' culture offers a chance to stabilise cultural heritage (Redicker & Reiser, 2017; Yang, 2011). For instance, tourist demand for souvenirs increases the chance that traditional crafts are made. Traditional performances/dances are kept alive as attractive tourism products. When participating in tourism activities and learning about local culture, tourists help to promote ethnic culture. Third, ethnic tourism is commonly perceived as a tool to bring economic

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benefits to a local community including higher income, local livelihood improvement, and more employment opportunities (Ishii, 2012; Su et al., 2014). Broadly, if ethnic tourism is properly managed, it has the potential to help disadvantaged communities alleviate poverty (Feng & Li, 2020; Lor et al., 2019) and accelerate local economic growth (Hu, 2019). In two case studies in Yunnan (China) and Shanmei (Taiwan), Yang and Li (2012) revealed that developing ethnic tourism helps to promote local economic, enhance community pride, and improve employment, living standards, road infrastructure, quality of public service and community recreation facilities. Overall, the authors concluded that ethnic tourism makes a positive contribution to local community's quality-of-life.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Tourists' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes influence their perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes.

In summary, positive host-tourist interaction is a primary goal for both parties in ethnic tourism, wherein cultural distance exists between them. However, a wide consensus within the tourism literature shows that host-tourist interaction does not always guarantee favourable outcomes and positive changes in tourist attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions towards the locals and the destination (P. L. Pearce, 2005b; Reisinger & Turner, 2003). Therefore, it is necessary to examine the influence of physical settings, content, and interaction difficulties on the perceived quality of host-tourist interaction. Furthermore, the influence of interaction quality on tourists' attitudes and behaviours, and subsequently their perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes also needs to be examined.

4.3 Methodology

As justified in Chapter 2 (p.31), the thesis utilised a mixed-method approach to investigate issues of host-tourist interaction and identify ways to improve interaction outcomes in the context of ethnic tourism. A qualitative approach was first carried out to obtain insights into host-tourist interactions from the emic perspective of villagers' experiences in ethnic tourism. Subsequently, in this study, a quantitative approach was applied to collect data from the etic view of domestic tourists visiting the Central Highlands via both on-site and online (Qualtrics platform) questionnaires. The questionnaire was initially developed in English and then translated into Vietnamese. Back-translation was undertaken by two Vietnamese scholars (one from the tourism discipline and one from outside the tourism discipline) who are fluent in English to validate the questionnaire. A pretest was carried out with a sample of 10 undergraduate students and 05 lecturers from Dalat University to verify the respondents understood the items in the survey questionnaire and that there was no issue with the choice of wording.

Fieldtrips were conducted to four ethnic places (Kon Ko Tu, Buon Don, Lak, and Lac Duong) of the Central Highlands from December 2020 to March 2021. The four places were previously chosen – based on their different ethnicities, levels of community participation in local tourism, and

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tourism development stages – in a preliminary study in which interviews were conducted with ethnic hosts about their interactions with tourists. A convenience sampling method was employed in this study by approaching domestic visitors at various locations (e.g., home-visits, homestay, local food and beverage establishments, gong venues, tourist attraction points, and public areas). All respondents were gifted a key chain with a unique ethnic culture design and a mini ‘thank you’ card. Respondents who could not undertake the on-site survey, still received the key chain with a QR code to link to the online version of the questionnaire for completion later. After approaching 520 domestic visitors, a total number of 474 questionnaires were collected, of which 438 were valid and used for data analysis.

‘*Physical settings*’ were measured by asking respondents to indicate the locations in which they interacted with locals. The respondents were asked to answer single-response (*yes/no*) questions for ten items which were correspondingly grouped into four specific settings; *local private house* (one item) (Zhang et al., 2017), on *tours* (one item) (Bott, 2018; Tháí, 2018), *tourist attractions and supporting facilities* (six items) (Carneiro et al., 2018; Eusébio & Carneiro, 2012), and *public spaces* (two items) (Eusébio & Carneiro, 2012; Loi & Pearce, 2015; Su et al., 2022). More specifically, for the *tourist attractions and supporting facilities*, examples of items included; communal house, food and beverage establishments, commercial shops, Gong performance venues, and tourist attractions points. The *public spaces* encompassed local markets and on street (see Appendix F for complete list of items).

The ‘*Content*’ included five categories with relevant items referring to interaction intensity levels ranging from low to high (Su et al., 2014); *presence without active interaction* (five items), *seeking information/direction* (three items), *purchasing goods and services* (six items), *mutual understanding* (four items), and *long-term social needs* (three items). The items were chosen from previous studies based on those found to be reliable and suitable for the research context (Bott, 2018; de Kadt, 1979; Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Lin, 2017; Su & Wall, 2010; Woosnam & Aleshinloye, 2013) (see Appendix F). Respondents were first asked to provide yes/no response to identify which types of interactions the respondents had with villagers. Then, the items identified in the list of types of interactions encountered by the respondents were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = completely dissatisfied to 5 = completely satisfied.

The question measuring interaction ‘*Difficulties*’ included 32 items in total (see Appendix F for complete list), aligned with the six dimensions from CMM theory; *verbal and non-verbal behaviours* (five items; e.g., language barrier, misunderstood the host’s postures/gestures), *speech acts* (four items; e.g., felt uncertain to introduce myself casually/formally, do not know how to behave appropriately with different hosts’ social statuses), *episodes* (11 items; e.g., felt confused when villagers refused to shake hands, avoided eye contact), *relationships* (three items; e.g., felt uncomfortable when the host considered our interaction as a material relationship, felt to be distant

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as a customer/buyer/tourist), *life scripts* (four items; e.g., felt the host seemed to be shy in the interaction, felt less confident in the first conversation with the host), and *cultural patterns* (five items; e.g., felt difficult to understand host's customs and taboos, felt uncomfortable when being asked personal questions) (Loi & Pearce, 2015; Lussa, 1994; Oktadiana et al., 2016; Pearce et al., 1998; Pearce & Cronen, 1980). The items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

The perceived '*Quality of interaction*' was measured by a 5-point semantic differential scale on five dimensions; *harmonious-clashing*, *friendly-hostile*, *intense-superficial*, *equal-unequal*, and *cooperative-competitive* (Fan, Qiu, et al., 2020; Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Lin, 2017).

The '*Tourists' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes*' were measured by asking respondents to rate on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) whether they had *more positive attitudes towards ethnic people* (Pearce, 1982; Su & Wall, 2010) and whether they would share positive experiences on *social media*, *recommend visiting to others*, and *return in the future* (Stylidis et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2019). Tourist perceptions towards '*Long-term ethnic tourism outcomes*' were measured by rating the level of agreement with statements aligned to *cultural* (two items), *social* (three items), and *economic capitals* (two items) (Lowry, 2017; Su & Wall, 2010; Xie & Wall, 2002; Yang et al., 2013). All constructs and measurement items are shown in Appendix F.

SPSS Statistics 28.0 was initially used to summarise data from the 438 valid responses. Preliminary analysis provides a descriptive profile of respondents and summary characteristics of host-tourist interactions. Subsequently, Smart PLS software 4.0 was applied to evaluate the research model via partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM enables researchers to estimate a complex causal-predictive model with many formatively and reflectively measured constructs, indicator variables and structural paths (Hair et al., 2019). To evaluate the model using PLS-SEM, two stages were followed; (1) assessment of the measurement model and (2) assessment of the structural model. Notably, for assessing the measurement model, the relevant criteria differ for reflective and formative constructs (Hair et al., 2019, 2021). The two assessment stages are illustrated in Appendix G.

Profile of respondents

The majority of respondents were Kinh people (92.2%), and more than half were female (56.8%) (Table 4.1). Most were aged between 21-40 (77.4%), specifically 21-30 (39.5%) and 31-40 (37.9%). One-half of respondents were married (50.2%). The main source of respondents was from Ho Chi Minh city (23.7%) and Dalat (Lam Dong province) (16%).

One-half of respondents had an undergraduate degree level of education (50.9%). The most common occupations of respondents were small-scale independent business owners (30.8%) and office staff (19.9%). Of respondents 14.8% were students, whereas Governmental/provincial staff

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accounted for 10.5%. The monthly income of respondents mostly ranged from VND 5,000,001 to 10,000,000 (equivalent to AUD 291-582) (41.8%) while 26% of respondents earned from VND 10,000,001 – 18,000,000 (equivalent to AUD 582-1,047).

Over the last three years, more than 90% of respondents had travelled both domestically and internationally. Of those, the proportion of respondents travelling at least 1-3 times and 4-6 times are relatively similar (30.1% and 29.9% respectively). Several respondents even reported that they could not remember how many trips they undertook because they travelled so often.

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Table 4.1

Profile of respondents to the Central Highlands region

Items		Frequency (N=438)	Percent	Items		Frequency (N=438)	Percent
Gender	Male	184	42.0	Educational level	Primary, secondary school, or high school	102	23.3
	Female	249	56.9		Diploma	68	15.5
	Non-binary/third gender	4	0.9		Undergraduate	223	50.9
	Prefer not to say	1	0.2		Graduate and higher	45	10.3
Age	Under 20 or 20	8	1.8	Occupation	Governmental/Provincial employee	46	10.5
	21-30	173	39.5		Office staff	87	19.9
	31-40	166	37.9		Small-scale independent business	135	30.8
	41-50	66	15.1		Causal workers	42	9.6
	51-60	20	4.6		Farmers	15	3.4
	Over 60	5	1.1		Students	65	14.8
Marital status	Married	220	50.2		Retired	10	2.3
	Living with another	108	24.7		Other	38	8.7
	Single	88	20.1	Income (VND)	Less than 5,000,000 or 5,000,000	87	19.9
	Divorced/Separated	16	3.7		5,000,001 - 10,000,000	183	41.8
	Widowed	6	1.4		10,000,001 - 18,000,000	114	26.0
Place of origin	Ha Noi	43	9.8		Above 18,000,000	54	12.3
	Hai Phong	6	1.4	Travel experience	No any trip	15	3.6
	Da Nang	14	3.2		1-3 Trips	126	30.1
	Ho Chi Minh	104	23.7		4-6 Trips	125	29.9
	Khanh Hoa/Nha Trang	22	5.0		7-10 Trips	83	19.9
	Kon Tum/Kon Tum	22	5.0		11-15 Trips	32	7.7
	Gia Lai/Pleiku	17	3.9		16-20 Trips	19	4.5
	Dak Lak/Buon Ma Thuot	54	12.3		21 or more	18	4.3
	Dak Nong/Gia Nghia	22	5.0				
	Lam Dong/Da Lat	70	16.0				
	Other	64	14.6				
Ethnicity	Kinh	404	92.2				
	Other	34	7.8				

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4.4 Results

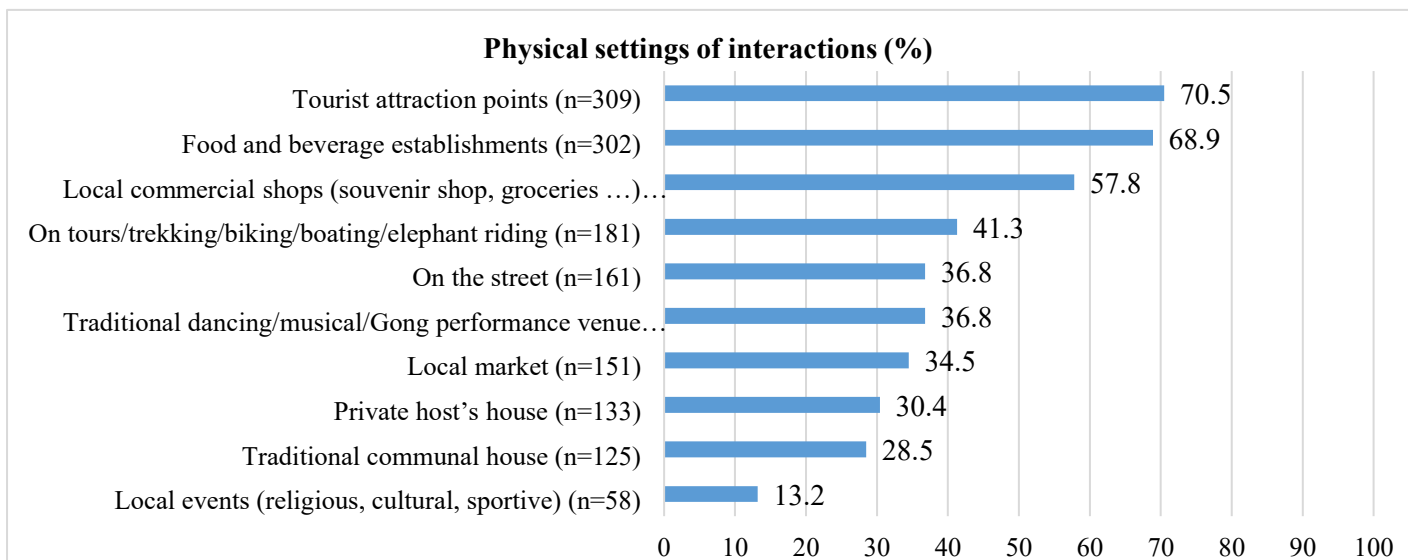
4.4.1 Summary characteristics of host-tourist interactions in the Central Highlands, Vietnam

4.4.1.1 Physical settings

The settings in which most interactions between hosts and visitors occurred were in popular *tourist attractions and facilities*, such as tourist attraction points (70.5%), food and beverage establishments (68.9%), and local commercial shops (e.g., souvenir shops, groceries) (57.8%). Several respondents (41.3%) also encountered villagers *on tours* (e.g., trekking, biking, dugout boating, elephant riding, coffee tour). Respondents were less likely to interact with villagers at a local *private house* (30.4%) or *public spaces* such as local markets and on the street (36.8%). The lowest frequency of interactions was in some specific tourist attraction places such as traditional communal house (28.5%) and local events (13.2%) (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2

Physical settings of host-tourist interactions



4.4.1.2 Content of and satisfaction with host-tourist interactions

The most common type of interactions were business exchanges when visitors *purchased goods and services* from the villagers (93.5%), and visitors were somewhat satisfied with these interactions (Mean = 3.72). According to respondents, only tasting local foods and beverages (e.g., *Cần* wine, coffee, traditional cake) holds both high frequency (86.5%) and satisfaction (4.12) (see Table 4.2). Notably, respondents reported higher satisfaction with other interactions such as participating in traditional musical or Gong performances (4.29), handicraft-making procedures (e.g., weaving, embroidering, pottering, and/or coffee, local specialties, traditional food) (4.26), and local events (4.21). Yet these interactions occurred less frequently, only 20.1% – 36.2%.

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The closest interactions – *fulfilling long-term social needs* (e.g., exchanging gifts, making friends with ethnic villagers, or exchanging personal contact details for future communication) – were low in frequency (30.7% – 39%), but relatively high in satisfaction (ranging from 3.89 – 4.07).

For the 30.4% of respondents who engaged with locals in their private house (Figure 4.2), 85.2% had a long conversation with hosts to learn about local culture and more than one-half had stayed overnight at the local house (66.4%), had meals with hosts (60.6%), and learned the ethnic language (60%). In such instances, respondents were the most satisfied when having meals with hosts (4.49) and staying overnight at the hosts' house (4.35). They felt highly satisfied about their long conversation with the hosts to learn and share about culture (4.20) but less satisfied with learning ethnic language (3.95).

At a lower intensity level when *seeking information/direction* or when there was only a *co-presence without active interaction*, the respondents said they felt somewhat satisfied. More specifically, 39.4% sought help (3.94), 44.9% observed Gong performances (3.97), and 51.9% observed handicraft-making procedures (3.93). Among all interaction activities, the respondents were least satisfied with superficial interactions and such interactions occurred relatively often; for example, simply observing local way of life (84.8%, mean= 3.75) and having short chats with the local (74.9%, mean = 3.62). Interestingly, respondents quite often took photos with the locals (64.7%) and felt somewhat pleased about such encounters (3.84).

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Table 4.2

Content and satisfaction level of host-tourist interactions

	Content of & Satisfaction with interactions	Percent	Average satisfaction ^a
Fulfilling long-term social needs (Composite mean (M) = 3.97)	I've exchanged personal contact details with the host for future communication	39.0	3.89
	I've exchanged gift with the host	30.7	4.07
	I've made friends with ethnic people (host)	33.7	4.04
Seeking mutual understanding ^b (M = 4.21)	I've stayed at the host's house	66.4	4.35
	I've enjoyed meals with the host	60.6	4.49
	I've had a long conversation with the host for learning and sharing together	85.2	4.20
	I've learned to speak ethnic language via the host	60.0	3.95
Purchasing goods and services (M = 3.87)	I've interacted with the host when they provide me goods and services	93.5	3.72
	I've tasted ethnic food & beverages (Cà wine, coffee, cake, ...)	86.5	4.12
	I've talked together with local guide during trekking/biking/boating/elephant riding/village tour	64.7	3.86
	I've participated in traditional musical/dancing/Gong performance)	36.2	4.29
	I've participated in local events (rituals, ceremonies, parties, festivals)	23.4	4.21
	I've participated in the production of handicrafts (weaving, embroidering, pottering), and/or coffee, local specialties, traditional food	20.1	4.26
Seeking information or direction (M = 3.67)	I've had short chats with the host when searching information about the village/local services (local restaurants, local tourist sites, local weather, groceries, local clinics, money exchange spots, ...)	74.9	3.62
	I've asked for/sought help (pick-up/drop-off service, purchase local products)	39.4	3.94
	I've sought local travel recommendation or travel itinerary	46.1	3.84
Presence of hosts and visitors without active interactions (M = 3.76)	I've observed traditional musical/dancing/Gong performance)	44.9	3.97
	I've observed the local events (rituals, ceremonies, parties, festivals)	33.6	3.90
	I've observed how to make handicrafts, and/or coffee, local specialties, traditional food	51.9	3.93
	I've taken photos with host	64.7	3.84
	I've observed local way of life	84.8	3.75

Note. ^a Measured via 5-point Likert scale, 1 = *completely dissatisfied* to 5 = *completely satisfied*

^b Frequency was calculated using the 30.4% of respondents who interacted with the hosts at the private house

4.4.1.3 Interaction difficulties

The respondents agreed most that they encountered difficulties in understanding customs and taboos (mean = 4.06) when interacting with villagers (Table 4.3). Respondents also agreed that they did not know how to be involved in religious events or practices when visiting ethnic villages (3.77). Other challenges visitors faced in their interactions with hosts related to language barriers, such as the way villagers express themselves in Vietnamese (3.76) and dialects, regional accents, or

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jargon (3.73). Additionally, they also moderately agreed that they misunderstood the host's postures and/or gestures during their encounters (3.61).

Respondents moderately agreed that they felt confused in some particular situations in which villagers kept silent (3.59), frowned (3.46), refused to shake their hands (3.38), or avoided eye contact (3.33). Moreover, respondents also reported their moderate agreement on other interaction difficulties. For example, they felt uncertain about how to introduce themselves casually/formally (3.47) or refuse the host's requests politely while being invited to drink local wine, taste 'exotic' food, dance (3.44). Respondents were sometimes unfamiliar with local eating practices (e.g., kind of food, amount of food, time of eating, way of eating) (3.45) and daily routine (e.g., time to go to bed/wake up, working time, mealtime) (3.39).

It is notable that respondents were neutral with the statements where there was a material relationship between villagers and themselves during their interactions (3.11) or they were less confident in the first conversation with hosts (2.69). Interestingly, they mostly disagreed that villagers were dominant in their interactions (2.11), while they were likely to agree that villagers seemed to be shy (3.51) and unnatural (3.40) in the interactions.

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Table 4.3 *The difficulties in host-tourist interaction*

Interaction difficulties		Mean rating
Verbal and Non-verbal behaviours (Composite mean (M) = 3.67)	I misunderstood/misinterpreted because of different dialects, regional accents, or jargons.	3.73
	I felt confused in the communication because of the host's way to express in Vietnamese.	3.76
	I felt uncomfortable when the host avoided to look at me or looked at somewhere when we were talking.	3.33
	I did not know what was happening when the host frowned.	3.46
	I misunderstood because of host's postures and/or gestures.	3.61
Speech acts (M = 3.44)	I did not know the appropriate physical distance I should keep between the host and me in our interaction.	3.38
	I did not know whether I should introduce myself to the host casually or formerly.	3.47
	I did not know how to show my respect to the host in our interaction.	3.27
	I did not know how to behave appropriately with different hosts who had different social statuses.	3.32
Episodes (M= 3.22)	I felt confused when the host refused to hold or shake my hands.	3.38
	I felt confused when the host avoided to answer or kept silent.	3.59
	I could not respond quickly in different situations during our interaction because I was confused.	2.93
	I could not recognise well between serious speaking and joke telling.	3.06
	I felt uncomfortable in the way the host talked over other people (their neighbourhoods, other ethnic people and/or tourists).	3.17
	I did not know what I should say/do to the host at the end of our interaction.	3.16
	I felt to be misunderstood when tipping ethnic hosts.	2.98
	I felt uncomfortable with the set-up of the room/stage.	2.77
	I did not know how to response well for the greetings and farewells that fit into the local way.	2.98
	I was not familiar with local eating practices (kinds of food, amount of food, time of eating, way of eating).	3.45
	I did not know how to involve in religious events/practices.	3.77
Relationships (M = 3.20)	I felt I was not trusted by the host as I was an outsider of the village.	2.99
	I felt to be distant because I was a customer/buyer/tourist.	3.25
	I felt uncomfortable when the host considered our interaction as material relationship.	3.11
Life scripts (M = 3.00)	I felt the host's interaction with us was unnatural.	3.40
	I felt the host seemed to be shy in our interaction.	3.51
	I felt the host tended to be dominant in our interaction.	2.11
	I felt less confident in the first conversation or meeting with the host.	2.69
Cultural patterns (M = 3.54)	I felt uncomfortable when the host tried to talk about his/her personal problems.	2.90
	I felt uncomfortable when the host asked about some very personal questions.	3.25
	I did not know how to refuse host's request politely (be invited to drink local wine, taste 'exotic' food, dance, try traditional costumes, or purchase souvenir).	3.44
	I was not familiar with host's daily routine (e.g., time to go to bed/wake up, working time, meals time, ...)	3.39
	I felt difficult to understand host's customs and taboos.	4.06

Note. Values were measured via 5-point Likert scale, 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*

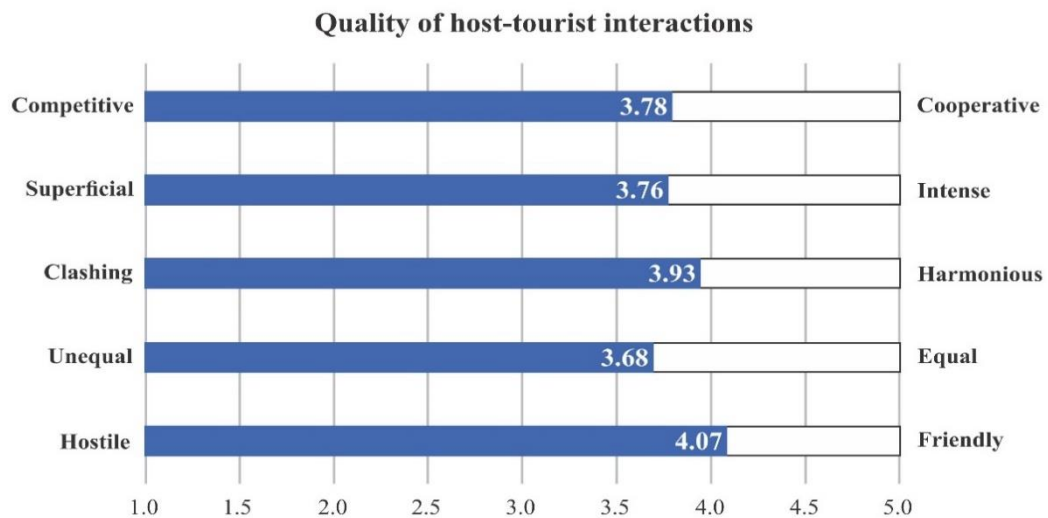
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4.4.1.4 *Quality of interactions*

Overall, visitors rated the quality of their interaction with villagers positively, illustrated by means ranging from 3.68 to 4.07. More specifically, the interaction quality was perceived as friendly (4.07) and harmonious (3.93). However, regarding other items on the sentiment scales, participants reported that their interactions with local villagers tended to be slightly less positive – e.g., intense (3.76) and cooperative (3.78). Notably, participants rated perceived equality in their interactions lowest (3.68) (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3

The quality of host-tourist interactions



4.4.1.5 *Tourists' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes and their perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes*

Respondents seemed to agree that their attitude toward ethnic people is “more positive compared to pre-visit” (3.83). They agreed to “return” and “recommend” the Central Highlands to others (4.03) and they were likely to share their positive experiences about the Central Highlands on social media (3.91) (see Table 4.4).

Regarding the outcomes of long-term ethnic tourism, respondents believed that tourism provides “more meaningful jobs” for villagers (4.24) and “improves the locals income” (4.17). In terms of social capital, respondents provided more neutral ratings; “I found the interactions rewarding and satisfying” (3.59), “I would like to express gratitude by presenting gifts to the hosts” (3.37), and “I want to establish/maintain an ongoing mutual relationship” with villagers (3.32). The respondents somewhat agreed that they wanted to “learn more about ethnic culture” (3.72), but were quite ambivalent about “learning ethnic language” (3.13).

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Table 4.4

Tourists' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes and their perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes

Information		Mean rating
Tourists' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes		
More positive attitude	My attitude toward ethnic people is more positive compared to pre-visit.	3.83
Positive sharing	I will share my positive experiences about the Central Highlands on social media.	3.91
Return	I would like to return to the Central Highlands in the future.	4.03
Recommendation	I would recommend visiting the Central Highlands to others.	4.03
Tourists' perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes		
Cultural aspect (Composite mean (M) = 3.43)	I want to learn more about ethnic language.	3.13
	I want to learn more about ethnic minority culture.	3.72
Social aspect (M = 3.43)	I want to establish/maintain an ongoing mutual relationship with the host.	3.32
	I would like to express my gratitude to ethnic people by exchanging or presenting gifts to the host.	3.37
	I found my interaction with ethnic people in the village to be rewarding and satisfying.	3.59
Economic aspect (M = 4.21)	I believe tourism can make positive contribution to the ethnic people's income in the future.	4.17
	I believe tourism provide more meaningful employment/jobs.	4.24

Note. Values were measured via 5-point Likert scale, 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*

4.4.2 Measurement model assessment

With the exception of *Tourists' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes*, which was reflective, each construct in the measurement model was formative in nature - its meaning was derived from its constituent parts based on the theoretical consideration (Figure 4.4). In other words, different indicators contribute to forming the construct and they are not interchangeable (Hair et al., 2017). By contrast, as a reflective construct, all indicators or measurement items of the *Tourists' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes* were developed in a way that reflects the measured construct and they are interchangeable (Cong, 2016; Hair et al., 2017; Rasoolimanesh & Ali, 2018). This construct was widely measured in tourism research (e.g., Huang et al., 2015; Stylidis et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2019, 2020).

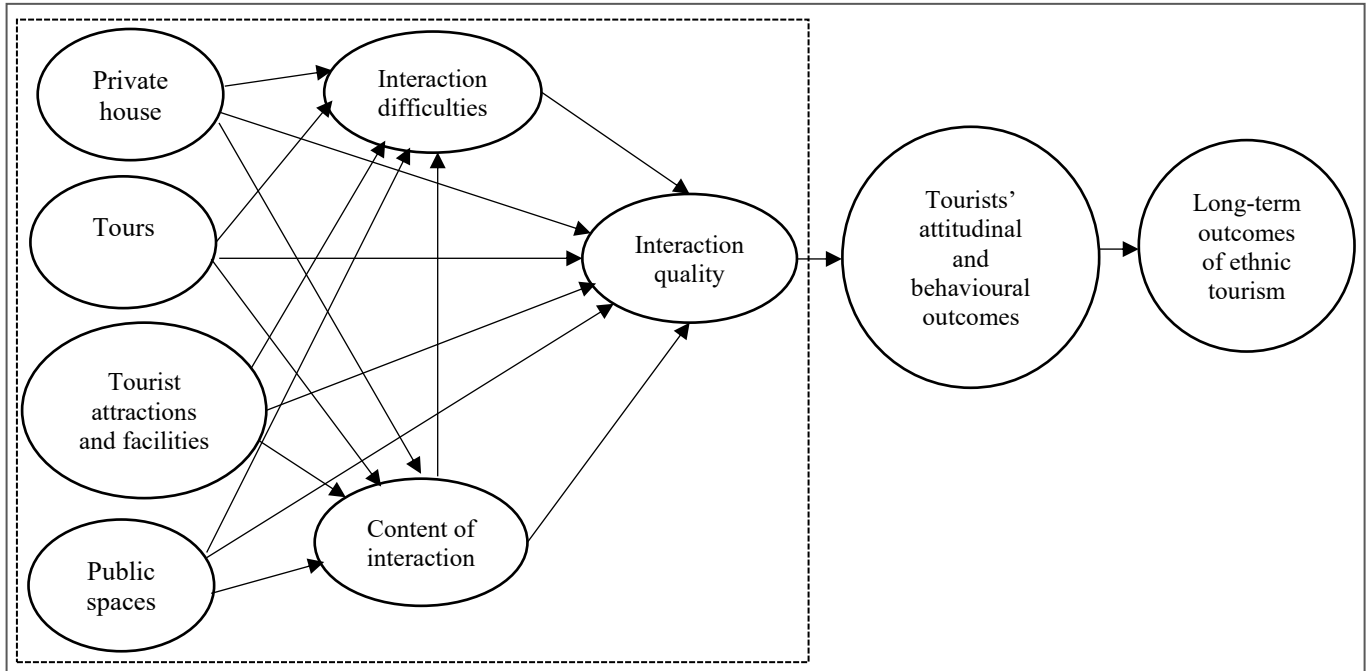
Notably, due to distinct features of different physical settings in the real world, the items provided for physical settings were grouped into four separate settings: *Private house*, *Tours*, *Tourist attractions and supporting facilities*, and *Public spaces*, which were treated as binary variables to be measured in the model. More specifically, lists of settings within *Tourist attractions and supporting facilities* were provided to ensure response accuracy, but collapsed to represent levels of interaction intensity. The four settings, representing both distinct features and levels of interaction intensity from

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low to high, lend themselves to different types of interactions. The content of all questionnaire items was developed in a formative approach. Refer to Appendix F for a list of indicators for each construct in the model.

Figure 4.4

Measurable research model with four specific physical settings



Note. Elaborated by the author

4.4.2.1 Formative measurement constructs

First, to examine whether the formative constructs exhibit convergent validity, the author ran redundancy analyses in which a global single-item or a reflectively measured item was used as an alternative measure of the same construct (Hair et al., 2017). Correlation between the formative construct and the global single-item (or reflective) measurement of the same concept should be 0.7 or higher (Cheah et al., 2018; Hair et al., 2017). Despite the importance of convergent validity assessment, hospitality researchers have largely ignored this fundamental validation step (Ali et al., 2018).

In the current study, four different statements (measured on a scale of 1 completely dissatisfied/strongly disagree to 5 completely satisfied/strongly agree) were used as four endogenous single-item constructs to correspondingly validate the four formative constructs: *Content*, *Difficulties*, *Quality of interaction*, and *Long-term outcomes of ethnic tourism*. More specifically, the statement “Please tell us how satisfied you are in interacting with the host when they provide goods and services” was used to check the formative construct of *Content*. The statement “Please indicate the extent of your agreement with the statement “I felt confused in the communication because of the host’s way to express in Vietnamese” was used to check the *Difficulties*. The statement “After

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your experiences with the ethnic people, please tell us how strongly you agree that your attitude toward ethnic people is more positive compared to pre-visit” was used to check the *Quality of interaction*. The statement “I believe tourism will contribute positively to the quality of life of this ethnic village” was used to check the construct of *Long-term outcomes of ethnic tourism*. The redundancy analyses were carried out and yielded estimates of 0.810 (*Content*), 0.732 (*Difficulties*), 0.776 (*Quality of interaction*) and 0.901 (*Long-term outcomes of ethnic tourism*) that were all satisfactory.

For the physical settings, four separate single-items – *Private house*, *Tour*, *Tourist attractions and facilities*, and *Public spaces* – were used to test the relationship of each setting construct with the other constructs. Since each setting construct was formed by a dummy-coded item which is acceptable in PLS-SEM (Hair, personal communication, April 12, 2023), each construct’s validity coefficient (outer loading) is 1.0.

Second, checking collinearity of indicators by looking at the variance indicator factor (VIF) values is very important in the formative measurement model. VIF should be lower than 5.0, which means the formative indicators are not highly correlated to one another (Hair et al., 2019; Huang et al., 2015). The VIF values for all the indicators ranged from 1.000–3.889 (Appendix H).

Third, assessing the statistical significance and relevance of indicator weights was carried out; the *p*-value of the indicator’s outer weight should be ≤ 0.05 , and larger significant weights mean greater relevance to the construct. If an indicator weight is not significant, the indicator’s absolute contribution to the construct is defined by its outer loading (Cenfetelli & Bassellier, 2009). Loadings that are ≥ 0.5 , or <0.5 but with statistical significance, are both considered relevant, therefore the indicators should generally be retained (Hair et al., 2019). Only one indicator – *Mutual understanding* did not meet the threshold level criteria (outer loading of 0.122 and *p*-value of 0.210) (Appendix H).

Notably, eliminating a formative indicator simply based on its unsatisfactory statistical outcome should be done with caution because each indicator captures a specific aspect of the construct’s domain (Hair et al., 2017, 2019). Before removing an indicator from the formative measurement model, the author needs to check its relevance from a content validity point of view (Hair et al., 2017). When considering the reality of the study context, the indicator *Mutual understanding* was measured to refer to highly intense interactions in which tourists were likely to interact with hosts at their private house. According to Su et al. (2014), in ethnic tourism, the content of interactions ranges from low to high intensity levels including those instances occur when both hosts and tourists are actively seeking mutual understanding. Therefore, the indicator *Mutual understanding* is retained in the model.

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4.4.2.2 Reflective measurement constructs

First, the author checked the indicator (outer) loadings. Loadings above 0.708 are recommended as they mean that the construct explains more than 50% of variance (Hair et al., 2021). The loadings for the four indicators of the *Tourists' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes* construct – “More positive attitude” (0.884), “Media sharing” (0.918), “Recommendation” (0.939), and “Return” (0.935) are all above 0.708, thus providing acceptable indicator reliability.

Second, internal consistency reliability was examined. “Higher values generally indicate higher levels of reliability” (Hair et al., 2019, p. 8). The reliability coefficient ρ_A , which usually lies between Cronbach's alpha and the composite reliability, is recommended to be from 0.70–0.90 but is acceptable if lower than 0.95. The construct's ρ_A value was 0.939.

Third, the average variance extracted (AVE) was calculated to check the convergent validity. The construct's AVE value was 0.845, exceeding the threshold of 0.50 and indicating that, on average, the construct explains 84.5% of the variance of its indicators (Hair et al., 2017).

Lastly, discriminant validity was assessed via the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations (Henseler et al., 2015). Because there is only one reflective construct in the model, this step was conducted by checking correlations among the four indicators within the same construct (monotrait-heteromethod correlations) (Roemer et al., 2021). The HTMT values in this study ranged from 0.732 – 0.894 which satisfied the suggested value of lower than either 0.85 or 0.90 (Hair et al., 2019).

4.4.3 Structural model assessment

Figure 4.5 presents the parameter estimates for the structural model. First, the variance inflation factor (VIF) was calculated to ensure collinearity does not bias regression results. The VIF values of the constructs ranged from 1.000 – 3.889, less than the recommended cut-off value of 5.0. So the collinearity issues between the constructs were absent from this study (Hair et al., 2021).

Second, Table 4.5 presents the results of the path analysis and hypothesis testing in the structural model. Three out of four physical settings significantly influenced satisfaction with *Content* whereas *Public spaces* had no significant influence. More specifically, *Private house* had a positive influence (coefficient = 0.498, p -value = 0.000), while *Tours* (coefficient = -0.238, p -value = 0.014) and *Tourist attractions and facilities* (coefficient = -0.400, p -value = 0.021) had negative influences on *Content* satisfaction. Overall, H1(a) was supported.

The *Private house* had an inverse relationship with *Difficulties* (coefficient = -0.381, p -value = 0.001) and a positive relationship with *Quality of interaction* (coefficient = 0.328, p -value = 0.000). Meanwhile three settings – *Tours*, *Tourist attractions and facilities*, and *Public spaces* – had no

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significant relationships with either *Difficulties* or *Quality of interaction*. Overall, H1(b) and H1(c) were supported.

The *Content* construct had an inverse relationship with *Difficulties* (coefficient = -0.267, p -value = 0.000) and a positive relationship with *Quality of interaction* (coefficient = 0.481, p -value = 0.000), thus H2(a) and H2(b) were fully supported.

The *Difficulties* construct had an inverse relationship with *Quality of interaction* (coefficient = -0.197, p -value = 0.000). The *Quality of interaction* construct positively influenced *Tourists' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes* (coefficient = 0.751, p -value = 0.000), and *Tourists' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes* had a strong and positive influence on perceived *Long-term outcomes of ethnic tourism* (coefficient = 0.853, p -value = 0.000). Therefore, H3, H4, and H5 were fully supported.

Table 4.5 Results of the path analysis and hypotheses testing

Hypotheses path	Construct	Path	Construct	Coefficient	p -value	Results
H1a	Private house	→	Content	0.498	0.000	Supported
	Tours	→	Content	-0.238	0.014	Supported
	Tourist attractions and facilities	→	Content	-0.400	0.021	Supported
H1b	Public spaces	→	Content	0.015	0.882	Not supported
	Private house	→	Difficulties	-0.381	0.001	Supported
	Tours	→	Difficulties	0.070	0.565	Not supported
H1c	Tourist attractions and facilities	→	Difficulties	0.081	0.716	Not supported
	Public spaces	→	Difficulties	-0.099	0.353	Not supported
	Private house	→	Quality of interaction	0.328	0.000	Supported
H2a	Tours	→	Quality of interaction	-0.039	0.614	Not supported
	Tourist attractions and facilities	→	Quality of interaction	-0.094	0.642	Not supported
	Public spaces	→	Quality of interaction	-0.103	0.192	Not supported
H2b	Content	→	Difficulties	-0.267	0.000	Supported
H3	Content	→	Quality of interaction	0.481	0.000	Supported
H4	Difficulties	→	Quality of interaction	-0.197	0.000	Supported
H5	Quality of interaction	→	Tourists' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes	0.751	0.000	Supported
H5	Tourists' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes	→	Long-term outcomes of ethnic tourism	0.853	0.000	Supported

Third, the R^2 value is a measure of the model's predictive power (Hair et al., 2017) and represents the amount of variance of an endogenous construct explained by all of the exogenous constructs linked to it (Assaker et al., 2012). Hair et al. (2019) stated that R^2 ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater explanatory power, and the acceptable R^2 are based on the research context. The R^2 of the five endogenous constructs range from 0.074–0.727 explaining that the four

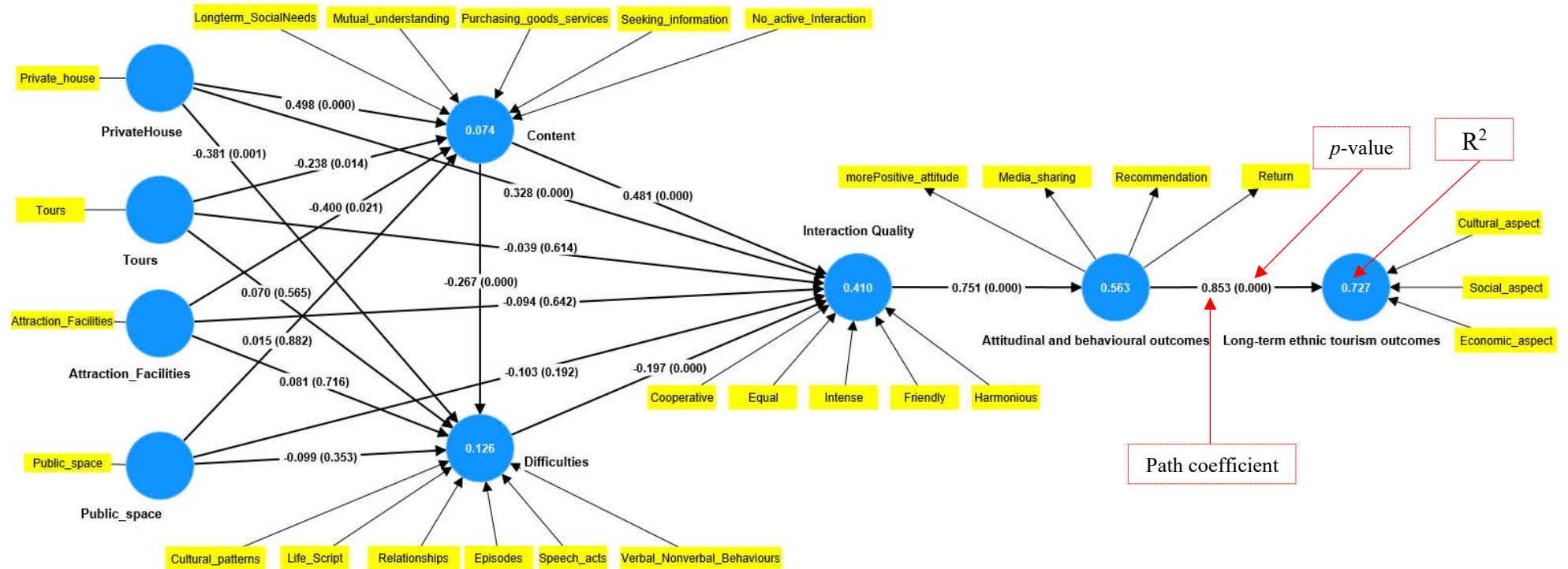
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physical settings – *Private house, Tours, Tourist attractions and facilities*, and *Public spaces* – predicted 7.4% of the variance in satisfaction with *Content*, the four *physical settings* and *Content* predicted 12.6% of the variance in *Difficulties*. Both *Content* and *Difficulties* predicted 41% of the variance in *Interaction quality*. Notably, the *Interaction quality* predicted 56.3% of the variance in *Tourists' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes*, which subsequently predicted 72.7% of the variance in *Long-term outcomes of ethnic tourism*.

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Figure 4.5

The structural model's results with path coefficients, p-values, and R^2



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4.5 Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigates the influences of host-tourist interactions on tourists' perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes. Both formative and reflective constructs were applied in the structural model to test the hypothesised relationships between the physical settings, content, difficulties, quality of interactions, tourists' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes, and their perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes. Most of hypotheses were supported with the exception of H1, which required consideration of each specific setting in which the host-tourist interactions occurred. The study highlights the complexity of how distinct characteristics of each setting influence satisfaction with content, difficulties, and quality of interaction. More specifically, of the four settings, the private house had positive relationships with the content (H1a) and interaction quality (H1c) and an inverse relationship with the interaction difficulties (H1b). As Lynch (2005) noted, the host's house "is perceived as a temporal, cultural, personal and emotional construct" (p. 5). Particularly in the ethnic tourism context, a home business is one of the main tourism products such as homestays, home visits, home restaurants, café shop, handicraft-making venue, etc (Zhang et al., 2017). This setting offers tourists more opportunities to engage in their interactions with hosts, decreases the perceived interaction difficulties, and generates more favourable interaction outcomes.

It is noteworthy that, in the private house, tourists were less likely to perceive difficulties in their encounters with hosts. Perhaps the private house is a unique space providing tourists with close physical proximity and the opportunity to learn local social rules as well as ethnic culture. Therefore, they seem to better 'read' and understand how the hosts behave and that helps them overcome difficulties in such interactions. Further, the private house also allows tourists to be seen as guests in the host's home setting (Zhang & Xu, 2023) perhaps making the hosts more tolerant towards tourists and any challenges in their interactions.

By contrast, public spaces did not influence either content (H1a), difficulties (H1b), or interaction quality (H1c). The reason for this might be that, in public settings, tourists briefly interact with hosts to seek information or take photographs, or simply there was a co-presence without active interaction. Unsurprisingly, the finding confirms that interactions occurring in the public spaces are often superficial, temporary, and non-repetitive (Kastenholz et al., 2013; Reisinger & Turner, 2003). In this vein, Su et al.'s (2022) results reveal that co-presence (e.g., walking on roads, wandering in the area) has no effect on the mutual understanding for both hosts and tourists due to lack of sharing of spaces and physical interaction.

Tours and tourist attractions and supporting facilities negatively influenced satisfaction with content (H1a) but did not significantly influence difficulties (H1b) and perceived quality of interactions (H1c). The negative effect on content satisfaction can be explained by variability of

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interaction intensity levels in the two settings. For example, when taking the elephant riding tour, tourists are sometimes offered an opportunity to learn about elephant habitat and closely interact with villagers to understand local way of life. However, in peak season, the elephant tour itinerary tends to be cut down to serve more tourists. The host-tourist interactions are likely to be shortened and more superficial due to back-to-back bookings. Another example is at Gong venues. A Gong performance is not only a unique cultural practice but also one of the most iconic ethnic tourism products in the Central Highlands. The more tourists involved in the Gong performance, the bigger the venue that is required. Consequently, tourists have less chance to closely interact with Gong performers or dancers. Their interaction content seems to stop at the commercial relationship. These examples can explain that the interaction content in the two settings varies according to external (spatial and temporal) or internal factors (motivation and personal attitudes in the interaction). Thus, the physical setting of tours or tourist attractions and supporting facilities alone cannot influence the difficulties and quality of interactions.

Content describes various types of interaction activities reflecting low to high intensity levels in host-tourist interactions. Different intensity levels, for example, ‘no-active interaction’ (coefficient = 0.428, p -value = 0.000) or ‘purchasing goods & services’ (coefficient = 0.770, p -value = 0.000) had certain statistically significant contributions to satisfaction with the content of interactions. Content was inversely related to difficulties (H2a) and positively related to quality of interaction (H2b). That means, as tourists’ satisfaction with the content of interactions increased, their perceived difficulties decreased, and as their satisfaction with the content increased, their perceived quality of interaction also increased, regardless of the intensity levels. This finding adds to Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Lin (2017) and Carneiro et al.’s (2018) claims that favourable interactions can help to reduce prejudices and conflicts between hosts and tourists.

More clearly from the descriptive results, this study finds that while intense interactions seemed to occur less frequently, tourists were more likely to be satisfied with higher intensity interactions; for example, ‘participated in traditional musical/dancing/Gong performance’ (mean = 4.29) vs. ‘observed traditional musical/dancing/Gong performance’ (mean = 3.97), ‘participated in the production of handicrafts (weaving, embroidering, pottering) and/or coffee, local specialties, traditional food’ (4.26) vs. ‘observed how to make handicrafts, and/or coffee, local specialties, traditional food’ (3.93), or ‘made friends with ethnic people (host)’ (4.04) vs. ‘talked together with local guide during trekking/biking/boating/elephant riding/village tour’ (3.86). Recognising this, opportunities for higher intensity interactions should be developed, thereby helping to minimise difficulties and maximise positive outcome of host-tourist interactions. However, it is important to engage with locals to determine willingness of hosts to engage in higher intensity interactions with tourists, and to ensure that quality of interactions remains

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positive if the quantity of intense interactions is increased in certain physical settings (e.g., communal house, private house, Gong venue).

Applying CMM theory in the ethnic tourism context, interaction difficulties are first measured by six indicators encompassing 32 items, which provide more details of difficulties encountered by tourists. The negative relationship between interaction difficulties and the quality of interaction is clear and significant (H3). That is, the more strongly tourists agreed that they faced difficulties in the interactions with hosts, the less positive they found such interactions, which is consistent with other studies (see Fan, Qiu, et al., 2020; Pearce et al., 1998; Reisinger & Turner, 2003). Broadly, the finding supports Fan, Qiu, et al. (2020)'s conclusion that overall quality of interactions is constrained by the cultural distance, which is a root of perceived difficulties in host-tourist interactions.

The findings demonstrate the salient influences of interaction quality on tourists' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes (H4), thereby impacting their perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism (H5). Favourable interaction results in tourists having more positive attitudes and future behavioural intentions towards the hosts as well as the destination (e.g., Styliadis, 2020). With positive attitudinal and behavioural outcomes, tourists are more likely to develop positive perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism in terms of cultural, social, and economic benefits that are also sustainable development goals of ethnic tourism. In line with destination management literature, this study confirms the powerful role of host-tourist interaction in facilitating long-term outcomes of ethnic tourism through its positive effect on tourists' attitudes and behaviours towards hosts and the destination (Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Lin, 2017; Lin et al., 2019; Su et al., 2022; Wong et al., 2019). Given that, the current study contributes to expanding the destination loyalty framework, which was demonstrated by the positive effect of interaction quality on destination image formation and loyalty (Styliadis et al., 2021).

4.6 Implications and Limitations

The study expands the existing body of knowledge of host-tourist interactions in ethnic tourism contexts. The interrelationship between physical settings, content, and interaction difficulties is comprehensively investigated. Further, the positive influence of interaction quality on tourists' attitudes and behaviours, and subsequently on their perceptions towards long-term outcomes of ethnic tourism is verified. The most insightful finding of this study is how different physical settings (private house, tours, tourist attractions and facilities, and public spaces) influence the content, difficulties, and quality of host-tourist interactions. Importantly, CMM theory was first used in designing the questionnaire and developing a construct to measure interaction difficulties which tourists encountered with hosts in the ethnic tourism context. Again, the study confirms a wide application of CMM in multi-discipline research, especially associated

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with interactions between different cultural backgrounds in the tourism context (Oktadiana et al., 2016; Pearce et al., 1998; Pearce, 2007).

Based on the results from the perspectives of tourists, this study emphasises the importance of managing host-tourist interactions to maximise positive outcomes. Both villagers and local tourism practitioners should pay more attention to three key elements of host-tourist interactions; physical settings, content, and difficulties. This could mean developing opportunities for more intense and meaningful interactions and minimising the difficulties in different settings, while of course considering the hosts' preferences for their role and level of involvement in providing ethnic tourism products. For example, the results suggest that ethnic hosts who have sufficient capability, should take advantage of their home space to meet tourists' needs in terms of lodging, home-made food, or home-visits. The products should be produced in a way that offers both hosts and tourists enough time and space for intense interactions. By doing that, tourists will have the chance to learn about and understand the hosts' culture and adjust their behaviours to react mindfully towards the hosts. As such, tourists can overcome interaction difficulties. Further, tourism marketers should cooperate with the hosts in promoting ethnic tourism products at the local private house. The private house can be an ideal means to promote marketing about ethnic destination to target tourists.

Regarding interactions on tours or at tourist attractions and supporting facilities, tourism practitioners need to focus on tourism activities and services in which closer interactions can be easily facilitated. Additionally, the content of interactions also needs to be improved in the two settings. For example, tour operators/Gong venue owners should design tour options/gong performance programmes which allow tourists to engage more with ethnic cultural practices or participate in the performances. Yet they must also consider time constraints and tourist preferences so that favourable interactions can be generated.

Given the need to carefully consider and develop higher intensity interactions, as noted above, this study suggests more empirical work needs to be done moving forward. It is important to find the most appropriate approach for local villagers to provide ethnic tourism products which facilitate greater engagement in closer interactions without increased imposition on the hosts in the long-term, particularly at their private houses.

Although all constructs in the research model were based on previous literature, the indicators of each formative construct might not fully capture all facets of the construct domain. Consequently, the indicator *Mutual understanding* of the construct *Content* did not meet the criteria requirement. Future research can add more items for this indicator and develop a global variable for the questionnaire to check the convergent validity of the construct (Hair et al., 2017).

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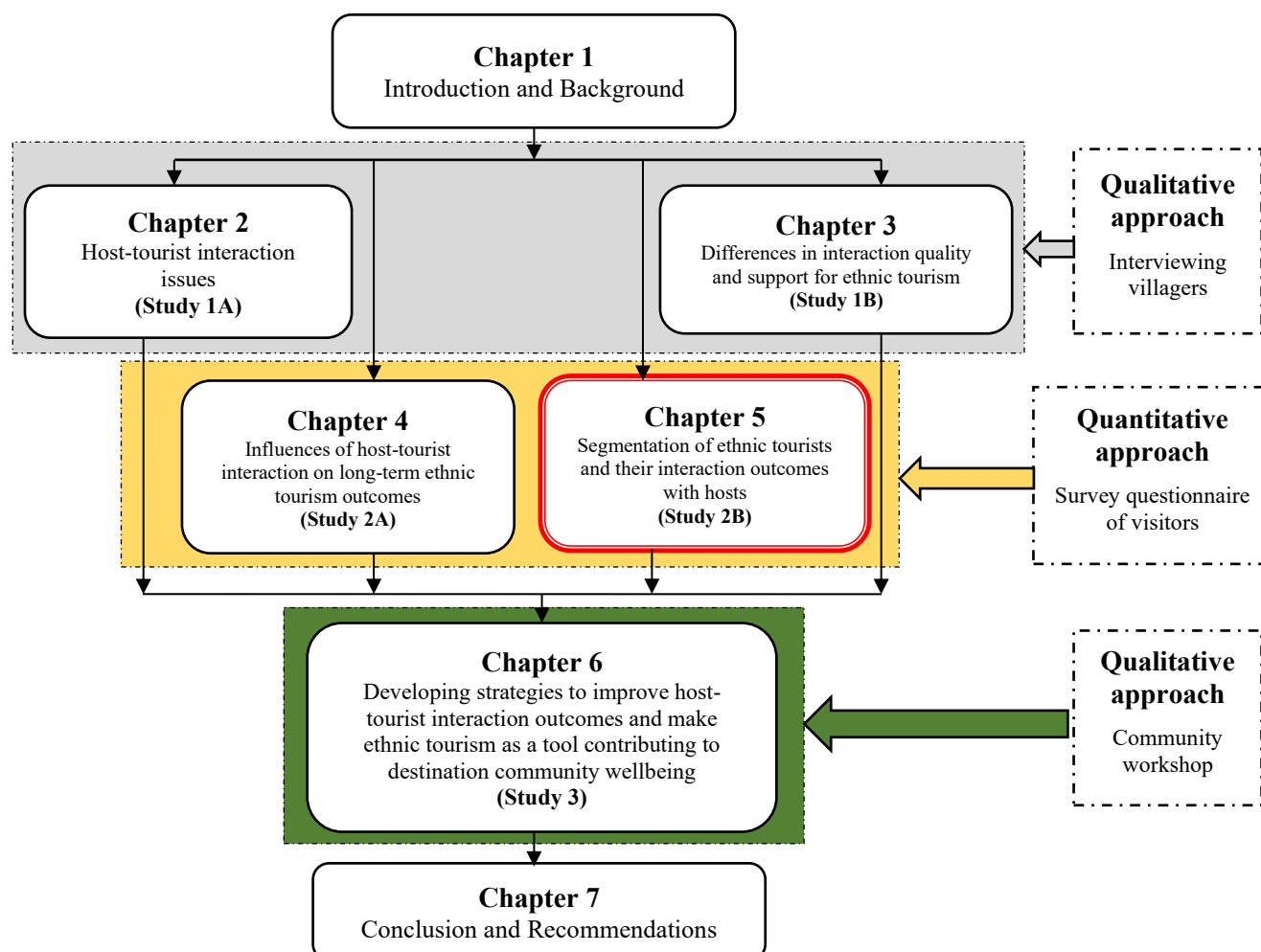
In addition, the survey was conducted in two (Lak, Buon Buon) of the four ethnic places during Lunar New Year holiday - peak season in the Central Highlands as well as Vietnam. Therefore, domestic tourists' evaluation about the quality of interactions might be biased due to participating in ethnic tourism activities in rush, service price increase, and lack of tourism staff.

CHAPTER 5

SEGMENTATION OF ETHNIC TOURISTS AND THEIR INTERACTION OUTCOMES WITH HOSTS IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS, VIETNAM (STUDY 2B)

As shown by the red box in the thesis structure, this chapter presents Study 2B of the PhD thesis. The main purpose of this chapter is to address the fourth research objective: *To examine the relationship between tourist motives for visiting ethnic tourism destinations and the nature and quality of interactions, attitudinal and behavioural outcomes, and perceptions towards long-term outcomes of ethnic tourism.* By analysing 438 valid questionnaire responses, this chapter presents segmentation of domestic tourists based on their travel motivation. More specifically, three PERSONAS provide a summary profile of each segment based on their distinguishing socio-demographic and trip characteristics, differences in host-tourist interactions, and perception of their experience as well as ethnic tourism outcomes. Such information will be useful for the next study (Study 3 in the next chapter) to prioritise target segment(s) according to community aspirations.

This chapter is ready to submit to the Advances in Southeast Asian Studies.



Chapter 5

5.1 Introduction

Understanding trends in tourist demand is one of the most fundamental requirements for successful destination tourism product development, management and planning (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2011). The UNWTO strongly noted that no destination can establish a product development portfolio without; (1) an extensive system for the collection, analysis, and interpretation of visitor statistics; and (2) regular market research and ad hoc studies into the scale, structure, profile, characteristics, and trends in major source markets. Therefore, for successful destination management and planning, the destination management organisation (DMO) and other stakeholders need to conduct research on analysing markets, profiling existing tourists, and identifying potential tourists (Morrison, 2019).

Ethnic tourism is a vital tool to alleviate rural poverty (Lor et al., 2019) by helping to improve the local economy and assist in cultural heritage preservation and natural conservation (Xie, 2011; Yang, 2007; Yang & Wall, 2009b). Additionally, ethnic tourism contributes to enhancing social interaction between hosts and tourists by creating a space in which to understand each other (Su et al., 2014). Ethnic tourists play central roles in minimising negative cultural impacts and constructing a rewarding cross-cultural experience between themselves and ethnic minorities (Yang, 2007). However, positive outcomes only happen if tourists actively participate in ethnic tourism activities and are aware of cultural differences and how they respond to the locals in different tourism settings (Fan, Tsaur, et al., 2020). Travel motivation is closely linked to tourist behaviours (MacInnes et al., 2022; Song & Bae, 2018) and affects their on-site experiences (P. L. Pearce, 2005a). Therefore, tourist segmentation based on travel motivation is helpful for host communities to know what tourists are seeking and understand their diverse preferences when prioritising markets and providing ethnic tourism products (Yang, 2012).

The Central Highlands encompasses five provinces: Gia Lai, Kon Tum, Dak Lak, Dak Nong, and Lam Dong. Besides many similarities among the five provinces – located in the same region with similar natural and cultural resources in general, each province possesses its own distinctive features. Typically, there is one or two dominant ethnic minority group(s) representing a certain province; for example, the Jarai in Gia Lai, Bana and Xo-dang in Kon Tum, Ede and M'nong in Dak Lak, M'nong in Dak Nong, and K'Ho and Churu in Lam Dong. Diversity among ethnic minority groups is a core element of the *Master Plan for Tourism Development to 2020 with Vision to 2030* in the Central Highlands (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT), 2013) which aims to increase visitor numbers and contribute to cultural preservation.

During the period of 2015-2019, the number of domestic tourist arrivals increased gradually with an average annual growth rate of 10.9% (see Table 5.1). The percentage of domestic tourists accounted for 92.5% of the total and the annual regional tourism revenue growth

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rate was approximately 10.5% during this period (compiled from reports of five Departments of Culture Sports and Tourism, 2020). It is understandable that the current state of the Central Highlands' tourism industry depends very much on the domestic market. In 2022, there was a significant recovery in Vietnamese domestic tourism post-COVID 19 with the number of domestic visitors totalling 101.3 million people, surpassing the 2019 figure by 19.2% (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT), 2022). In reality, despite great advantages of both potential tourist markets and tourism resources, the regional tourism industry is still under-developed (Duong et al., 2022). Therefore, it is necessary to understand the domestic market for developing ethnic tourism in the Central Highlands, further addressing the focus of Vietnam's tourism development which has emphasised cultural and social sustainability objectives (Bui & Phi, 2022).

Table 5.1

Number of domestic tourist arrivals to the Central Highlands (2015 – 2019)

Province	Year				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Kon Tum	159,243	193,655	226,150	267,850	277,000
Gia Lai	203,944	395,805	490,258	659,400	830,000
Dak Lak	506,000	563,000	636,000	736,000	870,000
Dak Nong	192,353	244,000	292,500	296,400	376,500
Lam Dong	4,880,000	5,130,000	5,500,000	6,020,500	6,617,000
Total	5,941,540	6,526,460	7,144,908	7,980,150	8,970,500
<i>Note.</i> Compiled from <i>Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism</i> of five provinces in the Central Highlands					

By profiling the existing domestic market, this study aims to identify tourist segments who are visiting the Central Highlands. As a result, the study can inform decisions about prioritising potential markets for this region. Insight into the domestic market will assist marketers and local policymakers in designing and promoting ethnic tourism products that best suit domestic market needs and match the local community's capacity and aspirations. Furthermore, the study findings will inform future studies in terms of profiling and segmenting ethnic tourists. Overall, the present study was driven by two research questions;

1. What travel motivation-based segments can be identified within the ethnic tourist market to the Central Highlands, Vietnam, and
2. Which segment(s) should be selected as target market(s) in developing ethnic tourism that contributes to improved interaction outcomes and local community wellbeing?

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5.2 Literature review

5.2.1 *Ethnic tourists as the Other*

Ethnic tourism is marketed as a form of tourism motivated by the search for ‘quaint’ customs and ‘exotic’ cultural experiences through interaction with a distinctive ethnic minority (Smith, 1989; Xie, 2011; Yang, 2012). Tourists expect to pursue tourism activities that bring them closer to the ethnic host’s values (Lama & Sarkhel, 2022). However, Yang (2011) argues that ethnic tourists are not only travelling to observe and explore ‘exotic’ cultural expression in remote villages but that the category of ethnic tourists includes those who consume ethnic products and services at visitor attractions. Similarly, Moscardo and Pearce (1999) categorised four ethnic tourist groups who behave differently at a destination in terms of preferred tourism experiences. The *Ethnic Tourism Connection* group enthusiastically embraces cross-cultural interaction while the *Passive Cultural Learning* group is highly interested in learning ethnic culture but reluctant to directly interact with ethnic people. Another group – *Ethnic Products and Activities* – is interested in fun and activities rather than interacting with ethnic people. By contrast, the *Low Ethnic Tourism* group is hardly interested in ethnic tourism and just visits ethnic destinations as a part of a package tour or with someone else in their party who wanted to visit.

According to the ‘host gaze’ concept, ethnic people gaze at tourists as the *Other* visiting their villages. The host gaze is based on how locals perceive tourist behaviours and attitudes towards them (Maoz, 2006). In this line of thought, there is always a distance between hosts and tourists due to their cultural backgrounds (Pearce, 1982; Pearce et al., 1998; Yang, 2011), especially in the ethnic tourism context. The distance influences how both gaze at each other and how they get involved in interaction (Moufakkir & Reisinger, 2013; Tasci & Severt, 2017). For the scope of this study, information about tourist markets can be useful in portraying a full picture about the *Other* that helps the hosts answer the question, “*who are the Other visiting our village?*”. As a result, the hosts may have a better understanding of which market segments to prioritise and which ethnic tourism products best meet the needs of these tourists, thus maximising tourist experience outcomes and simultaneously benefiting from ethnic tourism.

Internationally, a few studies present brief characteristics of ethnic tourists and their preferences and satisfaction with ethnic tourism experiences (see Table 5.2), but the body of research is still limited. More specifically, earlier research (e.g., Moscardo & Pearce, 1999; Smith, 1989; Xie & Wall, 2002) showed that there are few interactions between hosts and tourists - that tourists seemed less interested in direct interactions with hosts, whereas recent studies indicate an increase in tourist desire for interacting and participating in different ethnic tourism activities. However, some tourists are disappointed with those interactions in which they are involved. Therefore, by focusing on host-tourist interactions, the current study attempts to understand how different tourist groups interact with the hosts in the ethnic tourism context and whether tourist

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experience outcomes differ between these groups. Empirically, this study will assist both local villagers and DMOs in better understanding the market in order to provide greater experience outcomes for both tourists and the destination community.

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Table 5.2

Main studies about ethnic tourists

Year	Author	Destination	Ethnic minority groups	Methodology	Ethnic tourist characteristics/profile
1989	Smith	The Alaskan Arctic	Eskimo	n/a	Seldom demanding or critical Few tourists have face-to-face interaction with Eskimos
1999	Moscardo and Pearce	Australia	Tjapukai Aboriginal people	Quantitative method (1,556 surveys)	Four ethnic tourist groups: the <i>Ethnic Tourism Connection</i> , the <i>Passive Cultural Learning</i> , the <i>Ethnic Products and Activities</i> , and the <i>Low Ethnic Tourism</i> group of all ages; Both international and domestic tourists; High levels of interest in ethnic tourism products and experiences across all four groups; Little interest in direct interaction with Aboriginal people.
2002	Xie and Wall	Hainan, China	Li	Quantitative method (586 surveys)	Both international and domestic tourists: Over 95% of respondents are Han (from mainland China); Mostly in package tours and pay most expenses prior to the trip, visit the folk village as a part of recreational programme; Brief interaction with the hosts; Interested in ethnic cultures but little knowledge of ethnicity; Majority of tourists' ages ranged from 20-40, high education level, administrative and governmental staff
2012	Yang	Yunnan, China	Mousuo	Qualitative (55 interviews) and quantitative (274 surveys) methods	Only domestic tourists: 97.1% are Han Chinese; Majority of tourists' ages ranged 20-40, 60.2 % married, 67.9% had university or higher degrees, almost all respondents stayed overnight in the area; Cultural authenticity is not generally a concern for tourists who are mainly in search of enjoyment or relaxation; High satisfaction rating for natural environment, ethnic villages, architecture, cultural shows and guesthouses/inns

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Table 5.2 (Continued)

2013	Pratt et al.	North East Fiji	Indigenous Fijians	Qualitative methods: semi-structured interviews, personal observation, and review of personal travel blogs	Come from diverse backgrounds and at all ages; Only international tourists; Be adventurous, desire interaction, seek education and want authenticity; Tourists experienced a unique insight into indigenous Fijian culture, feels life-changing, knew the difference between a ' <i>need</i> ' and a ' <i>want</i> '.
2014(a)	Trupp	Thailand	Akha and Karen	Qualitative: interviews (28 villager interviews) and participant observation	Akha village (Jorpakha): Entirely international tourists; Most tourists participate organised tour, average length of visiting: 15 minutes; Tourism activities: photographing, souvenir purchasing, excursion tour or tribal village tours. Karen village (Muang Pham): Both Thai tourists and international; Average length of visiting of several hours; at least 90% of tourists stay overnight; Main visit time: December-February and July-September. Tourism activities: elephant riding, bamboo rafting, visiting the caves, weaving products observing, homestay, multiple-day trekking or jungle tours.
2018	Bott	Sapa, Vietnam	Ethnic/Indigenous women (e.g., Red Dao, Hmong)	Mixed methods: ethnographic fieldwork, review online marketing publications, participant observation, semi- structured interviews (12 participants)	Tourist market: domestic, Asian (predominantly Chinese) and Western tourists; Tourism activities: handicraft purchasing, homestay, and trekking tours; Tourists experienced disappointment because of the loss of 'authentic' lifestyles and behaviours of Indigenous women who were not faithfully replicating their portrayals as passive and innocent as in advertisements and guidebooks.

Note. Elaborated by the author

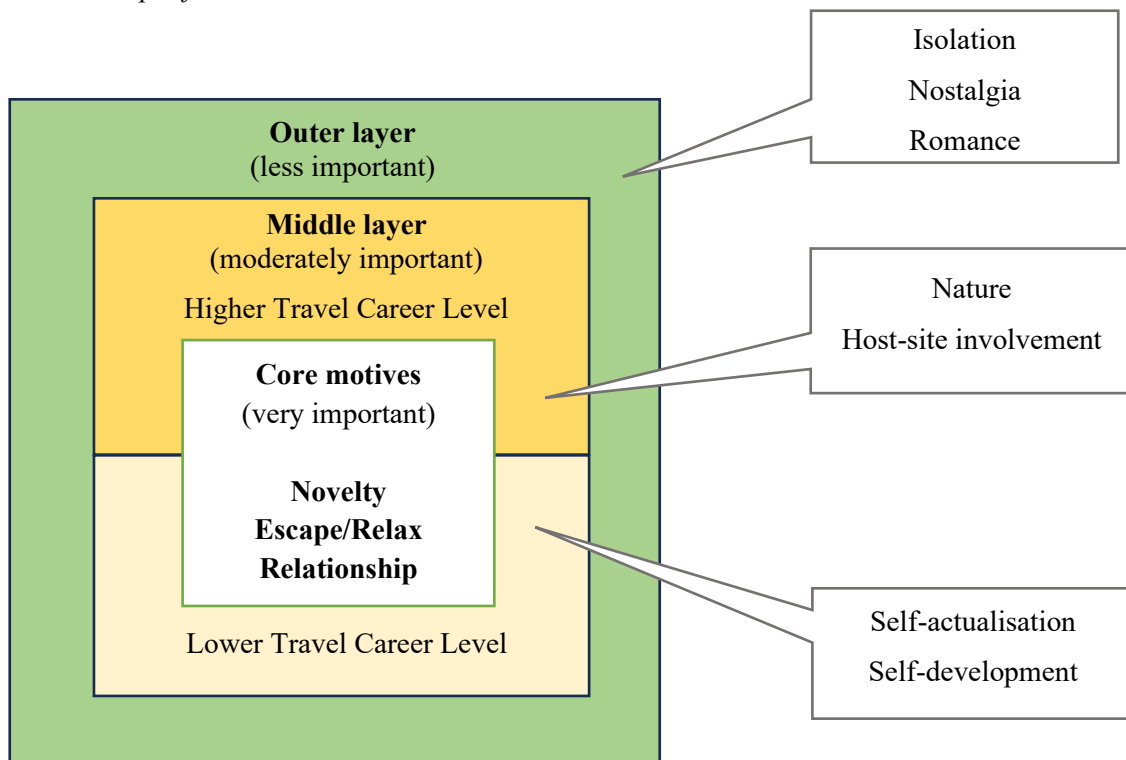
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5.2.2 Travel motivation

Motivation is fundamental in tourism studies and acts as a driving force behind all tourist behaviours (Pearce, 2019). Significant tourism studies have proposed different theoretical frameworks of travel motivation such as Maslow's need hierarchy (Maslow, 1943), Iso-Ahola's escape-seeking dichotomy (Iso-Ahola, 1982), the push-pull model (Dann, 1981), the Travel Career Ladder (Pearce, 1993), then the Travel Career Pattern (TCP) model (Pearce & Lee, 2005). Predicated on the premise that visitors have more than one level of travel motivation and that their motivational patterns will change with travel experience, Pearce and Lee (2005) developed the Travel Career Pattern (TCP) model. According to the concept of TCP, travel motivation encompasses three layers (see Figure 5.1). The core motivation layer includes *novelty*, *escape/relaxation*, and strengthening *relationships*. The middle motivation layer is moderately important, including external (e.g., *nature seeking* and *host-site involvement*) and internal (e.g., *self-actualisation*, *personal (self) development*, and *stimulation*) motivations. In the outer layer are the least important motivations; *romance*, *autonomy*, *security*, *recognition*, *isolation*, and *nostalgia*. It is noted in TCP, that tourists are driven to travel by multiple biological and socio-cultural motives and the patterns of travel motivations shift within a layer and/or among layers as travel experience increases (Oktadiana & Agarwal, 2022; P. L. Pearce, 2005a; Wen, 2017).

Figure 5.1

The concept of Travel Career Pattern



Note. Pearce and Lee (2005)

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Pearce (2019) emphasised that visitors do not only visit a place with standard objective destination features but also places where there are tourism activities and products that suit their personal psychological and motivational profile. Travel motivation is linked to preferences for tourism activities, subsequently affecting destination choice and on-site visitor experiences (Li et al., 2021; P. L. Pearce, 2005a). In the ethnic tourism context, ‘true’ ethnic visitors are motivated to actively interact with locals and experience the local way of life (Xie, 2011), while other visitors may travel to enjoy local scenery, ethnic architecture, and local lodging (Yang, 2012). With multiple travel motivations, the order of importance influences how involved visitors are in interactions with hosts at ethnic sites (Pearce, 2019; Wall & Mathieson, 2006).

5.2.3 *Interacting with hosts as the travel motivation*

According to P. L. Pearce (2005a), *host-site involvement* is one of four central motivation factors which can be understood as the ‘skeleton’ of travel motivation. In the original work, the authors pointed out that ‘experiencing different cultures’ and ‘meeting the locals’ are motivations aligned with *host-site involvement* that are evaluated as important by all travellers - especially, those who have more travel experience (Pearce & Lee, 2005).

Host-tourist interaction is a core element of ethnic tourism (Wong et al., 2019). Su et al.’s work (2014) indicated that an ethnic encounter is a primary motivation for tourists to visit an ethnic destination and also contributes to a satisfactory on-site experience. The interactions between hosts and tourists occur in different physical settings with diverse content reflecting a wide range of intensity levels (de Kadt, 1979; Su et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2017). The greater the cultural distance, the more tourists are motivated to interact with the locals (Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Lin, 2017). Yet, the more contact tourists have, the more negative feelings that can be generated due to interaction difficulties from misunderstanding and misinterpretation (Pearce, 1982; Reisinger & Turner, 2003). While ‘quaint’ customs and ‘exotic’ culture may satisfy tourists’ motivations of *novelty seeking* and *host-site involvement*, they can cause negative outcomes in host-tourist interactions, thereby influencing tourists’ attitudes as well as behavioural intentions towards the hosts and the destination.

A mismatch between ethnic resources and the targeted market has been often reported, leading to a gradual loss of authenticity in ethnic cultural resources, overcrowding, over-commercialisation (Yang, 2011), and misunderstanding of ethnic resources being promoted (Wong et al., 2022). Therefore, it is important to identify tourist segments based on travel motivations to better understand the extent of tourists’ on-site experiences and outcomes among different segments. With respect to host-tourist interaction, motivation-based segmentation also helps to explore whether there are differences in tourists’ interaction outcomes between those who are motivated to interact with the locals and those who are not. Such information can be used by the locals and DMOs to develop a market segmentation strategy that maximises positive tourist

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experiences and minimises negative tourism impacts on the hosts and the ethnic destination community.

5.2.4 Segmentation

As Dolnicar stated, “tourists are not all the same” (2008, p. 129), therefore the tourist market to an ethnic destination can and will be heterogeneous. Market segmentation is used as a strategic tool to better understand the characteristics of tourism market segments, whether they are labelled as geo-travellers (Boley & Nickerson, 2013), ecotourists, sustainable tourists, environmentally friendly tourists (Dolnicar et al., 2008), cultural tourists (McKercher, 2002), or ethnic tourists (Moscardo & Pearce, 1999). Without a clear understanding of the target markets’ characteristics and their travel motivations to a particular destination, marketing efforts are less effective (Morrison, 2019).

There are two main categories of tourist market segmentation: *a priori* (common sense) and *posteriori* (post hoc, data driven) (Formica & Uysal, 2001). According to Dolnicar (2008), a *priori* segmentation splits tourists into segments based on selected descriptors that are known in advance and can be driven by experience with the local market or practical considerations. By contrast, *post hoc* segmentation uses multivariate analyses to seek similar rating patterns in responses across a range of variables. Although a *priori* approach is the most common form of segmentation (Dolnicar, 2008), Haley (1995) criticises this approach as being merely descriptive and common variables used (e.g., geographic, demographic) are poor predictors of behaviour.

Travel motivation has been well-used to segment markets in tourism research (e.g., Formica & Uysal, 1998; Guttentag et al., 2018; Jopp et al., 2022). Yet, research on tourist segmentation in the ethnic tourism context is still scarce, with the exception of Moscardo and Pearce’s work (1999). By conducting *post hoc* segmentation, the current study will classify different tourist groups on the basis of the importance they place on various motivations for visiting an ethnic destination, especially interacting with the locals. Further, this study will explore whether tourist experience outcomes differ among these groups.

5.3 Methodology

This analysis is based on results of the quantitative visitor survey employed for Study 2 and the data collection procedure was reported in Chapter 4. In the current chapter, the importance ratings for the travel motivation question adapted from the Travel Career Pattern (Pearce & Lee, 2005) were employed to segment different groups of tourists travelling to the Central Highlands. The k-means cluster analysis procedure in SPSS Statistics 28.0 was used to group domestic visitors based on their travel motivations. Multiple discriminant analysis was employed to validate clusters and identify which motivation items most effectively discriminated between the clusters. Chi-square and one-way ANOVA tests were undertaken to examine differences between

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clusters in terms of demographic and trip characteristics, their interactions with hosts, and tourism experience outcomes.

5.4 Results

5.4.1 Tourist segments based on travel motivations

Market segmentation in tourism has been commonly conducted by using a factor-cluster approach (Guttentag et al., 2018). However, Dolnicar criticised that “factor-cluster analysis never leads to better segmentation solutions than analysing the original items because much of the information contained in the original variables – up to 70 per cent – is lost when compressing variables into factors” (2020, p. 47). Therefore, this study employed direct *k*-means clustering of original travel motivation items to carry out market segmentation. The study used 13 out of 14 TCP motivations (Pearce & Lee, 2005) which are relevant to ethnic tourism context (Table 5.3). Similar to the work of Oktadiana et al. (2017) and Wen (2017), one motivation was removed due to the specific research context. More specifically, *relationship (security)* which used in the original work (Pearce & Lee, 2005) was excluded from the questionnaire because the author considered its potential sensitivity to cultural differences. It can be problematic to ask domestic visitors about “feeling personally safe and secure” when travelling to ethnic villages in the intra-national context.

Table 5.3

Travel motivation statements aligned with TCP

Questionnaire statements	TCP layers and motivational factors
Core motivation	
Experiencing something new and different	<i>Novelty</i>
Taking a rest or escaping my daily routine	<i>Relaxation/Escape</i>
Strengthening relationships with others (family, friends, colleagues)	<i>Relationship (Strengthen)</i>
Middle layer	
Viewing local natural scenery	<i>Nature</i>
Interacting with local people	<i>Host-site involvement</i>
Learning about ethnic minority culture	<i>Self-development</i>
Gaining a new perspective on life	<i>Self-actualisation</i>
Outer layer	
Experiencing thrills and excitement	<i>Stimulation</i>
Having others know that I have been here	<i>Recognition</i>
Experiencing something romantic	<i>Romance</i>
Doing things my own way	<i>Autonomy</i>
Experiencing the peace and calm	<i>Isolation</i>
Thinking about and reflecting about good times and past memories	<i>Nostalgia</i>

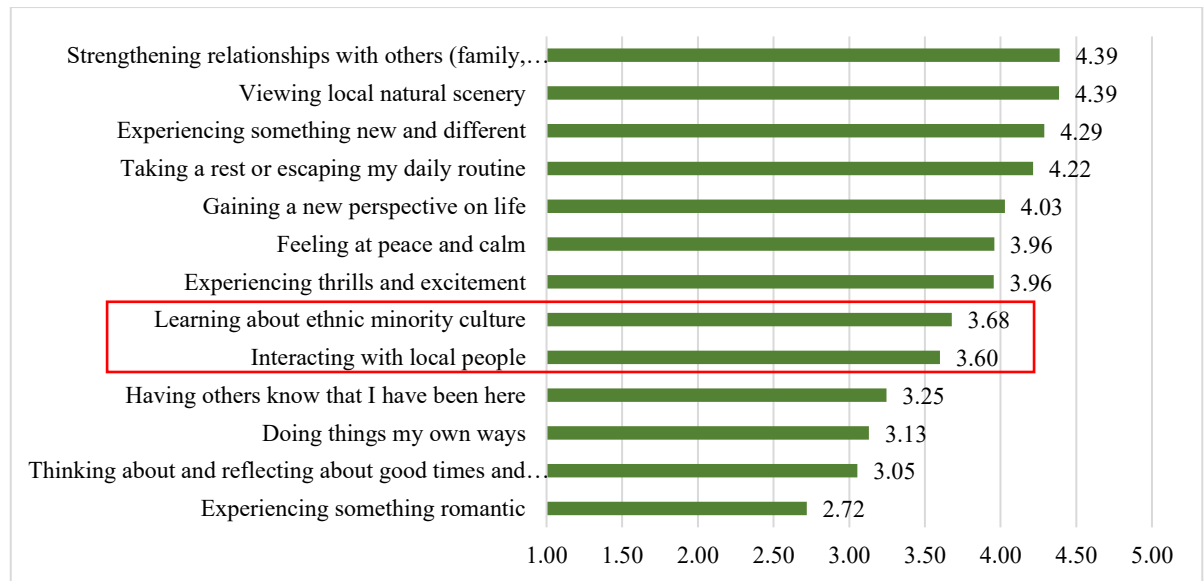
Note. Pearce and Lee (2005)

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Figure 5.2 presents respondents' travel motivations ratings. Unsurprisingly, three core motivations (*novelty*, *escape/relaxation*, strengthening *relationship*) were rated highest by respondents, but interestingly, *nature* was also the highest rated (4.39). “Interacting with local people” (*host-site involvement*) and “learning about ethnic minority culture” (*self-development*) were rated as moderately important (3.60 and 3.68 respectively). Consistent with Pearce and Lee's findings (2005), the outer layer motives of TCP such as *nostalgia*, and *romance* were rated lowest.

Figure 5.2

Mean importance ratings of travel motivations in general



Note: Rating scale ranged from 1 = *very unimportant* to 5 = *very important*

By running *k*-means cluster analysis, two, three, and four cluster solutions were examined. The three-cluster solution was selected because it provided a relatively even spread of respondents and the clearest interpretation. The three clusters were named *Explorers*, *Seekers*, and *Enjoyers* based on the mean scores on travel motive items (see Table 5.4). The *Explorers* were the smallest segment (27.9%) and rated the middle layer of travel motivations highest. For example, the most important motivations for travelling to the Central Highlands included “gaining a new perspective on life” (*self-actualisation*, mean = 4.11), “learning about ethnic minority culture” (*self-development*, 4.04), “viewing local natural scenery” (*nature*, 4.03), and “interacting with local people” (*host-site involvement*, 3.95). This segment was labelled as *Explorers* because they can be described as ‘true’ ethnic visitors based on their strong motives for exploring local natural and cultural values.

Seekers were the second largest segment (35.8%), with high ratings for most motivations including core (4.59 – 4.61), middle (3.97 – 4.45), and outer layer of travel motivations (3.4 – 4.55). Their ratings were mostly higher than other segments in all motivations, reflecting that they were seeking many things in their trip to satisfy a range of desires. They were especially motivated

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by “taking a rest or escaping daily routine” (*escape*, 4.69), and “viewing local natural scenery” (*nature*, 4.67). Importantly they rated the importance of learning about ethnic minority culture (4.04) and interacting with local people (3.95) as high as *Explorers* and significantly higher than *Enjoyers*.

The last group – *Enjoyers* – is the largest segment (36.3%) and they rated core motives as most important - such as *escape* (4.69), strengthening *relationship* (4.61), and *novelty* (4.59). “Interacting with local people” (*Host-site involvement*) and “learning about ethnic minority culture” (*self-development*) were both rated as the least important (2.93) and significantly lower than the other two segments.

Table 5.4

Motivation-based segments of ethnic visitors to the Central Highlands

Motivation		Total	Clusters			
			Mean rating			Post hoc
Items		100%	1 (27.9%) <i>Explorers</i>	2 (35.8%) <i>Seekers</i>	3 (36.3%) <i>Enjoyers</i>	
Core motivation	Strengthening relationships with others (family, friends, colleagues)	4.39	3.61	4.61	4.78	SE & EN > EX
	Experiencing something new and different	4.29	3.68	4.59	4.46	SE & EN > EX
	Taking a rest or escaping my daily routine	4.22	3.54	4.69	4.30	SE > EN > EX
Middle layer	Viewing local natural scenery	4.39	4.03	4.67	4.38	SE > EN > EX
	Learning about ethnic minority culture	3.68	4.04	4.13	2.93	SE & EX > EN
	Interacting with local people	3.60	3.95	3.97	2.93	SE & EX > EN
	Gaining a new perspective on life	4.03	4.11	4.45	3.50	SE > EX > EN
	Experiencing thrills and excitement	3.96	3.52	4.37	3.82	SE > EN > EX
Outer layer	Having others know that I have been here	3.25	2.55	3.4	3.64	SE & EN > EX
	Experiencing something romantic	2.72	2.35	3.79	1.88	SE > EX > EN
	Doing things my own ways	3.13	3.28	4.19	1.92	SE > EX > EN
	Feeling at peace and calm	3.96	3.65	4.55	3.56	SE > EX & EN
	Thinking about and reflecting about good times and past memories	3.05	2.83	4.12	2.09	SE > EX > EN

Note. Rating scale ranged from 1 = Very unimportant to 5 = Very important

Explorers: EX, Seekers = SE, Enjoyers = EN

To validate the three clusters, multiple discriminant analysis was carried out. The analysis generated two discriminant functions as shown in Table 5.5. Overall, 96.6% of original grouped cases and 95.2% of the cross-validated grouped cases were correctly classified, that demonstrating a high hit ratio (Srihadi et al., 2016). These results substantiate classification accuracy. Wilks' lambda and F test results revealed significant differences on all motivation items (Formica & Uysal, 1998). Out of the 13 items, three motivational items were found to have the most discriminating power: “doing things my own way” (Wilks lambda = 0.488, F value = 216.749, sig. = <.001), “experiencing something romantic” (Wilks lambda = 0.525, F value = 186.970, sig. = <.001), and “thinking about and reflecting about good times and past memories” (Wilks lambda

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= 0.623, F value = 125.217, sig. = <.001). The results align with key principles of TCP theory, demonstrating that the importance of outer layer motives varies across tourists which allows to distinguish different groups of tourists, while core motives are important to a wider market of tourists. In other words, the core motives are common backbone for all kinds of travel experiences (P. L. Pearce, 2005a, 2019).

Table 5.5

Summary of the discriminant analysis results

Function	Eigenvalue	Percent variance	Cumulative percent	Canonical correlation	Wilks' lambda	Chi-square	df	p-value
1	3.010	68.4	68.4	0.866	0.104	919.959	26	<.001
2	1.391	31.6	100.0	0.763	0.418	354.717	12	<.001

Note. 96.6% of original grouped cases correctly classified
95.2% of cross-validated grouped cases correctly classified

5.4.2 Who are the Others visiting the Central Highlands?

There are no statistical differences on gender and ethnicity factors across the three segments, but significant differences were found on other demographic factors (Table 5.6).

Seekers were most likely to be aged 21-30 (45%) and *Enjoyers* to be aged 31-40 (43.7%), while *Explorers* had the highest proportion in 41-50 age category (19%). *Enjoyers* were significantly more likely to be married (64.9%), *Explorers* to be living with another (37.9%), and *Seekers* most likely to be single (28.2%). *Seekers* were significantly more likely to be from Ho Chi Minh city (34.9%), *Enjoyers* from Dak Lak/Buon Ma Thuot (21.2%) and *Explorers* from Lam Dong/Dalat (23.3%).

Enjoyers were significantly more likely to have only primary or high school education (47%), while *Seekers* were more likely to have an undergraduate degree (66.4%), and *Explorers* to have graduate degree or higher (21.6%). *Enjoyers* were more likely to be in small-scale family business (37.7%) and casual workers (20.5%). *Explorers* were more likely to be students (25%) and *Seekers* were mostly office staff (25.5%).

Enjoyers were most likely to have a medium income of 5-10 million VND/month (58.3%). *Seekers* were more likely to have a higher income of 10-18m (34.2%), and *Explorers* were likely to have a low income of 5m or less than 5m (25.9%). Within the last three years, *Explorers* were more likely to travel on 1-3 trips (33%), *Enjoyers* most likely to have had 4-6 trips (39.7%), and *Seekers* most like to have had 11-15 trips.

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Table 5.6

Segments' profile by demographic information

Profile variable	Explorers	Seekers	Enjoyers	χ^2	p-value	Profile variable	Explorers	Seekers	Enjoyers	χ^2	p-value
Percentage						Percentage					
Gender				5.256	.511	Education level				103.164	<.001
Male	38.8	43.0	45.7			Primary, secondary school, or high school	11.2	11.4	47.0		
Female	59.5	55.0	54.3			Diploma	12.1	12.1	22.5		
Non-binary/third gender	1.7	1.3	0.0			Undergraduate	55.2	66.4	27.8		
Prefer not to say	0.0	0.7	0.0			Graduate and higher	21.6	10.1	2.6		
Age				19.272	0.037	Occupation				80.087	<.001
Under 20 or 20	2.6	2.7	0.0			Governmental/Provincial employee	12.9	9.4	10.6		
21-30	38.8	45.0	31.1			Office staff	18.1	25.5	14.6		
31-40	32.8	40.3	43.7			Small-scale family business	25.0	29.5	37.7		
41-50	19.0	8.7	17.9			Causal workers	3.4	4.0	20.5		
51-60	6.0	2.0	6.0			Farmers	1.7	2.0	6.0		
Over 60	0.8	1.3	1.3			Students	25.0	17.4	2.0		
Marital status				41.316	<.001	Retired	0.9	1.3	4.6		
Married	41.4	43.6	64.9			Other (Please specify)	12.9	10.7	4.0		
Living with another	37.9	24.8	9.9			Income per month (VND)				45.646	<0.001
Single	13.8	28.2	19.2			Less than 5,000,000 or 5,000,000	25.9	22.1	9.3		
Divorced/Separated	4.3	2.7	4.6			5,000,001 - 10,000,000	37.9	28.9	58.3		
Widowed	2.6	0.7	1.3			10,000,001 - 18,000,000	16.4	34.2	26.5		

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Table 5.6 (Continued)

Place of origin	75.483	<.001	Above 18,000,000	19.8	14.8	6.0
Hanoi	7.8	10.7	11.3	Travelling experience within last 3 years		
Ho Chi Minh	20.7	34.9	15.9		39.275	<.001
Da Nang	4.3	4.7	0.0	No any trip	2.8	2.9
Khanh Hoa/Nha Trang	4.3	4.7	5.3	1-3 Trips	33.0	28.8
Kon Tum/Kon Tum	2.6	2.7	9.9	4-6 Trips	29.2	18.0
Gia Lai/Plaiku	4.3	2.0	5.3	7-10 Trips	22.6	20.9
Dak Lak/Buon Ma Thuot	11.2	6.0	21.2	11-15 Trips	4.7	12.2
Dak Nong/Gia Nghia	1.7	2.7	9.9	16-20 Trips	2.8	9.4
Lam Dong/Da Lat	23.3	14.1	10.6	21 or more	4.7	7.9
Other	19.8	17.5	10.6			0.0
Ethnicity	19.219	.378				
Kinh	95.7	91.3	90.1			
Other	4.3	8.7	9.9			

Note. Elaborated by the author

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5.4.3 Why and how did visitors come?

While *Seekers* and *Enjoyers* were most likely to be visiting the Central Highlands for holiday/leisure (65.1%, 66.2%, respectively), *Enjoyers* were significantly more likely than other two segments to be visiting friends/family (27.8%). While most respondents in the *Explorers* group also visited for holiday/leisure (50.9%), they were most likely of all three segments to be on a business/professional trip (23.3%), especially when compared to *Enjoyers* (4.6%) (see Table 5.7).

Explorers (86.2%) and *Seekers* (85.2%) were more likely to visit Lam Dong, while *Enjoyers* were more likely to travel to Dak Lak (88.7%). While all three segments tended to use social media (Facebook, Instagram, Trip advisor, personal blog, ...) as one of the main sources of information, *Enjoyers* (79.5%) were more likely to do so than *Explorers* (56.9%) and *Seekers* (67.1%). Additionally, *Enjoyers* (62.9%) were significantly more likely to have travelled to the region based on their previous experience when compared to *Explorers* (45.7%) and *Seekers* (53.7%). *Enjoyers* (84.8%) were also more likely to choose word of mouth as a useful source of information than *Explorers* (53.4%) and *Seekers* (46.3%). Meanwhile *Seekers* were more likely to search for information via advertising, travel article or documentaries (42.3%) and travel agents (10.7%).

Enjoyers (54.3%) were significantly more likely than the other two segments to have travelled with family while *Seekers* were most likely to have travelled with a group of friends (55.7%) and *Explorers* were the most likely to have travelled alone (19%). *Enjoyers* (94.7%) were most likely to have arranged the trip to the Central Highlands by themselves while *Seekers* (27.5%) were more likely to buy tour package when compared to the other two segments.

Table 5.7

Trip planning among three segments

Variables (N = 416)	Variables	Explorers (Percentage)	Seekers (Percentage)	Enjoyers (Percentage)	χ^2	p-value
Main purpose of visit	Holiday/leisure	50.9	65.1	66.2	52.461	<.001
	Business/professional	23.3	11.4	4.6		
	Events	4.3	0.7	1.3		
	Visit friends and family	11.2	14.8	27.8		
	Other	10.3	8.1	0.0		
Visited place	Kon Tum (N=152)	26.7	40.9	39.7	6.729	.035
	Gia Lai (N=61)	8.6	18.1	15.9	4.991	.082
	Dak Lak (N=289)	57.8	59.1	88.7	41.557	<.001
	Dak Nong (N=31)	5.2	7.4	9.3	1.600	.449
	Lam Dong (N=332)	86.2	85.2	69.5	15.556	<.001
Source of information	Been here before (N=228)	45.7	53.7	62.9	7.975	.019
	Word of mouth (N=259)	53.4	46.3	84.8	52.525	<.001
	Travel agents or tour wholesalers (N=25)	6.0	10.7	1.3	11.766	.003

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Table 5.7 (Continued)

Travel companion	Advertising, travel article or documentaries (TV, radio, movies) (N=143)	32.8	42.3	27.8	7.145	.028
	Travel book, guide or brochure (N=25)	9.5	9.4	0	15.157	<.001
	Social media (Facebook, Instagram, Trip advisor, personal blog, ...)	56.9	67.1	79.5	15.849	<.001
	(N=286)					
	Online websites (N=33)	11.2	8.7	4.6	4.078	.130
	Alone (N=40)	19.0	8.7	3.3	18.71	<.001
	With family (N=163)	28.4	32.2	54.3	23.135	<.001
	With incentive trip (company) (N=47)	19.8	10.1	6	12.939	.002
	With a group of friends (N=197)	41.4	55.7	43.7	6.634	.036
	With tour group (N=24)	9.5	8.1	0.7	11.617	.003
Trip arrangement ^a					33.281	<.001
	Independent	74.1	70.5	94.7		
	Package	22.4	27.5	5.3		

Note. ^a The 'Other' variable was excluded since 3 cells (50%) have expected count less than 5.

In terms of trip characteristics (see Table 5.8), bus was the most common mode of transportation used to get to the Central Highlands by *Explorers* (45.7%) and *Seekers* (48.3%), while *Enjoyers* mostly travelled by private/rental car (40.4%). Understandably, more than one half of the *Enjoyers* (53%) used private/rental car to get around the destination. However, for all three segments, motorbike was the most common mode of transportation within the destination. *Seekers* were more likely than the other segments to travel around by bus (22.8%) while *Explorers* were more likely to use a taxi (25%) or travel on foot (26.7%) within the destination.

Even though the majority of respondents stayed overnight when visiting ethnic sites, *Enjoyers* were least likely (30.5%) to stay overnight, and if they stayed overnight to have stayed for only one (38.1%). *Explorers* (49.5%) and *Seekers* (48.1%) were more likely to stay two nights. *Seekers* mainly spent money on meals, drinks, and food (1,463,000 VND, equivalent to 94 AUD) and entertainment, leisure activities (780,000 VND, equivalent to 50.2 AUD), while *Enjoyers* was more likely to spend on accommodation (1,335,000 VND, equivalent to 86 AUD). Notably, *Seekers* spent double the amount on entertainment and leisure activities compared to the other two segments. Among the three segments, no significant differences were found in spending on tour package options and other separate travel expenditures such as tour guide services, transport, retail shopping and other expenses. Yet it is worth noting that all segments seemed to spend very little on tour guides/tour services which was the lowest expense during their trip, e.g., *Explorers* (109,000 VND, equivalent to 7 AUD), *Seekers* (143,000 VND, equivalent to 9.2 AUD), and *Enjoyers* (81,000 VND, equivalent to 5.2 AUD).

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Table 5.8

Trip making among three segments

Information (N = 416)	Variables	Explorers	Seekers	Enjoyers	χ^2	p-value
			(Percentage)		41.942	<.001
Transportation mode to the Central Highlands (N = 416)	Airplane	11.2	15.4	10.6		
	Bus	45.7	48.3	23.8		
	Private/Rental Car	25.9	16.8	40.4		
	Motorbike	13.8	18.8	25.2		
	Other	3.4	0.7	0		
Transportation mode within the Central Highlands ^a (N = 416)	Bus (N=56)	18.1	22.8	0.7	34.579	<.001
	Private/rental car (N=158)	30.2	28.9	53.0	22.688	<.001
	Taxi (N=71)	25.0	16.8	11.3	8.766	.012
	Motorbike (N=211)	54.3	52.3	46.4	1.906	.386
	On foot (N=79)	26.7	20.1	11.9	9.543	.008
Stay overnight (N = 416)	Yes	85.3	87.2	69.5	17.465	<.001
	No	14.7	12.8	30.5		
Length of stay (N=333)					39.156	<.001
	1 night	26.3	14	38.1		
	2 nights	49.5	48.1	27.6		
	3 nights	9.1	28.7	25.7		
	4-6 nights	8.1	4.7	7.6		
	7-10 nights	2.0	2.3	1		
	11 nights or above	5.0	2.2	0		
Tour package (VND) (N=72)					14.06	.080
	Less than 3,000,000 or 3,000,000	37.5	10	12.5		
	3,000,001 - 5,000,000	33.3	32.5	25		
	5,000,001 - 7,000,000	16.7	40	25.0		
	7,000,001 - 10,000,000	8.3	17.5	37.5		
	Above 10,000,000	4.2	0	0		
Separated expenditure (Average expenditure of the whole group in thousand VND)	Accommodation, including any meals & drinks where you are staying and any amount (N = 270)	804	1,145	1,335	F = 4.017	.019
	Meals, drinks, and food (N = 333)	1,249	1,463	869	F = 10.202	<.001
	Tourism, entertainment, events and other leisure activities (N = 333)	446	780	410	F = 10.117	<.001
	Tour guides/tour services (N = 334)	109	143	81	F = 1.588	.206
	Transport, such as taxis, public transport, petrol, car hire and vehicle repair (N = 337)	944	799	629	F = 2.843	.060
	Retail Shopping - such as souvenirs, gifts, books, clothing, etc. (N= 335)	525	739	533	F = 2.428	.090
	Any other Expenses (N = 336)	259	308	201	F = 1.350	.261

Note. ^a The 'Bike' variable was excluded since 3 cells (50%) have expected count less than 5.

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5.4.4 Where and how did visitors interact with host on-site?

5.4.4.1 Physical settings in which visitors interacted with the hosts

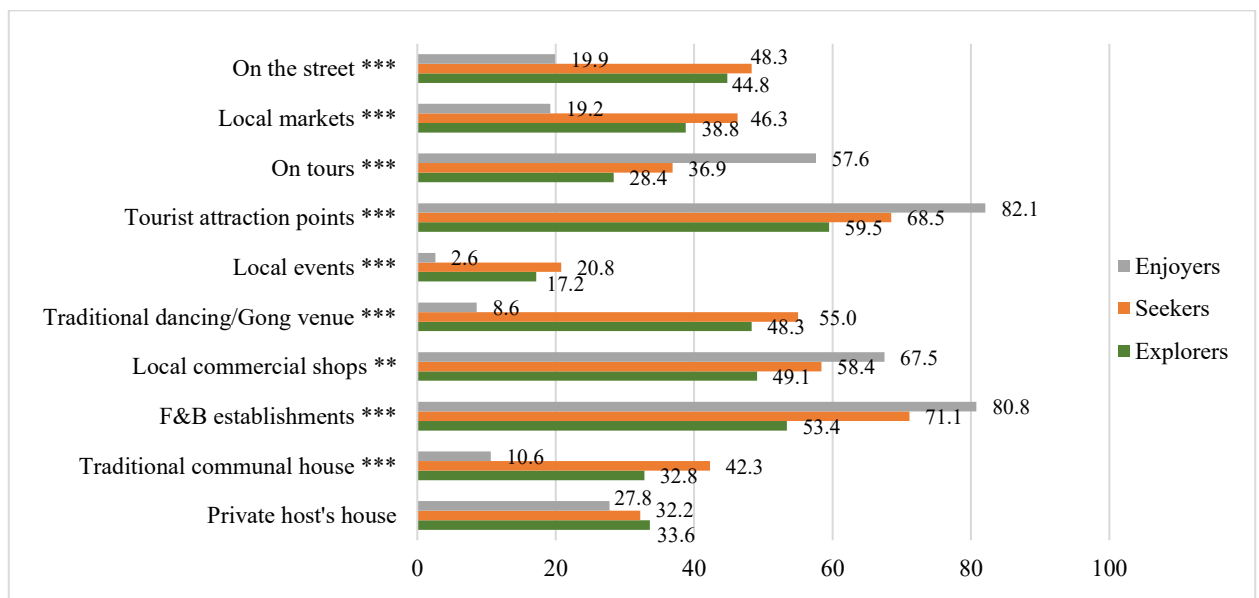
The proportion of *Enjoyers* interacting with local people was significantly higher in commercial settings; food and beverage establishments (80.8%) vs. 54.3% for *Explorers* and 71.1% for *Seekers*, tourist attraction points (82.1%) compared to 59.5% for *Explorers* and 68.5% for *Seekers*, and local commercial shops (67.5%) compared to 49.1% for *Explorers* and 58.4% for *Seekers* (Figure 5.3).

By contrast, *Explorers* and *Seekers* were significantly more likely than *Enjoyers* to interact in settings which were associated with ethnic culture. For instance, 55% of *Seekers* and 48.3% of *Explorers*, visited traditional dancing/Gong venues, compared to only 8.6% of *Enjoyers*. Similarly, 42.3% of *Seekers* and 32.8% of *Explorers* interacted with hosts at a traditional communal house, while only 10.6% of *Enjoyers* did. Finally, 20.8% of *Seekers* and 17.2% of *Explorers* interacted with hosts at local events compared to only 2.6 % of *Enjoyers*. Notably, there were not significant differences found in likelihood of visiting a private house across the three segments.

More than one-half of *Enjoyers* (57.6%) interacted with the locals on tours, whereas only 36.9% of *Seekers* and 28.4% of *Explorers* did so in such settings. Conversely, *Seekers* and *Explorers* seemed to more frequently interact with ethnic people at local markets (46.3%, 38.8% respectively) or on the street (48.3%, 44.8% respectively) than the *Enjoyers* (both around 19%).

Figure 5.3

Physical settings in which visitors interacted with the hosts



Note. n = 416, ** p = .01, *** p < .001

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5.4.4.2 Content of interactions which visitors had with the hosts

Table 5.9 presents the comparison of the three segments on the content of, and satisfaction with, interaction with the hosts. *Explorers* and *Seekers* were more likely than *Enjoyers* to have intense interactions aligned with ‘fulfilling long-term social needs’ – 43.4% of *Explorers* and 43.1% of *Seekers* exchanged personal contact with hosts for future communication and 34.5% of *Explorers* and 35.3 % *Seekers* exchanged gifts with the hosts. *Enjoyers* were less likely to interact with hosts in these ways (29% and 21.7%, respectively). No significant difference was found in terms of likelihood of making friends with ethnic people across the three segments. Significant differences were found in satisfaction with the intense interactions. For example, *Explorers* (mean = 4.09) and *Seekers* (4.00) were more satisfied with exchanging personal contact for future communication than *Enjoyers* (3.32). Similarly, *Explorers* (4.19) and *Seekers* (4.15) were more satisfied with making friends with ethnic people than *Enjoyers* (3.61). Meanwhile *Seekers* (4.15) were significantly more satisfied with exchanging gifts with the hosts than *Enjoyers* (3.77).

There were no significant differences across the three segments with respect to experiencing content aligned with ‘seeking mutual understanding’. Yet it should be noted that, while over 80% of respondents in each segment had long conversations with hosts for learning and sharing together about their culture and lifestyles, *Seekers* (4.37) were significantly more satisfied than *Enjoyers* (3.95).

Considering interactions related to commercial relationships, *Explorers* were significantly more likely than the other two segments to taste ethnic food and beverages (91.3%), and participate in Gong performances (46.6%), local events (29.6%), and handicraft-making procedures (26.3%). No significant differences were found in terms of interactions with hosts when purchasing goods and services and talking to local guides during tours. Yet it should be noted that more than 90% of each segment interacted with the hosts when purchasing goods and services. In such commercial interactions, *Seekers* were more satisfied with tasting food and beverages (4.29) than *Explorers* (4.07) and *Enjoyers* (3.95). *Seekers* were also more satisfied with participating in local events (4.33) and in handicraft-making procedures (4.47) than *Explorers* (3.92 and 3.97, respectively). Despite non-significant differences in frequency of interactions with hosts when purchasing goods and services and talking with local guides during tours, there were significant differences in satisfaction with these interactions. For example, both *Seekers* (3.94) and *Explorers* (3.79) were more satisfied with interactions occurring when purchasing goods and services than *Enjoyers* (3.40). Finally, *Seekers* (4.05) were more satisfied with talking to a local guide than *Enjoyers* (3.69).

Both *Explorers* and *Seekers* more frequently interacted with hosts when ‘seeking information or direction’ than *Enjoyers*. More specifically, *Seekers* were most likely to have short

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chats with the locals when searching for information about village/local tourism services (82.3%), asking for help (44.7%), and seeking local travel recommendations (54.6%). *Seekers* were more satisfied with short chats (3.83) and seeking local travel recommendations (4.02) than both the *Explorers* (3.59, 3.73, respectively) and *Enjoyers* (3.35 for both instances). When asking for help, both *Explorers* (3.96) and *Seekers* (4.12) were more satisfied than the *Enjoyers* (3.49).

For the lowest intensity interactions – ‘presence of hosts and tourists without active interactions’, *Explorers* seemed to have more frequent interactions; such as observing Gong performances (60%), local events (43.4%), handicraft-making procedure (56.1), and taking photos with hosts (71.9%). No significant difference was found in observing local way of life across the three segments, but *Seekers* had significantly higher satisfaction (4.04) with such interactions. *Seekers* (4.14) were also more satisfied with observing local events than *Explorers* (3.66) and *Enjoyers* (3.42). *Explorers* were least satisfied with observing handicraft-making procedures (3.59), while *Enjoyers* were least satisfied with taking photographs with hosts (3.52). Notably, both *Seekers* (4.08) and *Enjoyers* (4.05) were more satisfied with observing handicraft-making procedures than *Explorers* (3.59).

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Table 5.9

Content of and satisfaction with interaction with hosts

Content of interactions		Explorers	Seekers	Enjoyers	χ^2	p-value	Explorers	Seekers	Enjoyers	ANOVA		Post Hoc ^b
		Percentage					Average satisfaction (Mean) ^a			F	p-value	
Fulfilling long-term social needs	Exchanging personal contact details with the host for future communication (N=388)	43.4	43.1	29	7.617	.022	4.09	4.00	3.32	F(2,147) = 11.930	<.001	EX & SE > EN
	Exchanging gift with the host (N=387)	34.5	35.3	21.7	7.353	.025	4.10	4.21	3.77	F(2,115) = 3.076	.050	SE > EN
	Making friends with ethnic people (host) (N=387)	40.2	33.3	26.3	5.427	.066	4.19	4.15	3.61	F(2,127) = 6.609	.002	EX & SE > EN
Seeking mutual understanding	Staying at the host's house (N=115)	59.4	64.4	76.3	2.464	.292	4.16	4.37	4.42	F(2,76) = 1.618	0.205	No difference
	Enjoying meals with the host (N=120)	66.7	55.6	57.1	1.082	.582	4.54	4.48	4.46	F(2,72) = .109	0.897	No difference
	Having a long conversation with the host for learning and sharing together (N=121)	84.8	82.2	88.4	.659	.719	4.30	4.37	3.95	F(2,102) = 4.265	.017	SE > EN
	Learning to speak ethnic language via the host (N=118)	57.6	68.2	51.2	2.588	.274	4.04	4.00	3.69	F(2,69) = 1.049	0.356	No difference
Purchasing goods and services	Interacting with the host when they provide me goods and services (N=411)	94.8	95.9	90.5	3.980	.137	3.79	3.94	3.40	F(2,380) = 19.821	<.001	EX & SE > EN
	Tasting ethnic food & beverages (N=408)	91.3	88.5	81.4	6.120	.047	4.07	4.29	3.95	F(2,249) = 8.434	<.001	SE > EX & EN
	Talking together with local guide during tours (N=396)	71.3	65	61.6	2.661	.264	3.80	4.05	3.69	F(2,255) = 4.786	.009	SE > EN
	Participating in traditional musical/dancing/Gong performance) (N=398)	46.6	40.1	21.4	19.647	<.001	4.11	4.38	4.38	F(2,133) = 2.452	.090	No difference

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Table 5.9 (Continued)

	Participating in local events (N=394)	29.6	26.6	14.3	9.799	.007	3.92	4.33	5.00	F(2,85) = 4.906	.010	SE > EX
	Participating in the production of handicrafts and/or coffee, local specialties (N=391)	26.3	24.8	9.6	14.185	<.001	3.97	4.47	4.00	F(2,73) = 4.760	.011	SE > EX
Seeking information or direction	Having short chats with the host when searching information about the village/local services (N=406)	73.0	82.3	69.4	6.817	.033	3.59	3.83	3.35	F(2,300) = 12.845	<.001	SE > EX & EN
	Asking for/sought help (N=394)	43.5	44.7	28.3	9.581	.008	3.96	4.12	3.49	F(2,149) = 10.911	<.001	EX & SE > EN
	Seeking local travel recommendation or travel itinerary (N=393)	50.0	54.6	32.6	14.895	<.001	3.73	4.02	3.35	F(2,176) = 9.151	<.001	SE > EX & EN
Presence of hosts and visitors without active interactions	Observing traditional musical/dancing/Gong performance) (N=393)	60.0	48.9	27.3	28.859	<.001	3.73	4.14	3.67	F(2,123) = 5.360	.006	SE > EX
	Observing the local events (N=386)	43.4	38.7	18.4	20.665	<.001	3.66	4.14	3.42	F(2,124) = 12.936	<.001	SE > EX & EN
	Observing how to make handicrafts, and/or coffee, local specialties, traditional food (N=406)	56.1	59.2	40.7	11.237	.004	3.59	4.08	4.05	F(2,204) = 9.596	<.001	SE & EN > EX
	Taking photos with host (N=406)	71.9	70.1	54.7	10.943	.004	3.86	4.02	3.52	F(2,259) = 10.780	<.001	EX & SE > EN
	Observing local way of life (N=407)	79.1	89	84.4	4.747	.093	3.79	4.04	3.40	F(2,341) = 24.762	<.001	SE > EX > EN

Note. ^a Values were measured via 5-point Likert scale, 1 = *completely dissatisfied* to 5 = *completely satisfied*

^b Explorers: EX, Seekers = SE, Enjoyers = EN

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5.4.4.3 Difficulties which visitors encountered in the interaction with the hosts

In general, there was no significant difference in the likelihood of experiencing most interaction difficulties across the three segments (see Table 5.10). Yet it is important to note several key points: first, the respondents strongly agreed that they found it difficult to understand local customs and taboos, demonstrated by average ratings of 4.03 (*Explorers*, *Seekers*) and 4.13 (*Enjoyers*). Second, they also reported some challenges in language barriers including different dialects, regional accents, or jargons (3.69 – 3.74) and host's expressions in Vietnamese (3.73 – 3.84). Lastly, all three segments moderately agreed that they did not know how to get involved in religious events/practices (3.72 – 3.83).

For those variables with significant differences across the three segments, *Seekers* (3.30) were more likely than *Explorers* (2.75) to agree that they could not distinguish between serious speaking and joke telling. *Seekers* (3.23) also agreed more than *Enjoyers* (2.84) that they did not know how to respond well to the greetings and farewells that fit into the local way. *Enjoyers* tended to agree more that they got confused when the host avoided to answer or kept silent (3.85) and were more likely to find it difficult when the host tried to relate to his/her personal problems (3.16), compared to *Explorers* (3.32, 2.54, respectively).

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Table 5.10 *Interaction difficulties which tourists encountered in their interactions with host*

Interaction difficulties		Explorers	Seekers	Enjoyers	ANOVA F	p-value	Post Hoc
		Mean rating					
Verbal and Non-verbal behaviours	I misunderstood/misinterpreted because of different dialects, regional accents, or jargons.	3.69	3.78	3.74	F(2,255) = .199	.820	No difference
	I felt confused in the communication because of the host's way to express in Vietnamese.	3.73	3.84	3.74	F(2,333) = .611	.543	No difference
	I felt uncomfortable when the host avoided to look at me or looked at somewhere when we were talking.	3.28	3.24	3.47	F(2,253) = 1.331	.266	No difference
	I did not know what was happening when the host frowned	3.33	2.55	3.64	F(2,156) = 1.128	.326	No difference
	I misunderstood because of host's postures and/or gestures.	3.62	3.68	3.62	F(2,256) = .142	.868	No difference
Speech acts	I did not know the appropriate physical distance I should keep between the host and me in our interaction.	3.47	3.44	3.32	F(2,268) = .598	.551	No difference
	I did not know whether I should introduce myself to the host casually or formerly.	3.40	3.61	3.41	F(2,281) = 1.176	.310	No difference
	I did not know how to show my respect to the host in our interaction.	3.10	3.47	3.21	F(2,259) = 2.515	.083	No difference
	I did not know how to behave appropriately with different hosts who had different social statuses.	3.31	3.44	3.21	F(2,226) = .993	.372	No difference
Episodes	I felt confused when the host refused to hold or shake my hands.	3.25	3.29	3.72	F(2,146) = 2.461	.089	No difference
	I felt confused when the host avoided to answer or kept silent.	3.32	3.58	3.85	F(2,221) = 4.103	.018	EN > EX
	I could not respond quickly in different situations during our interaction because I was confused.	2.94	3.17	2.74	F(2,237) = 2.678	.071	No difference
	I could not recognise well between serious speaking and joke telling.	2.75	3.30	3.12	F(2,196) = 3.542	.031	SE > EX
	I felt uncomfortable in the way the host talked over other people (their neighbourhoods, other ethnic people and/or tourists).	3.13	3.21	3.27	F(2,127) = .161	.852	No difference
	I did not know what I should say/do to the host at the end of our interaction.	2.98	3.31	3.17	F(2,244) = 1.469	.232	No difference
	I felt to be misunderstood when tipping ethnic hosts.	3.08	2.95	2.97	F(2,167) = .292	.747	No difference

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Table 5.10 (Continued)

	I felt uncomfortable with the set-up of the room/stage.	2.56	2.82	2.83	$F(2,254) = 1.470$.232	No difference
	I did not know how to respond well to the greetings and farewells that fit into the local way.	2.95	3.23	2.84	$F(2,229) = 3.255$	.040	SE > EN
	I was not familiar with local eating practices (kinds of food, amount of food, time of eating, way of eating).	3.50	3.36	3.49	$F(2,265) = .527$	.591	No difference
	I did not know how to get involved in religious events/practices.	3.72	3.75	3.83	$F(2,236) = .287$	.751	No difference
Relationships	I felt I was not trusted by the host as I was an outsider of the village.	2.88	2.97	3.12	$F(2,277) = .986$	.374	No difference
	I felt to be distant because I was a customer/buyer/tourist.	3.10	3.19	3.39	$F(2,322) = 1.604$	.203	No difference
	I felt uncomfortable when the host considered our interaction as material relationship.	2.89	3.04	3.36	$F(2,179) = 2.325$	.101	No difference
Life scripts	I felt the host's interaction with us was unnatural.	3.20	3.37	3.54	$F(2,313) = 2.062$	.129	No difference
	I felt the host seemed to be shy in our interaction.	3.40	3.47	3.59	$F(2,315) = .779$	.460	No difference
	I felt the host tended to be dominant in our interaction.	2.14	2.01	2.20	$F(2,235) = .788$	.456	No difference
	I felt less confident in the first conversation or meeting with the host.	2.58	2.82	2.64	$F(2,298) = 1.141$	.321	No difference
Cultural patterns	I felt uncomfortable when the host tried to talk about his/her personal problems.	2.54	2.96	3.16	$F(2,192) = 4.295$	.015	EN > EX
	I felt uncomfortable when the host asked about some very personal questions.	3.18	3.33	3.25	$F(2,147) = .251$	.779	No difference
	I did not know how to refuse host's request politely (be invited to drink local wine, taste 'exotic' food, dance, try traditional costumes, or purchase souvenir).	3.50	3.52	3.31	$F(2,248) = .913$	.403	No difference
	I was not familiar with host's daily routine (e.g., time to go to bed/wake up, working time, meals time, ...)	3.30	3.33	3.52	$F(2,242) = 1.340$	.264	No difference
	I felt difficult to understand host's customs and taboos.	4.03	4.03	4.13	$F(2,290) = .388$	.679	No difference

Note: Values were measured via 5-point Likert scale, 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*

Explorers: EX, Seekers = SE, Enjoyers = EN

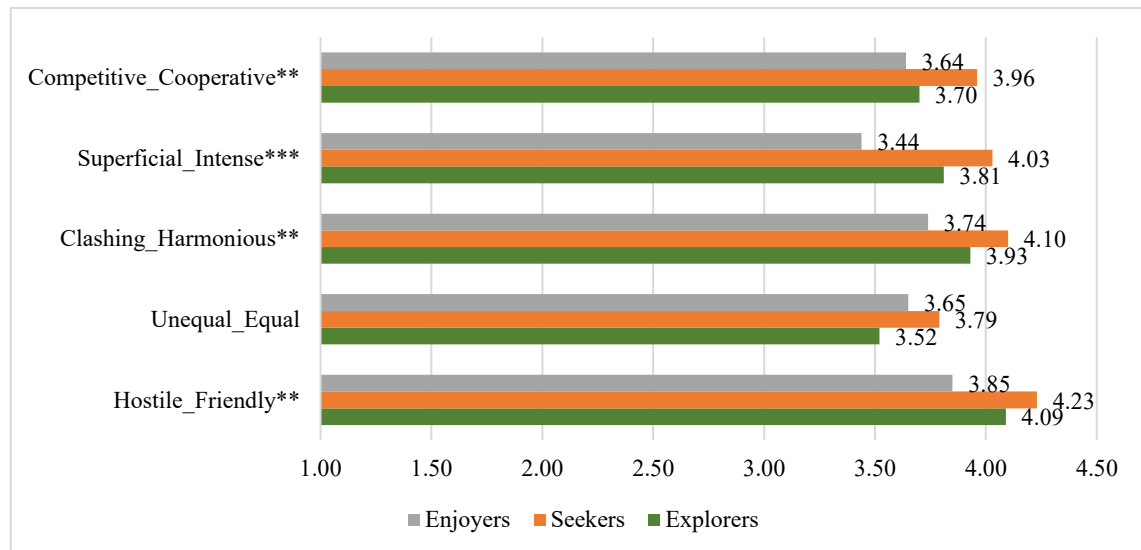
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5.4.4.4 How did visitors feel about their interactions with the hosts?

Respondents in the three segments were likely to evaluate the quality of interaction as positive in general, with *Seekers* tending to rate their interaction quality with hosts higher (see Figure 5.4). *Seekers* (4.23 and 4.10, respectively) reported higher scores than *Enjoyers* (3.85 and 3.74, respectively) rating interactions as ‘friendly’ and ‘harmonious’. *Seekers* also found interactions to be more ‘cooperative’ (3.96) than *Explorers* (3.70) and *Enjoyers* (3.64). Interestingly, both *Explorers* (3.81) and *Seekers* (4.03) rated the interactions as more ‘intense’ than *Enjoyers* (3.44). There was no significant difference across the three segments in the ‘unequal – equal’ rating.

Figure 5.4

Quality of interaction



Note. Values were measured via 5-point semantic scale, 1= negative sentiment (e.g., *superficial*) to 5 = positive sentiment (e.g., *intense*)

Explorers: EX, Seekers = SE, Enjoyers = EN

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Competitive – Cooperative: SE > EX & EN

Superficial – Intense: EX & SE > EN

Clashing – Harmonious: SE > EN

Unequal – Equal: No significance

Hostile – Friendly: SE > EN

5.4.4.5 What did visitors think after the trip?

In terms of tourists’ attitudinal and behavioural intentions, there were significant differences across all three segments (see Table 5.11). *Seekers* were significantly more likely to have positive attitudes and future behaviours than both *Explorers* and *Enjoyers*. For example, *Seekers* were more likely to agree that they had more positive attitudes towards ethnic people compared to pre-visit (4.09) than *Explorers* (3.70) and *Enjoyers* (3.66). Similarly, they were more

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likely to; share experiences on social media (4.31) compared to *Explorers* (3.65) and *Enjoyers* (3.73), return (4.39) vs. *Explorers* (3.90) and *Enjoyers* (3.77), and recommend visiting the Central Highlands to others (4.43) vs. *Explorers* (3.90) and *Enjoyers* (3.74).

Table 5.11

Tourist experience outcomes among three segments

Overall ethnic tourism experience outcomes	Explorers Mean rating	Seekers Mean rating	Enjoyers Mean rating	ANOVA F	Post hoc
My attitude toward ethnic people is more positive compared to pre-visit	3.70	4.09	3.66	F(2,413) = 8.607	SE > EX & EN
I will share my positive experiences about the Central Highlands on social media.	3.65	4.31	3.73	F(2,411) = 14.719	SE > EX & EN
I would like to return to the Central Highlands in the future.	3.90	4.39	3.77	F(2,409) = 14.468	SE > EX & EN
I would recommend visiting the Central Highlands to others.	3.90	4.43	3.74	F(2,406) = 19.415	SE > EX & EN
I want to learn more about ethnic language.	3.35	3.49	2.51	F(2,411) = 43.285	SE & EX > EN
I want to learn more about ethnic minority culture.	3.91	4.15	3.09	F(2,412) = 62.634	SE & EX > EN
I want to establish/maintain an ongoing mutual relationship with the host.	3.46	3.67	2.83	F(2,411) = 27.623	SE & EX > EN
I would like to express my gratitude to ethnic people by exchanging or presenting gifts to the host.	3.57	3.72	2.80	F(2,411) = 31.397	SE & EX > EN
I found my interaction with ethnic people in the village to be rewarding and satisfying.	3.58	3.85	3.36	F(2,411) = 10.255	SE > EX & EN
I believe tourism can make positive contribution to the ethnic people's income in the future.	4.11	4.47	3.93	F(2,411) = 20.720	SE > EX & EN
I believe tourism provide more meaningful employment/jobs.	4.19	4.53	4.02	F(2,411) = 18.114	SE > EX & EN
I believe tourism will contribute positively to the quality of life of this ethnic village.	4.22	4.56	4.08	F(2,411) = 16.834	SE > EX & EN

Note. Values were measured via 5-point Likert scale, 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*
 $p < .001$
 Explorers: EX, Seekers = SE, Enjoyers = EN

Significant differences were found across all three segments regarding perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes. For cultural aspects, both *Seekers* (3.49) and *Explorers* (3.35) were more likely to want to learn an ethnic language than *Enjoyers* (2.51). Likewise, both *Seekers* (4.15) and *Explorers* (3.46) were more likely to want to learn about ethnic minority culture than *Enjoyers* (3.09).

For social aspects, both *Seekers* and *Explorers* were more likely to want to establish/maintain on going mutual relationship with the hosts (3.67 and 3.46, respectively) and express their gratitude to ethnic hosts by exchanging/presenting gifts (3.72 and 3.57, respectively) than *Enjoyers*. Interestingly, *Seekers* found the interaction to be more rewarding and satisfying (3.85) than *Explorers* (3.58) and *Enjoyers* (3.36).

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For economic aspects, *Seekers* were more likely to believe that ethnic tourism can make positive contributions to local people's income in the future (4.47) vs. *Explorers* (4.11) and *Enjoyers* (3.93), and can provide more meaningful employment/jobs (4.53) vs. *Explorers* (4.19) and *Enjoyers* (4.02). Overall, *Seekers* more strongly agreed that ethnic tourism contributes to the local quality of life (4.56) vs. *Explorers* (4.22) and *Enjoyers* (4.08).

Table 5.12 summarises additional open-ended responses to describe the two best features of the ethnic destinations identified by each segment and two things that need to be improved to better deliver tourism experiences and achieve long-term ethnic tourism outcomes.

Table 5.12

Summary of two best features of ethnic destinations and two things need to be improved across three segments

Segments	Two best features	Two things need to be improved
Explorers	Gong performance, cuisine, <i>Cần</i> wine	Local human resources - communication skills, hospitality skills, language, working attitudes, local guide, knowledge/awareness of tourism, expertise in tourism
	Village architecture, stilt house, local housing architecture, traditional handicrafts, traditional costumes	Recruiting and training local villagers to participate in tourism, fair financial/benefit distribution to the locals
Seekers	Personal characteristics of local villagers: honest, friendly, sociable and humorous, kind, lovely, meek, naïve, hospitable	Host-tourist interaction, language, communication skills, working attitudes/performance at work
	Stilt house, housing architecture, village architecture, handicrafts, brocade weaving	Cultural preservation - ethnic identity, traditions, Gong culture, traditional food, traditional architecture
Enjoyers	Elephant, bamboo suspension bridge (hanging bridge), dugout canoe	Food hygiene and sanitation
	Stilt house, housing architecture, village architecture, traditional costumes	Attitudes and hospitality skills of staff

Both *Explorers* and *Seekers* were impressed by ethnic cultural assets (e.g., Gong performance, cuisine, *Cần* wine, traditional costumes, handicrafts) and local architecture (e.g., stilt house, local housing, village architecture). *Seekers* also admired the positive personal qualities of local villagers such as honesty, friendliness, sociability and humour, innocence, and hospitality. Improvements in local human resources were suggested, including knowledge/awareness of tourism, communication and hospitality skills, proficiency in the Kinh/Vietnamese language, and better working attitudes and performance. Moreover, while *Explorers* suggested the recruitment of more villagers to work at local tourism enterprises and the

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guarantee of fair benefit distribution to the locals who are involved in ethnic tourism activities, *Seekers* further emphasised the need for cultural preservation.

Enjoyers were more interested in natural and cultural capital associated with entertaining activities such as elephants, bamboo suspension bridge (hanging bridge), dugout canoe, or village sightseeing to enjoy traditional ethnic architecture. They tended to recommend improvements in food hygiene and sanitation, as well as attitudes and hospitality skills of local tourism staff.

5.5 Discussion

Based on the travel motivations of respondents, the current study identified three segments of ethnic visitors to the Central Highlands; *Explorers*, *Seekers*, and *Enjoyers*. The significant differences across the three segments on study variables have been presented. Subsequently, the main features of three segments have been compiled into three PERSONAS which provide a summary profile of each segment based on their distinguishing socio-demographic and trip characteristics, differences in host-tourist interactions, and perception of their experience and ethnic tourism outcomes.

Figure 5.5 provides a profile of *Explorers* who are likely to be aged 21-30 and well-educated (undergraduate and postgraduate). They are mostly students or employed in small-scale family businesses or by the government, with low (under 5m VND/month) to medium income (5-10 m VND/month). They have a moderate level of previous travel experience and when travelling are highly motivated by the middle layer of TCP model (Pearce & Lee, 2005), placing importance on gaining a new perspective on life, learning about ethnic culture, exploring the local scenery, and interacting with the hosts. They most often use a bus to get to the destination and travel around by motorbike or on foot. Social media, word-of-mouth, and previous travel experience were the main sources of information for this group. They are more likely to travel with friends or alone for holiday/leisure or professional/business trip. They usually stay 1-2 nights, with more opting for two-night than one night. During the trip, they mainly spent on meals and transportation instead of accommodation.

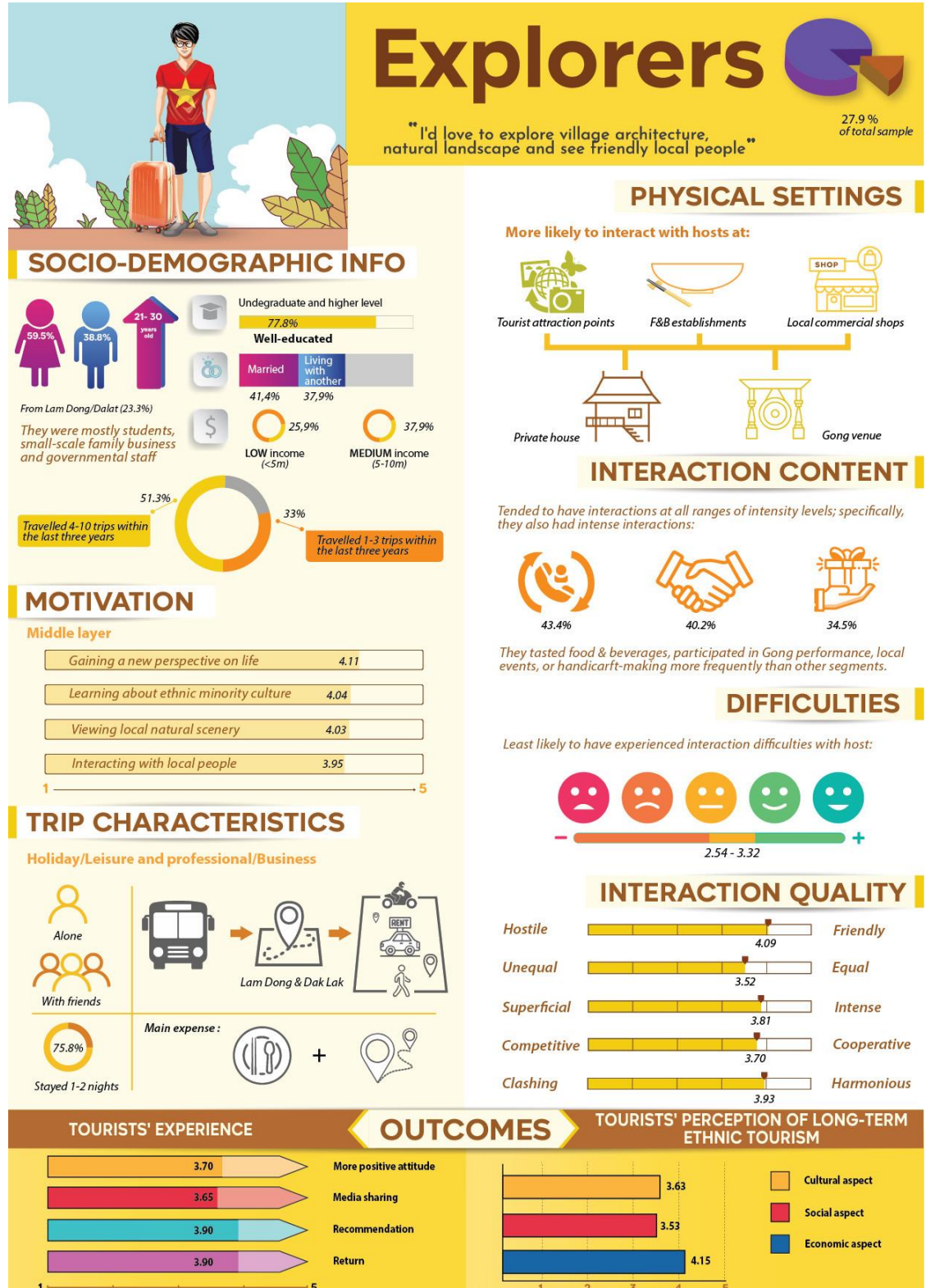
Explorers tend to interact with the locals at all ranges of intensity levels at tourist attraction points, food and beverage establishments, local commercial shops, private houses, and Gong venues. In particular, they tend to have more intense interactions (e.g., exchanging personal contact and making friends with hosts) than the other two segments. They are most likely to interact with the locals regarding commercial encounters, such as purchasing goods and services, tasting food and beverages, participating in Gong performance or local events but are less satisfied with these encounters. A possible explanation can be that *Explorers* are well-educated and placed emphasis on host-site involvement as a motivation for visiting, thus, they might be more demanding of the hosts when engaging in such interactions. *Explorers* are least likely to have

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experienced interaction difficulties with hosts. Although they seem to encounter fewer difficulties, they rate the quality of interaction as moderately positive. Subsequently, they express neutral opinions on ethnic tourism outcomes contributing to the local destination community.

Figure 5.5

Explorers' Personas



Note. Designed by the author and KStudio

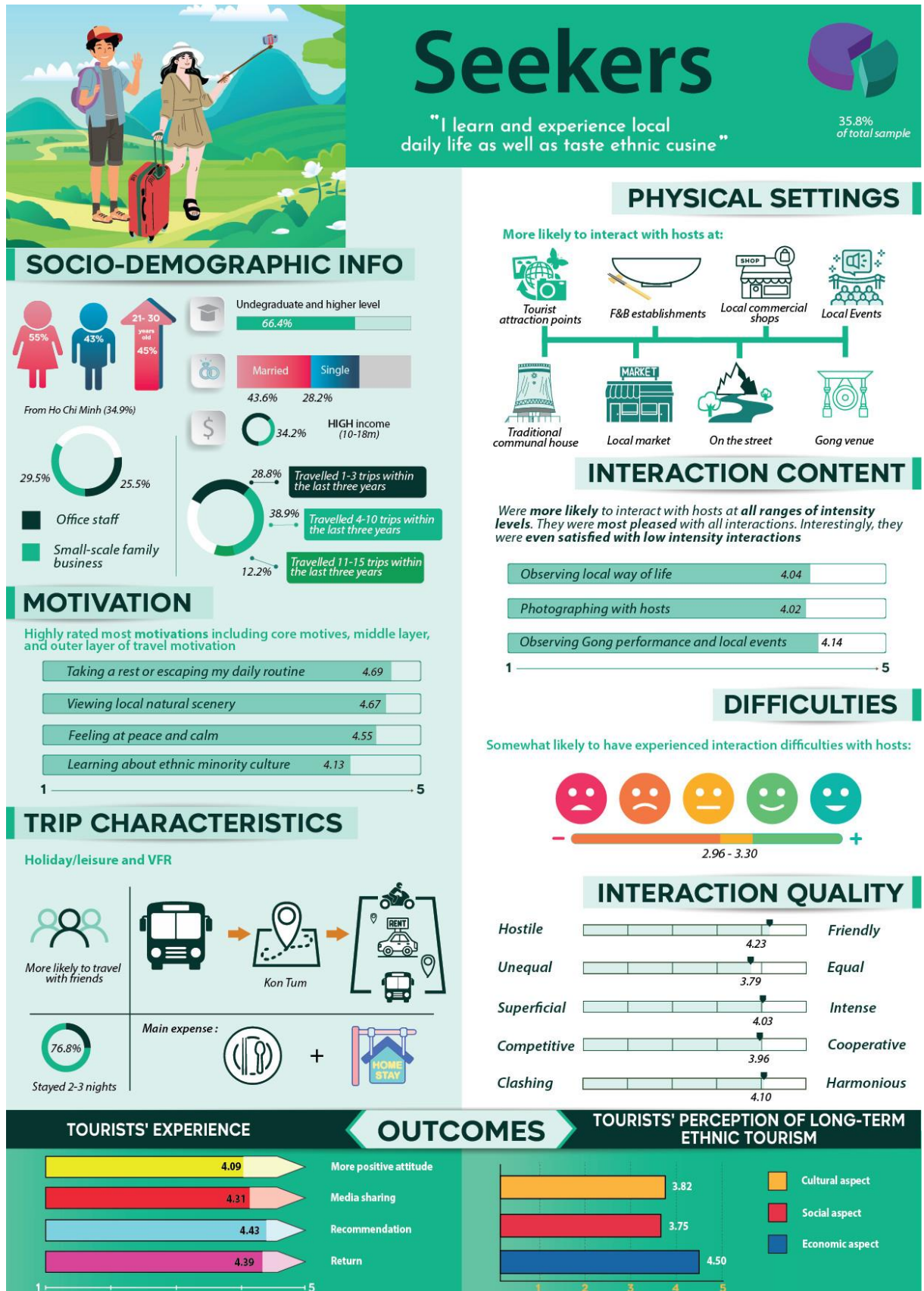
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Figure 5.6 profiles *Seekers* who are mostly between the ages of 21 – 30 and have undergraduate level education. Most of this group are employed in small-scale family businesses or as office staff with a high income of 10-18m VND/month. They have a lot of previous travel experience and are motivated by all core motivations, as well as having strong motivations for many items in the middle layer and outer layers of the TCP (Pearce & Lee, 2005). They are likely to take a bus to get the ethnic destination, and then travel around by various modes (e.g., rental motorbike, car, or bus). They primarily rely on social media, previous experience, word-of-mouth, and advertising/travel articles as main information sources. They are more likely to travel with friends for holiday/leisure or VFR. They usually stay 2-3 nights and mainly spend money on meals and accommodation during their trip. Importantly, they tend to have higher expenditure on a variety of on-site tourism services than the other two segments.

Seekers are more likely to interact with hosts at all ranges of intensity levels at tourist attraction points, F&B establishments, local commercial shops, traditional communal houses, Gong venues, local events, on the street, and local market and are mostly pleased with all interaction activities. Interestingly, they are even satisfied with low intensity interactions, such as observing local way of life, photographing with hosts, or observing Gong performance and local events. In such interactions, they are somewhat likely to have experienced some interaction difficulties, but they rate the interaction quality high and agree that ethnic tourism makes positive social, cultural, and economic contributions.

Figure 5.6

Seekers' Personas



Note. Designed by the author and KStudio

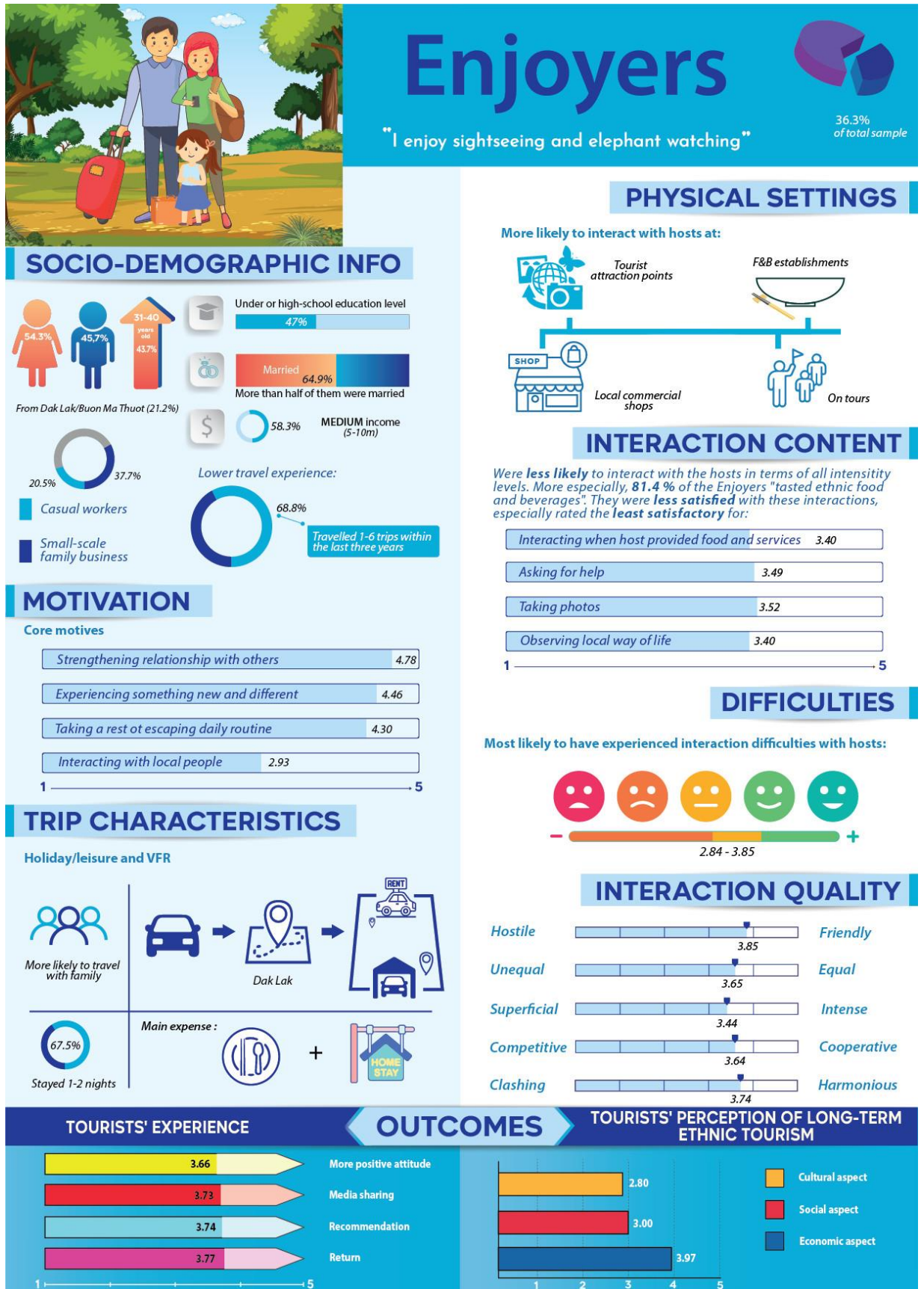
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Figure 5.7 profiles *Enjoyers* who are in an older age group of 31 – 40 and have lower education levels (under/high school). They are mostly employed in small-scale family businesses and as casual workers, with medium income 5-10m VND/month. They tend to have less travel experience and strong core travel motivations (i.e., strengthening relationship, resting or escaping daily routine, experiencing something new), as well viewing the local scenery - but the lowest ratings for interacting with the hosts and learning about ethnic culture. They mostly use private/rental car or motorbike when travelling and used social media, previous experience, and WOM as main information sources. They are likely to travel with family for holiday/leisure or VFR, staying 1-2 nights. Despite a preference of one-night stays, *Enjoyers* spend most of their money on accommodation. This could be explained by the fact that, based on the fieldtrip observation, they were more likely to stay in a local resort or drive to the town centre/city to stay in a modern, luxury hotel.

Enjoyers usually interact with ethnic people at tourist attraction points, food and beverage establishments, local commercial shops, and on tours and are the least likely to interact with the locals at all intensity levels. Their on-site tourism activities are similar to ‘excursion tourism’ or ‘tribal village tour’ group found in Jorpakha, Thailand (Trupp, 2014a). They are slightly satisfied with these interactions except for those occurred in Gong performance, local events, or handicraft-making venue. They have the lowest satisfaction ratings for short chats with villagers and seeking local travel recommendations. *Enjoyers* are more likely to have experienced interaction difficulties than *Explorers* and *Seekers*. Consequently, they rate the interaction quality lowest and are least likely to agree with positive contribution of ethnic tourism to the locals as well as the destination.

Figure 5.7

Enjoyers' Personas



Note. Designed by the author and KStudio

5.6 Conclusion and Implications

The current study collected data from a sample of domestic visitors (n=438) to the Central Highlands, Vietnam. By employing the Travel Career Pattern (TCP) approach (Pearce & Lee, 2005), three segments of ethnic visitors were identified; *Explorers*, *Seekers*, and *Enjoyers*. The main features of each segment are summarised in three PERSONAS to answer: Who are they, where and how do they interact with ethnic hosts, how do they feel about such interactions, and what do they think about long-term ethnic tourism outcomes? The study provides a comprehensive understanding of ethnic tourist market, particularly in a non-Western context, proving that travel motivation is clearly associated with how visitors were involved in interactions with ethnic hosts. This study reinforces the importance of examining host-tourist interactions in ethnic tourism (e.g., Su et al., 2014; Wong et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2017) by demonstrating the differences in how each segment interacted with hosts, the sorts of difficulties they encountered, and how the interaction quality led to different tourism experiences and perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes.

Theoretically, this study contributes to re-affirming the application of TCP in the existing tourism literature on tourist motivation and segmentation. Consistent with the key principle of TCP theory, the findings reveal that less important motives in the middle- and outer- layer are influenced by the levels of previous travel experience. These motives were the most discriminating factors to distinguish the three segments in this study. Pearce (2005, 2019) argues that a change in or alteration to less-important motives will shape an overall travel pattern while core motives may not change regardless of travel experience levels.

The study further expands the body knowledge on ethnic tourist market since the early work done by Moscardo and Pearce (1999). It offers a more comprehensive understanding of the value and role of cluster analysis (Jopp et al., 2022). More specifically, the findings analyse the differences between three groups of ethnic tourists focusing on their interactions with local villagers in non-Western tourism. As a result, this study provides insightful information on the ethnic tourism market within the context of Asian domestic tourism, contributing to enabling a prosperous, inclusive, and resilient region (Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), 2022).

Segmentation results of this study are useful for local communities and DMOs to understand current ethnic tourism markets and direct marketing efforts (Morrison, 2019). Importantly, the information becomes an input to community empowerment, enabling the locals to actively target which segment(s) they desire in order to foster positive interaction outcomes rather than placing tourist expectations as the core drivers of tourism planning with locals playing a very limited role (Moscardo & Murphy, 2014). Further, this step is necessary to develop specific

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ethnic tourism products to attract the target markets that are aligned with and are more likely to contribute to community aspirations for the future (Moscardo & Murphy, 2016).

Practically, *Explorers* and *Seekers* seem to be the most suitable target groups for the Central Highlands to achieve better interaction outcomes and make positive contributions to the local community. Both segments were motivated by local scenery, ethnic culture, and interaction with hosts which are core components of ethnic tourism (Wong et al., 2019). They were more likely to get involved in a variety of interactions at ethnic destinations. This finding is consistent with Pratt et al. (2013)'s study on tribal tourists who are interested in interacting with the locals, cultural exchange experiences, and sustainable development and therefore benefit the local Fijian community in ways that go beyond the local resorts.

Importantly, as depicted in Table 5.12, both *Explorers* and *Seekers* emphasised the need for improvement in human capital including communication skills, Kinh language proficiency, hospitality skills, awareness of tourism, and attitudes and performance in the workplace. The suggestions are directly associated with host-tourist interaction issues found in previous studies (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 4) and if addressed will have a positive influence on interaction quality and tourist attitudes and perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes (see Chapter 4). The two segments suggested preservation of traditional culture (cultural capital) and fair distribution of benefits to the locals (financial capital), which would also contribute to sustainability in ethnic tourism development. Tourism stakeholders and local authorities can use these suggestions for further discussion to directly improve the cultural and financial capital.

Explorers are more interested in 'learning about ethnic culture' and 'interacting with locals' than in other motivations. They tend to interact with the hosts at all intensity levels; specifically, they taste food and beverages, participate in local events or handicraft-making procedure more frequently than *Seekers*. However, *Explorers* are less satisfied with these interactions than *Seekers* are. *Seekers* interact with hosts at all intensity levels and tend to be satisfied with all of interactions. Importantly, they rate the motivations of 'learning about ethnic culture' and 'interacting with locals' even higher than *Explorers*. Therefore, adding storytelling to ethnic tourism offerings is needed to encourage visitors to become more active in interactions and better understand local way of life. As a result, *Explorers* may have 'gained a new perspective on life' which is their most important motivation for visiting the village, and can ultimately lead to more positive interaction outcomes, while high satisfaction level of *Seekers* across all interaction activities can be promoted.

To attract more *Explorers* and *Seekers*, local tourism providers should diversify the range of food and beverage products, especially traditional ethnic cuisines (e.g., *Cần* wine, bamboo sticky rice and charcoal roasted chicken). Furthermore, seasonal farming products/specialities,

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souvenirs, and tourism entertainment activities need to be provided in both greater variety and quantity to meet tourist demand, particularly for *Seekers* who had higher expenditure on shopping. To capitalise on the fact that roughly 90% of each segment interacted with locals when tasting ethnic cuisine, providing more opportunities and varieties to taste traditional food is meaningful not only to increase visitor expenditure but also to preserve ethnic culinary heritage. Traditional food recipe transmission from female seniors to local restaurants' chefs or even recruiting those ladies to work at restaurants should be encouraged. Provision of cooking workshops or guided food tours is proposed to enhance visitors' engagement with hosts in order to learn ethnic culture and enjoy local gastronomy.

It is worth noting that all segments spent little money on tour guides/tour services. There would be a need to encourage local villagers to get involved in ethnic tourism as local guides. Due to their wisdom of local culture and genuine hospitality, they may encourage tourists to engage more in host-tourist interactions during tours. Additionally, educating or training programmes are required for these villagers to better communicate with tourists and to have well-equipped tourism skills when providing services.

Local transportation providers need to increase the quantity of daily bus trips to the five provinces of the Central Highlands region and improve the quality of bus services, especially the route from Ho Chi Minh city to the region, as well as the routes within five provinces (e.g., from Lam Dong/Da Lat – Dak Lak/Buon Ma Thuot and vice versa). Within each locality increased opportunities for motorbike or rental car should be considered.

To effectively reach the *Explorers* and *Seekers*, both local marketers and practitioners should use social media marketing techniques, which are the primary source of information for these segments. The best features of the Central Highlands destination described in Table 5.12 imply that the focal point of marketing and advertising should be on ethnic cultural assets (Gong performance, cuisine, *Cần* wine), local architecture, and the friendly and honest nature of the villagers. Facebook and Zalo (Vietnamese platform) should be the main social media platforms in this marketing strategy since Vietnam ranks 7th worldwide regarding the number of Facebook users (Vu, 2023), with over 80 % of Generation X and over 90% of Generation Y and Z using Facebook and Zalo (Statista Research Department, 2023). Strategies should also be employed to encourage visitors to share their photos and comments about ethnic tourism experiences on social media as well as review platforms (User-Generated Content) by gift vouchers, promo codes, or discounts. As a result, potential visitors can better imagine what local tourism looks like, what they can expect to experience at the ethnic destination, and access information as well as other visitors' shared moments.

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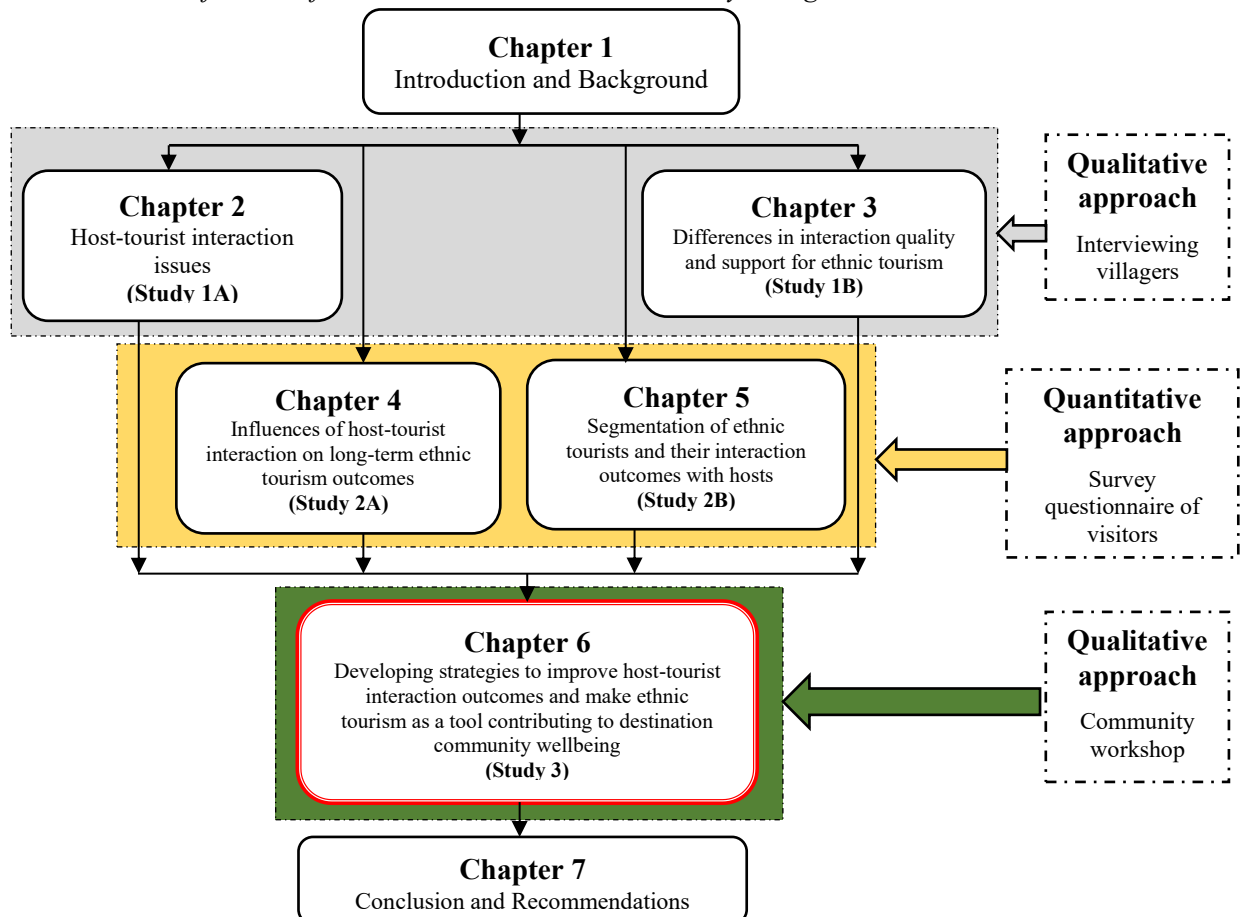
The main limitation of this study is that data were collected at specific points in time which were outside of the traditional festive time in several ethnic communities (e.g., Kon Ko Tu, Lac Duong) or peak domestic tourism season when many Gong performances occur. Tourists, who are highly motivated by participating in ethnic festivals and Gong performances, were absent from this work. Future studies can expand on these research findings to propose an appropriate marketing strategy for a single market. Open-ended responses from three segments, particularly *Explorers* and *Seekers*, will be useful for the next study to consider how to improve interaction quality and long-term ethnic tourism outcomes from tourist perspective. A focus on the relationship between interaction content and tourist intentional behaviours would also be suggested to increase tourist revisitation and attract potential tourists.

CHAPTER 6

DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE HOST-TOURIST INTERACTION OUTCOMES - ETHNIC TOURISM AS A TOOL CONTRIBUTING TO DESTINATION COMMUNITY WELLBEING (STUDY 3)

This chapter presents the last study of the PhD thesis. It attempts to address the fifth research objective: *To engage with locals of a selected ethnic community to generate strategies to improve host-tourist interaction outcomes and develop ethnic tourism experiences that contribute to local destination community wellbeing*. Utilising a qualitative research approach, this chapter describes how a community workshop was conducted at an ethnic site and summarises key findings from 34 stakeholders' viewpoints. The results of Study 1 informed the selection of one out of four ethnic communities in which to conduct the workshop, whereas the results of Study 2 provided a detailed domestic tourist market profile to present to the community. Further, results from both studies were delivered to participants to provide a holistic picture of host-tourist interaction issues and current situation of ethnic tourism, to inform their engagement in the workshop discussions of this study.

Like previous chapters, this chapter has been accepted as a conference paper in *the 73rd AIEST Conference of Ideas 2024 in Bolzano-Bozen, Italy – Aug 2024*.



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6.1 Introduction

Ethnic tourism has been widely recognised for its potential to bring both cultural and economic benefits to marginalised communities. However, like other forms of tourism, developing ethnic tourism may lead to negative impacts that commonly result from the pursuit of increasing tourist numbers and financial profits (Moscardo, 2009; Wall & Mathieson, 2006; Zielinski et al., 2020). While ethnic tourism primarily aims to preserve ‘exotic’ culture and generate financial benefits, especially to alleviate poverty in peripheral areas, it can sometimes be overlooked how to create positive impacts on social reciprocity and natural resources (Yang, 2011). Arguably, financial benefits may be realised by external agents instead of the host community (Feng & Li, 2020), as widely confirmed in many studies on ethnic tourism, indigenous tourism, rural tourism, community-based tourism, and pro-poor tourism (e.g., Carr et al., 2016; Feng & Li, 2020; Lor et al., 2019; Moscardo, 2023; Tian et al., 2021; Truong et al., 2014; Zielinski et al., 2020). Unfortunately, the fruits of tourism development are not always distributed to better serve the poor (Feng & Li, 2020). Without proper planning and management, ethnic tourism may not be as sustainable as assumed or intended.

Lack of community participation is a root cause of unsustainable tourism development, including ethnic tourism (Bramwell, 2014; Nunkoo, 2017). Although there is ample evidence highlighting the importance of community participation in both developed and developing countries (Zielinski et al., 2020), there is a knowledge gap about holistic approaches for enabling local community participation in tourism planning and governance within the context of ethnic tourism. Giampiccoli et al. (2015) note that underprivileged people in developed countries usually have better access to resources and infrastructure than those in developing countries. Consequently, barriers to participative tourism planning appear to be greater in the ethnic tourism contexts, where local villagers are often poor, small in number, lacking in relevant skills and competencies, and geographically isolated (Carr et al., 2016; Lor et al., 2019). Specific socio-cultural issues such as tensions between state regulation and ethnic autonomy (Yang & Wall, 2009b), formal and informal regulation between political and cultural institutionalizations of power (Tian et al., 2021), or interaction difficulties between hosts and tourists (Nguyen et al., 2023) also constrain local villagers’ interest and ability to engage in ethnic tourism.

Cultural differences obviously exist between hosts and tourists, irrespective of whether tourists are domestic or foreign (Pearce, 1982; Reisinger & Turner, 2003), which makes their interactions more challenging in the ethnic tourism context. The quality of interactions influences how hosts engage in tourism, their attitudes towards tourists and tourism development, and perceptions of tourism impacts on quality of life (Carneiro et al., 2018; Tse & Tung, 2022; Xiong et al., 2021). Simultaneously, interaction quality shapes tourists’ attitudes towards the hosts and the destination, their tourism experiences and future intentional behaviours (Stylidis, 2020;

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Stylidis et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2019). Therefore, facilitating positive interaction outcomes between hosts and tourists is of the utmost importance in ethnic tourism. Fan (2020) stresses that the quality of interaction determines the long-term strength of host-tourist relationships, thereby contributing to social sustainability in tourism. Sustainable host-tourist relationships will enhance bridging social capital. This enhancement helps generate a '*spiralling up*' effect (Emery & Flora, 2006), which increases the likelihood of improvements in other forms of community capital, ultimately contributing to community wellbeing in local destinations.

A community wellbeing approach to tourism destination planning, proposed by Moscardo and Murphy (2014), is particularly appropriate in the ethnic tourism context. The authors argue that tourism should be a means to improve community wellbeing in destinations by putting the community at the heart of the tourism planning process (Konovalov, 2016). Inspired by the Community Capitals framework (Emery & Flora, 2006), the approach uses tourism to enhance the stocks of seven forms of capital (natural, social, human, financial, built, cultural, and political) within a community. Core to this approach is the need to listen to community aspirations and enable locals to become a central part of the tourism planning process (Moscardo, 2023). Rather than focusing on what resources are available for tourism in the destination, this approach centres on how tourism can positively contribute to existing community capital and how tourists can be leveraged to meet the needs and aspirations of the locals.

The chapter is an attempt to engage with the locals to facilitate informed decision making for improving host-tourist interaction quality and long-term ethnic tourism outcomes. Furthermore, drawing from the indigenous research framework (N'Drower, 2020), this chapter offers an opportunity to bring previous study findings back to the community. As a result, the host community is able to determine whom they serve and interact with while providing ethnic tourism products rooted in their cultural heritage and local natural landscape. Improvements in social, cultural, and natural capital will have the potential to trigger an upward spiralling process in other forms of capital that contribute to local destination community wellbeing. Three research questions arise;

1. In what way does the community want ethnic tourism to contribute to community capitals,
2. Which domestic market segments does the community want to prioritise to best foster positive interaction outcomes with tourists that contribute to community wellbeing aspirations, and
3. What are priority actions for developing ethnic tourism to improve host-tourist interaction outcomes and help achieve community wellbeing aspirations?

6.2 Literature review

6.2.1 *Community wellbeing approach to destination tourism planning*

Despite being long-standing tool for economic development in peripheral areas, ethnic tourism appears to have exaggerated its pro-poor benefits (Tian et al., 2023; Yang & Wall, 2009b; Zielinski et al., 2020). Previous research (e.g., Wall & Mathieson, 2006; Wondirad et al., 2020; Zielinski et al., 2020) has highlighted a failure of tourism initiatives to fulfill their promises of delivering cultural, social, and even economic benefits to the host communities, instead causing further negative impacts on destination community wellbeing. Common reasons for this failure have been identified in previous studies as illustrated in Table 6.1. Broadly, Moscardo (2023) pointed out two main reasons for failure; a tendency to use business strategy planning rather than community development planning as the default approach to tourism governance, and a failure to empower and engage community residents in the planning, management and practice of tourism.

Table 6.1

Commonly identified barriers to the effective tourism development

- Reliance on external agents for tourist market information and access.
- Dominance of external agents in tourism planning and development decisions.
- Limited or no formal tourism planning.
- Limited community awareness of tourism processes, especially negative tourism impacts.
- Unrealistic expectation of tourism benefits.
- Lack of local tourism leadership.
- Lack of local community coordination.
- Limited local community participation/empowerment in tourism governance.
- Lack of stakeholder collaboration.
- Limited connections to tourism distribution systems.
- Poor accessibility and inadequate marketing.
- Conflict within the community over tourism development.
- Limited innovation in tourism products.
- Poor integration of tourism with other sectors.
- Limited local experience with ICT-enabled communication.
- Lack of local entrepreneurial ability.
- Land ownership and community cohesiveness issues
- Use of culturally inappropriate methods for gaining local knowledge and participation.
- Unsuitable governance policy and unequal distribution of tourism benefits and costs.
- Lack of skills, capital, and interest by younger generation within the destination community.

Note. Adapted from Moscardo (2023) and added by other authors: Tosun (2000), Lenao (2017), Nguyen et al. (2020), Wondirad et al. (2020), Zielinski et al. (2020), Kunjuran (2022).

To address these issues, Moscardo and Murphy (2014) proposed a new approach to tourism planning - destination community wellbeing (DCW) - which differs from conventional approaches in which opportunities for community or public engagement are mostly provided after

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the development of the plans/strategies when decisions have already been made. The key argument in the DCW approach is that the destination community should be an input of the planning development process themselves. S. Singh (2012) also criticised the lack and nature of community participation in tourism planning emphasising that it should be considered as a basic right of residents rather than a political strategy.

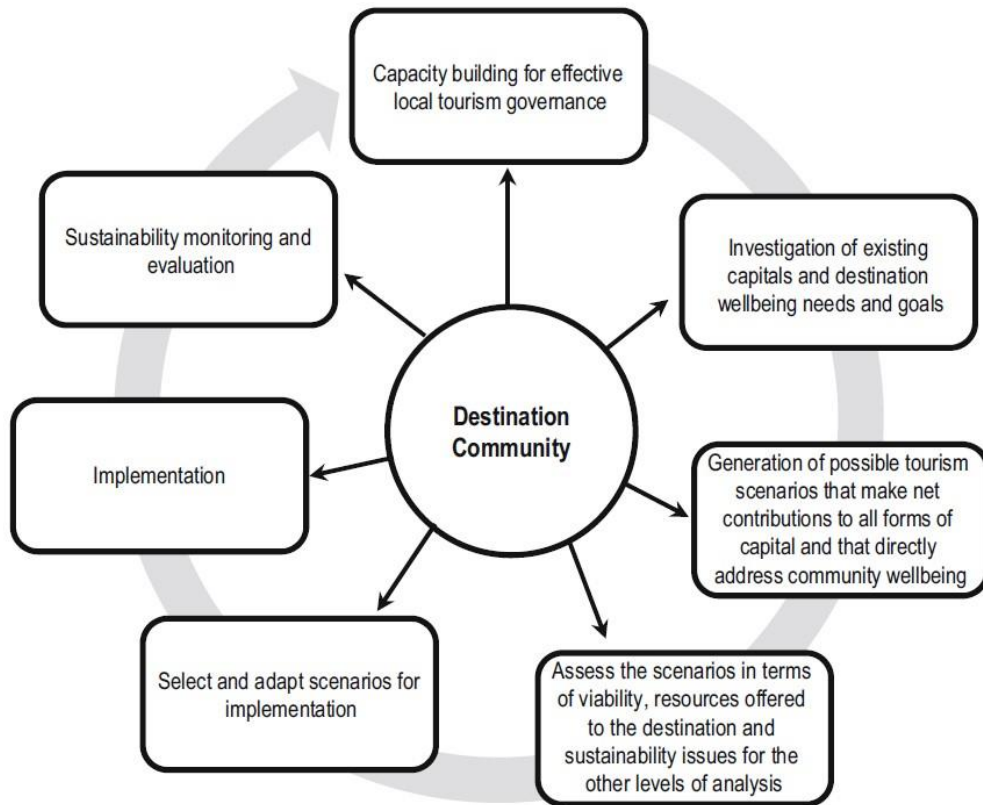
The DCW approach was built upon elements from the Community Capitals framework (Emery & Flora, 2006) with the goal of identifying forms of tourism that can directly improve the various capital elements. The aim is to measure tourism success by its contributions to local community wellbeing rather than tourism volume or profits. Instead of assessing the resources available for tourism, this approach argues for an assessment of the stock of the various capitals available to destination residents and the major sustainability issues that face the destination.

Figure 6.1 depicts the DCW tourism planning process as circular rather than linear (Moscardo, 2023; Moscardo & Murphy, 2014). The planning approach is centred on the destination community. This approach involves building resident capacity to manage tourism planning, investigating current stocks of community capitals, and identifying possible tourism scenarios that make net contribution to community wellbeing. Then, the resulting tourism scenarios are assessed for viability, resources offered to the destination, and sustainability issues. The next stage is choosing scenarios that are both desired by the local residents and judged to be viable and sustainable in the tourism planning process. The last two stages are implementation and monitoring to ensure that moving forward tourism contributes to specific capitals that make up destination community wellbeing.

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Figure 6.1

Destination community wellbeing (DCW) approach to tourism planning



Note. Moscardo and Murphy (2014)

6.2.2 The importance of community capitals for ethnic tourism development

Although there are different terminologies referring to ‘capital’ in the literature, such as; livelihood assets (Department for International Development (DFID), 1999), tangible and intangible capitals (Svendsen & Sørensen, 2007), community capitals (Emery & Flora, 2006; Flora et al., 2016) or tourism livelihood assets (Shen et al., 2008), the concept of ‘capital’ is commonly used to analyse a community’s capability or capacity in the rural development or community development context (Kline, 2017). Capital is defined as any assets, or groups of assets, with the ability to render a stream of present or future benefits (Shoeb-Ur-Rahman et al., 2020). Recent tourism studies have witnessed different forms of capital being aligned with sustainable tourism development and community well-being (Moscardo & Murphy, 2016). Researchers have also used different combinations of capitals, analytical foci, and units to represent each form of capital in specific research contexts.

Bramwell et al. (2017) claim that there has been little research on how wider social-cultural interactions and systems influence prospects of sustainable tourism. The Community Capitals framework developed by Flora and Flora in 2004 (see Flora et al., 2016) addresses this issue because it is useful in fostering a holistic analysis of seven community capitals: natural,

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cultural, human, social, political, financial and built capital (Table 6.2). The key idea is that all the capitals intersect with each other and have a ‘*spiralling up-down*’ effect where increase/investment in one capital ignites positive changes in other capitals; conversely, decrease/loss in one capital can cause negative changes in others (Flora et al., 2016; Kononov, 2016). Therefore, Knollenberg et al. (2022) suggest all forms of capitals should be invested in to generate positive changes in the community capitals.

Table 6.2

Community Capitals framework

Natural capital includes the air, water, soil, wildlife, vegetation, landscape, and weather that surround us and provide both possibilities for and limits to community sustainability. Natural capital influences and is influenced by human activities.
Cultural capital includes traditions, language, value, and cultural heritage. Cultural hegemony allows one social group to impose its worldview, symbols, and reward system on other groups.
Human capital includes education, skills, health, and self-esteem.
Social capital involves mutual trust, reciprocity, groups, collective identity, working together, and a sense of a shared future. It refers to relationships among individuals or groups within the community (<i>bonding social capital</i>) and to outside of the community (<i>bridging social capital</i>).
Political capital is the ability of a community or group to turn its norms and values into standards, which are then translated into rules and regulations that determine the distribution of resources.
Financial capital includes savings, income generation, fees, loans and credit, gifts and philanthropy, taxes, and tax exemptions. Community financial capital can be assessed by changes in poverty, firm efficiency, diversity of firms, and local people’s increased assets.
Built capital includes information technologies, chemicals, bridges, railroads, oil pipelines, factories, daycare centres, and wind farms.

Note. Emery and Flora (2006) and Flora et al., (2016)

While an array of capitals has been used in diverse contexts, some studies excluded cultural capital. For example, Shen et al. (2008) and Shueb-Ur-Rahman et al. (2020) considered five capitals (natural, human, social, economic, and institutional) to propose a co-management concept between ‘state’ and ‘community’ to create sustainable livelihood outcomes. Wakil et al. (2021) explored six assets (human, social, natural, physical, financial, and psychological) to integrate community resilience and tourism development. Recently, Pasanchay and Schott (2021) examined five capitals (natural, human, economic/financial, physical, and social) to identify the capacity of homestays to advance Sustainable Development Goals (SDG1 and SDG11). Arguably, cultural capital is a core value of ethnic tourism (Wong et al., 2019; Yang & Wall, 2009b). Therefore, the current study utilises Flora’s Community Capitals Framework to investigate existing assets (stocks) in all seven capitals, especially social capital to facilitate

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positive host-tourist interaction outcomes, thereby developing ethnic tourism as a tool that contributes to destination community wellbeing.

6.2.3 *Positive host-tourist interaction and destination community wellbeing*

Favourable interaction outcomes are a goal in developing ethnic tourism (Su et al., 2014), and assist in building long-term host-tourist relationships with genuine emotions and in-depth understanding (e.g., friendships) (Xiong et al., 2021). Yet, how to achieve favourable interaction has become a critical question in the ethnic tourism context. Both hosts and tourists face a variety of interaction difficulties due to cultural differences (Nguyen et al., 2023; Pearce, 1982; Reisinger & Turner, 2003). Additionally, the nature of interactions, referring to physical settings in which such interactions occur and their content, can significantly influence the extent to which hosts engage in the interactions and their attitudes towards tourists and tourism (de Kadt, 1979; Sharpley, 2014; Xiong et al., 2021).

Moscardo et al. (2017) emphasised that positive interactions, where hosts enjoy interacting with tourists, enhance *bridging social capital*. As locals become more engaged in tourism, they gain confidence to reach out beyond their ‘comfort zone’ to different third parties (e.g., tour operators, agencies, and tourism practitioners). This engagement contributes to the growth of *bridging social capital*. Furthermore, it strengthens social cohesion within a community, contributing to *bonding social capital*. Drawing from the ‘*spiralling up*’ effect (Emery & Flora, 2006), positive host-tourist interactions will increase social capital, thereby facilitating growth in other community capitals. In this vein, social or human capital invested in a project will lead to increases in the stock of assets in financial, political, cultural, and natural capital. This multiplying effect among capitals can initiate an ongoing upward spiralling process and facilitate sustainable development process (Gutierrez-montes et al., 2009).

Carneiro and Eusébio (2015) revealed that positive host-tourist interactions contribute to more positive perceptions of tourism impacts on quality of life among the local residents. Perceived positive social impacts of tourism are linked to residents’ place attachment (Woosnam, 2012), support for tourism, and perceived quality of life (Ramkissoon, 2023), which is often equated with wellbeing (Moscardo, 2009, 2023) or overall life satisfaction (Kim et al., 2015). In the ethnic tourism context, work by Yang and Li (2012) provided evidence from two case studies in Mainland China and Taiwan to demonstrate the positive impacts of ethnic tourism on the quality of life of the host community. The authors stated that ethnic tourism helped alleviate poverty, enhanced community pride, and promoted cultural exchanges and revitalization. Yet, this work also reported a problem arising within one community (Shanmei in Taiwan), where some members do not have equal opportunities to participate in tourism. Again, it is undeniable that tourism implementation will encounter common barriers as listed in Table 6.1. More importantly, community participation influences the quality of life of local residents (Ali et al.,

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2022). The question here is how to get locals engaged in tourism, facilitate favourable host-tourist interactions, and create an upward spiral across the capitals within the community, given that each community possesses its own characteristics and faces different challenges. The community should ask itself where to start and how to make changes in its community capitals.

Many existing studies have shown links between different forms of capital and community wellbeing in destination communities (see Moscardo et al., 2017). By fostering positive host-tourist interaction outcomes, social capital is improved, which can be a key entry point for the host community to make improvements in other forms of capital (Flora, 2004). Therefore, it is necessary for the community to examine current issues associated with host-tourist interactions and their aspirations for the future based on current capital stocks. Destination community wellbeing can be achieved through increasing stocks of multiple capitals.

6.3 Methodology

Workshops have been utilised to collect data and engage with key stakeholders in both tourism academic research (Benckendorff et al., 2009; Chatkaewnapanon & Lee, 2022; Konovalov, 2016; Waayers et al., 2012) and practice (see UNWTO, 2021). Ørngreen and Levinsen (2017) note that a workshop is not only a means or a practice, but also a research methodology. The authors indicate that, on one hand, a workshop aims to fulfil participants' expectations to achieve something related to their own interests. On the other hand, a workshop can be specifically designed to fulfil a research purpose by producing reliable and valid data about the domain in question. In a workshop, issues can be presented, experimented with, played out, and discussed. The workshop methodology is useful to enhance innovative collaboration for more sustainable tourism, which enables a shift of the tourism sector towards sustainability (Bertella et al., 2021).

This study employed a qualitative workshop methodology to discuss current issues associated with host-tourist interactions within one of studied communities. The primary goal was to encourage local villagers to engage in generating strategies to improve interaction outcomes and make ethnic tourism meet their aspirations, thereby contributing to destination community wellbeing. Additionally, the workshop offers an opportunity to share results from previous studies back to the community addressing the need for communication and building trust embedded in indigenous methodologies (N'Drower, 2020), and building the local villagers' capacity for tourism planning process derived from the DCW tourism planning approach (Moscardo & Murphy, 2014).

Lak (Dak Lak) was selected from the four ethnic sites included in this research as the location to conduct the workshop for three reasons. First, local villagers were more likely to participate in the delivery of a variety of ethnic tourism activities (Study 1 A and B). Second,

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results of Study 1B also indicated that they were the most willing to participate in future tourism development in their village, especially decision-making, but they were struggling to find ways to get more involved in. Finally, respondents to the visitor survey were most likely to have visited Dak Lak (69%) and Lam Dong (79%) in their trip to the Central Highlands region (as found in Study 2B). Thus, it was assumed that there were more opportunities for host-tourist interactions to occur in Lak (Dak Lak) and Lac Duong (Lam Dong). However, in contrast to Lak (Dak Lak), the local community in Lac Duong (Lam Dong) had greater experience in doing tourism business and was more confident with their tourism business skills than other communities. They were more likely to already be participating in the decision-making process of local tourism and therefore less likely to benefit from participation in a workshop.

An invitation (Appendix J) and a brief report of the findings from the previous studies (Appendix K_1 & 2) were distributed to 50 potential participants through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The brief report provided information on the current study's background and domestic tourist market profile including three tourist segments identified. More specifically, different groups of participants were purposively invited to diverse stakeholder representatives such as local authorities, tourism officials, national tourism enterprises, academic researchers, local tourism business/ventures, tourism staff, handicraftsmen, and local residents (Table 6.3). Those who had participated in interviews for Study 1 were also invited in order to follow up the research and provide an opportunity for them to contribute their opinions to further discussions. For specific stakeholder groups including local tourism businesses, staff, and residents, a participant was asked to recommend to the author other potential participants representing their group. A total of 34 participants attended the workshop, 7 of whom had participated in Study 1.

Table 6.3

List of stakeholders participating in the workshop

Stakeholders	Description	Quantity	Ethnicity
Local authorities	Deputy District Party Committee secretary	1	M'ngong
	District administrative officer	1	Kinh
Tourism officials	Head of district tourism department and officer	1	M'ngong
	District tourism department officer	1	Kinh
National tourism enterprise	Lak resort	1	Kinh
Academic research	Tay Nguyen University	1	Kinh
Local tourism businesses/start-ups	Tour operators	2	M'ngong
	Travel agency	1	
	Souvenir shop	1	
	Homestay and guesthouse	2	
	Restaurants	2	

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Table 6.3 (Continued)

Stakeholders	Description	Quantity	Ethnicity
Local tourism staff	Mahouts	4	M'nong
	Local guides	3	
	Gong performers	3	
	Housekeeper	1	
Handicraftsmen	Pottery	4	
Local residents	Residents who were not involved in tourism	5	

The workshop was held on 23rd December 2022 and was four hours in duration, with a 30-minute coffee break (Figure 6.2). The role of the author was to present the findings from the previous studies to workshop participants, ask questions, and stimulate the dynamics of the discussions. Notably, the author facilitated group discussions between the participants, not between the author as a researcher and the participants (Chatkaewnapanon & Lee, 2022).

Figure 6.2

Workshop facilitation in December 2022



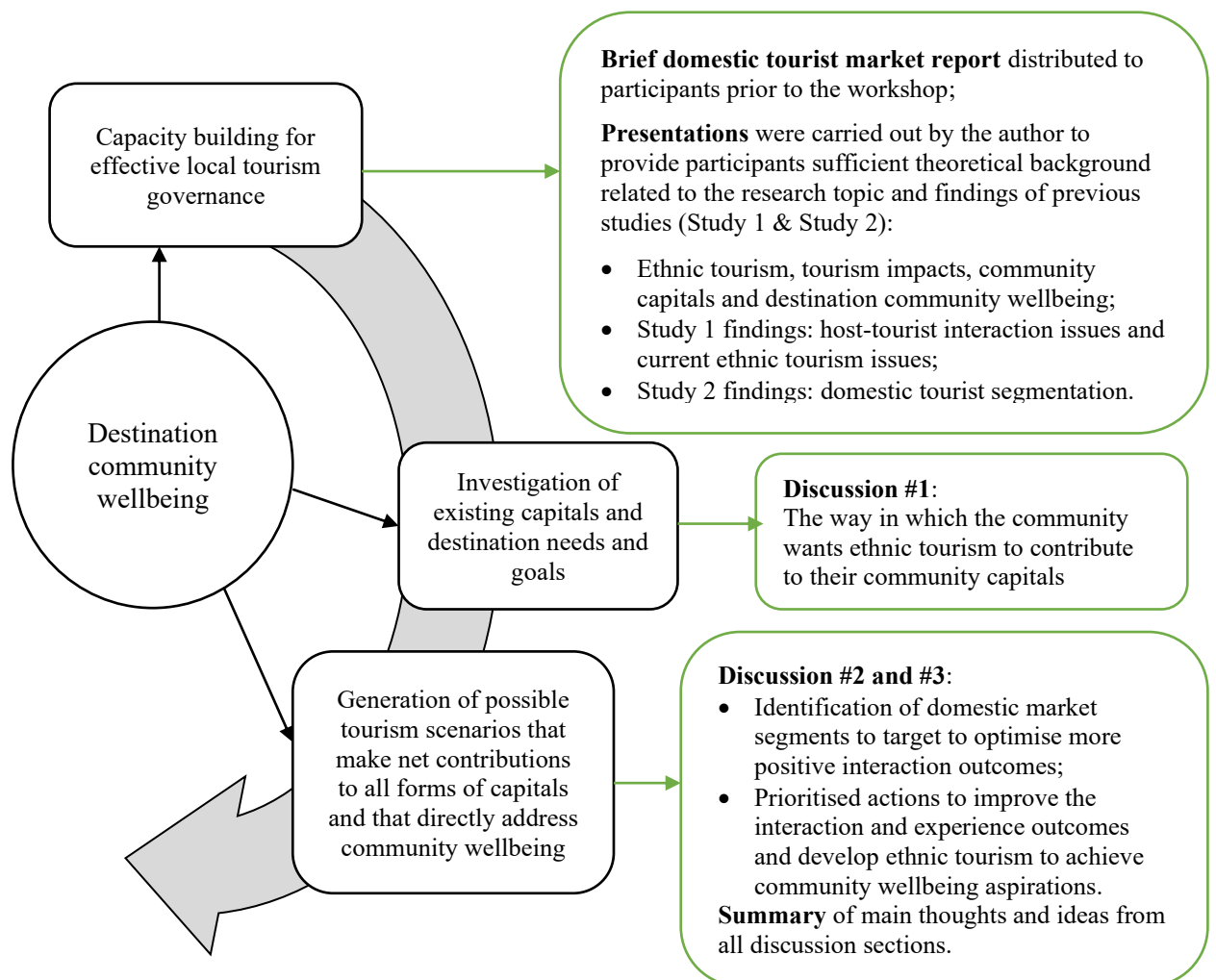
Note. Photos of the author and participants, used with permission

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The workshop consisted of three sections (see Figure 6.3). First, the author presented an overview of ethnic tourism, community capitals, and destination community wellbeing and key research findings (i.e., different levels of community participation in tourism in which major interaction difficulties encountered by both hosts and tourists, as well as ethnic tourist segmentation) (see Appendix L_2, M_2, N_2 in English version). Second, discussions were undertaken among five groups which were comprised of mixed stakeholder participants. The discussions comprised three sub-sessions/topics: the importance of existing community capitals within the community, targeted tourist segment(s), and prioritised actions to improve host-tourist interaction outcomes, thereby developing ethnic tourism as a tool contributing to destination community wellbeing. In the discussions, brainstorming and rapport-building were encouraged among all participants (Bertella et al., 2021). For each topic, participants' ideas were recorded on sticky notes, white A4 papers, and poster per each group. Subsequently, a representative of each group presented key points from the discussion to all participants. Lastly, the author summarised the main thoughts and ideas from the five groups about all three topics.

Figure 6.3

Conducted workshop process incorporating with the DCW tourism planning approach



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All participants were given a consent form to sign at the registration stage. The data collection procedure strictly followed Ethics Approval Number H8964 (see Appendix I). Data collected were notes, papers, photographs of discussion activities/work, and video recordings of the ‘presentation’ and ‘wrap-up’ sub-sessions in Vietnamese. The recording transcripts were transcribed verbatim in Vietnamese, then all collected materials were translated into English by the author. These video recordings assisted in further explaining written materials, understanding brief sentences, and capturing any additional information which might be missed in the materials collected.

Content analysis was utilised to analyse the data due to its capability of capturing a richer sense of concepts within textual data (Table 6.4). This method is commonly used in social science and tourism research (Nguyen et al., 2020; Pu et al., 2022). Content analysis can be seen as a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meanings (see Camprubí & Coromina, 2016). The written and recorded comments were carefully read through and first organised into three main categories addressing the three main questions/topics in the workshop. In each category, similar responses (e.g., short phrases, ideas, and concepts) were grouped together and colour coded to answer specific sub-questions. Themes were drawn in alignment with the Community Capitals Framework (#1 and #3) and three tourist segments based on previous study findings (#2).

Data from discussion #1 and #3 was used to better understand existing capitals within the community as well as their aspirational goals concerning interaction outcomes with tourists and the future of ethnic tourism. Regarding discussion #2, based on the presentation of tourist segmentation, participants were provided a detailed profile of each segment, how travel motivations influenced tourists’ interactions with ethnic hosts, particularly interaction difficulties, and how they perceived the quality of interactions, travel experience, and perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes in the village. Then, the participants were able to identify and chose to target visitors who have motivations and on-site interactions that are aligned with community aspirations.

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Table 6.4

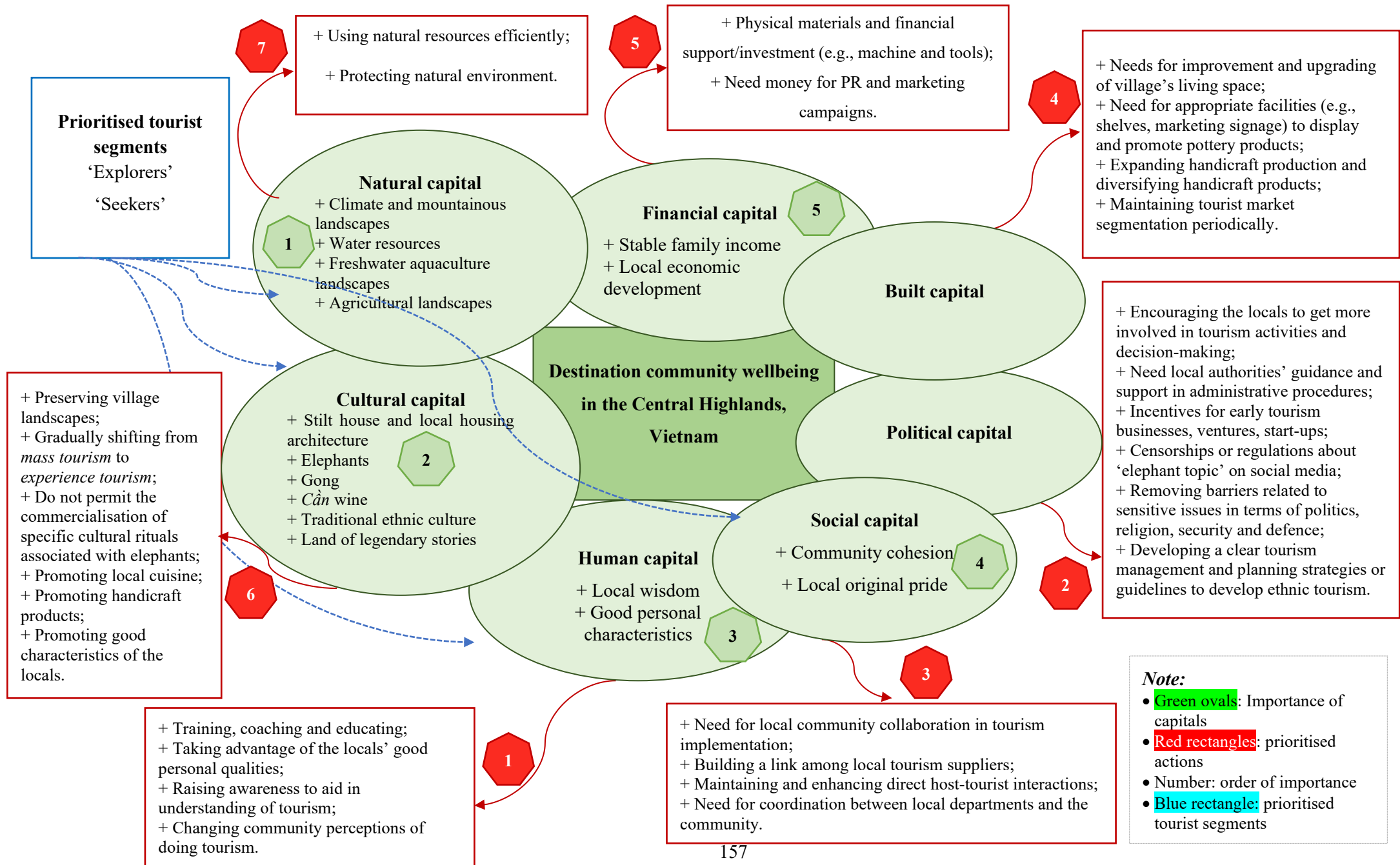
Preliminary data analysis summary

No.	Main categories/topics	Sub-questions	Themes
#1	The way in which the community wants ethnic tourism to contribute to community capitals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you like about living in Lak? What is important to your community wellbeing? What improvements are needed in capitals to improve host-tourist interactions outcomes and community wellbeing? How do you see tourism being able to contribute to improvements without spoiling what you like/want to preserve? 	Natural capital Cultural capital Human capital Social capital Political capital Financial capital Built capital
#2	Domestic market segments which the community wants to prioritise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which group of visitors do you want to serve for optimising positive interaction outcomes? Which type of tourism products and services are prioritised to provide to visitors? 	‘Explorers’ ‘Seekers’ ‘Enjoyers’
#3	Prioritised actions for ethnic tourism as a tool to achieve community wellbeing aspirations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which issues should be prioritised for action in engaging with target domestic visitors and developing ethnic tourism? 	Natural capital Cultural capital Human capital Social capital Political capital Financial capital Built capital

6.4 Results and Discussion

The following diagram (Figure 6.4) summarises key findings of the workshop. A holistic analysis of ethnic tourism strategies and planning is discussed by incorporating the Destination Community Wellbeing (DCW) Approach (Moscardo & Murphy, 2014) and Community Capitals framework (Emery & Flora, 2006). Placed in the centre of the diagram, local destination community wellbeing is the core aspirational goal of participants. Five community capitals represented in green ovals, with a descending importance order: *natural*, *cultural*, *human*, *social*, and *financial* reflect their reported importance to local community wellbeing. Nevertheless, all seven community capitals in red rectangles: *human*, *political*, *social*, *built*, *financial*, *cultural*, and *natural* reflect identified priority actions needed to make improvements in the host-tourist interaction in the context of ethnic tourism. Further, tourist segments in the blue rectangle were prioritised based on alignment with, and contribution to positive interaction outcomes and community capitals. As a result, stocks of *social capital* will first increase, then initiate an upward spiral across other capitals, directly contributing to improvements in all community capitals such that ethnic tourism will become a tool with possibilities for contributing to the destination community wellbeing.

Figure 6.4 Strategies to improve interaction outcomes and make ethnic tourism contributing to community wellbeing generated in the workshop in Lak in December 2022



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6.4.1 *Natural capital*

Participants argued that *natural capital* underpins several of the other capitals. *Natural capital assets* such as forests, mountainous landscapes, water resources, and freshwater aquaculture and agricultural landscapes, are important to their daily lives as well as community wellbeing. For example, the local living environment and culture are associated with forests and mountains. That is why researchers often call the Central Highlands ‘mountainous culture’, ‘highland culture’ or ‘upland culture’ (Kim & Tam, 2019). Group 2 emphasised that “*water resources provide us ingredients and food*” for feeding the locals and now provide visitors with local specialities, such as cooked dried tiny fish or shrimp (*Cá bóng rim* or *tép rim*) and *Thác Lác* fishcake (*chả cá Thác Lác*). Moreover, some households also make money through dugout canoe boating tours. Paddy fields paint an attractive landscape picture for the village and are also associated with traditional ethnic culture. As an older male participant (Group 2) shared that “*maintaining wet rice helps preserve our matriarchy*”.

These *natural capital* assets play a pivotal role in shaping physical settings in which host-tourist interactions take place (Su et al., 2014; Wong et al., 2020), thereby distinguishing interactions in the context of ethnic tourism from other forms of tourism. Particularly, ‘tour’ is one of the four distinct settings of such interactions in the ethnic tourism, and the opportunity to trek to the forest, participate in fishery tours on *Lắk* lake, as well as coffee or cocoa tours, allows visitors to understand local traditions while also providing a link to the natural environment.

Generally, participants recognised the enormous importance of *natural capital* to local community wellbeing. This capital not only forms a unique local living environment but also contributes to local economy. It shapes the basis of all the other capitals within the community and the physical settings of host-tourist interactions in the ethnic destination. Current *natural capital* seems not to be considered as needing urgent actions, perhaps a reflection of the fact that, so far, ethnic tourism has been perceived by the community as a useful means to preserve environmental features. Participants did suggest the importance of using natural resources efficiently in order to contribute to nature conservation (water, forest, ...). A local tour operator representative, for example, said, “*when visiting waterfalls and trekking to the forest, we must ensure not to litter. Moreover, Lắk lake is currently one of the largest natural freshwater lakes in the Central Highlands. So, developing tourism is necessary to protect its water resources and natural environment in general*” (Group 1). By doing so, favourable conditions for host-tourist interactions can be facilitated, thereby allowing visitors to explore local culture while helping to maintain a healthy ecosystem surrounding the community.

6.4.2 *Cultural capital*

As the ‘soul’ of ethnic tourism, the importance of *cultural capital* to daily life and community wellbeing was noted by all participants. The *cultural capital* assets of the village

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include communal stilt houses, elephants, Gong culture, *Cần* wine, and ethnic traditions. These assets are harmoniously connected with each other and strongly reflect ethnic identity. For instance, elephants and Gong culture are not only outstanding characteristics but also iconic ethnic tourism products of the Central Highlands. Elephants represent the strength of local villages and clans, and are also a sacred symbol, respected by all families in the village. All participants were very proud of their village's reputation as 'elephant land'. They further shared that, "*elephants are our cultural heritage. Our place has the largest number of elephants in the Central Highlands: 14 elephants out of 38 elephants in captivity used for tourism in Vietnam*" (Group 1). Gong culture is closely linked to daily life, the cycle of the seasons, and villagers' belief systems whereas *Cần* wine is an integral part in ethnic rituals and Gong festivals. Gong performances in ethnic tourism offer tourists insights into traditional culture and promote ethnic pride, as well as encouraging younger generations to learn how to play the Gong.

Cultural capital makes a significant contribution to meaningful content in host-tourist interactions. A variety of cultural capital assets enable hosts to foster intense interactions with tourists. However, both parties faced various difficulties in their interactions associated with cultural factors (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 4), consequently leading to negative experiences and resulting in a suggested shift from 'mass tourism' to 'experience tourism'. Participants emphasised that, rather than simply listening to/observing gongs, elephant riding, or dugout boating, the focus of ethnic tourism should switch to exploring and experiencing Gong culture and local daily life associated with elephants or dugout canoes. Furthermore, it was suggested that '*Than*' singing, '*Aray*' folklore, epic poetry, or oral storytelling should be delivered to visitors during home-visits or village tours to help visitors explore the cultural values which lie underneath these traditions. These experiences would also encourage future generations to understand their roots and feel proud of their unique cultural legacy, as stated by one group "*We inherited the traditional culture from our ancestors*" (Group 1). Ethnic tourism products should be based on educational values, aesthetics, environmental and cultural conservation. More specifically, participants listed additional priority actions;

- Prohibition of the commercialisation of specific cultural rituals associated with elephants (i.e., elephant's health worship);
- Promotion of local cuisine - showing visitors how to prepare and make local food, or getting visitors involved in the culinary process;
- Promotion of handicraft products - encouraging visitors to participate in handicraft-making procedures such as pottery making, bamboo knitting, *Cần* wine, and so on; and
- Promoting the good characteristics of local people - honesty, trustworthiness, and hospitality. Participants commented "*Good personal qualities belong to both human capital and cultural capital*" (Group 2).

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Such actions initially help to preserve ethnic culture and enhance different stocks of *cultural capital*. Subsequently, these actions have potential to offer more meaningful content in interactions which allow hosts to share their ethnic cultural values while satisfying tourists' motivation for learning local culture and interacting with hosts (see Chapter 5). Both parties can better understand each other, then overcome interaction challenges. In this way, they can achieve favourable interaction outcomes and foster co-creation of sustainable host-tourist relationships (Fan, Qiu, et al., 2020) which directly contribute to *social capital*. Meanwhile providing tourism products and services associated with *cultural capital* (e.g., Gong performance, *Càñ* wine, mahout, or local guide services) also helps locals make extra money and improve their household income (*financial capital*).

6.4.3 *Human capital*

Local wisdom reflects that villagers are knowledgeable about local culture, traditions, and taboos. This knowledge can be useful in ethnic tourism via local tour guide services or on-site interpretation activities. Good personal characteristics also become the locals' advantages when getting involved in tourism. Most participants identified the locals' distinctive qualities of gentleness, friendliness, and hospitality. They shared that "*It makes visitors impressed and revisit our village*" (Group 5). In turn, through ethnic tourism activities, the locals have opportunities to maintain and promote their local wisdom as well as personal qualities.

However, a local tourism entrepreneur shared that "*Local human resources lack tourism skills. They do not know customer service. Those who are good looking and have qualifications mostly leave our village to find better jobs in bigger cities or get married. The rest of human resources, who are still living in our village and working for local enterprises, are a bit slow, have poor performance and low working motivation*" (Group 3). Due to deficiencies in *human capital* – tourism and hospitality skills – villagers may face more interaction difficulties with tourists when providing ethnic tourism services. Consequently, the *spiralling down* effect (Emery & Flora, 2006) may happen within community capitals. The community may decline in one (i.e., *bridging social capital*) or all capital assets. Therefore, training programmes for local guides and tourism staff at all levels were suggested as a top priority action to make positive changes, as well as coaching and educating the local community. It was also emphasised that locals need to be equipped with communication skills in order to confidently communicate with visitors and even do upselling a variety of ethnic tourism products. Participants suggested providing craft-making opportunities to children and young people to preserve traditional craft techniques and handicraft-making skills, and opening short tourism courses/programmes to encourage young people to get a professional certification in tour guiding, housekeeping, homestay business, etc.

Harnessing the genuine characteristics of local (M'nong) people and their wisdom is necessary to get them involved in ethnic tourism. In turn, *human capital* will be improved

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accordingly. For example, it is reasonable to encourage some locals to become tour guides or on-site interpreters because they are honest, trustworthy, and knowledgeable about their own ethnic culture and familiar with local typographic features and rich experiences to trek in the forest. The advantages instil hosts with greater confidence in facilitating more meaningful and intense interactions. Accordingly, the content of interactions will be improved, thereby generating mutual understanding and fulfilling long-term social needs (i.e., friendship) (Su et al., 2014).

Raising awareness of tourism is required among the whole community. Those who are participating in tourism need to understand visitor preferences. More importantly, a participant stated that, *“each villager will be a single ring of the local tourism supply chain and also a ‘marketer’ to promote our ethnic tourism products and local tourism industry. For example, instead of letting visitors simply pass by a village and see pottery products as usual, a local tour guide should make visitors curious about the traditional products. He should introduce cultural values of local pottery products, encourage visitors to observe the pottery-making procedure, and learn how villagers work hard and how delicate they are to create each pottery item. As a result, visitors may want to directly buy pottery products from villagers”* (Group 1). In brief, tour guides should be aware of their role as middlemen to let visitors learn local culture via ethnic tourism products. By doing that, they are contributing to respecting humanity values and motivating local villagers to preserve their culture.

Changing community perceptions of doing tourism was also suggested by most participants. Rather than keeping conventional perceptions that serving visitors is only to earn money to better afford daily family needs, villagers now need to change their perceptions to focus on delivery of mutually beneficial tourism experiences that ensure positive word of mouth and return visitation, as well as positive contributions to community capitals. Additionally, another participant pointed out that; *“Many villagers’ ego is so big; therefore, it is too difficult to recruit them and get them trained. For them, tourism is just a part-time job, not a main income”* (Group 3). Therefore, changing the locals’ perceptions and attitudes towards visitors and tourism is crucial.

In short, *human capital* was strongly emphasised during workshop in which participants spoke frankly about their disadvantages such as limited capabilities, lack of tourism leadership, and poor awareness of tourism processes. These challenges not only hinder their interactions with tourists but also align with common barriers to the effective tourism development as summarised in Table 6.1 and many previous studies (e.g., Nguyen et al., 2020; Tosun, 2000; Zielinski et al., 2020). Future actions regarding *human capital* should be prioritised to first make improvements and then ‘ignite’ positive changes in host-tourist interaction outcomes (*social capital*) (Moscardo et al., 2017; Xiong et al., 2021), cultural and natural preservations (*cultural and natural capital*) (Yang, 2011), their empowerment in local tourism planning process (*political capital*) (Tian et

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al., 2021), and local households' income (*financial capital*) and overall quality of life (Yang & Li, 2012).

6.4.4 Social capital

Bonding social capital – the networks inside the community and their ethnic identity and pride were emphasised in discussions. Connections are based on family relationships, family lines and village life. Traditionally, all community members are encouraged to attend local festivals, weddings, funerals, or birthday celebrations and worship rituals (i.e., new house ceremonies, rice season greeting, and elephant's health). Ethnic pride was expressed by many participants; “*We were born and grew up over here. Our root is here: Our grandparents and parents are here; the next generations will also live here and love to live here*” (Group 3).

Building on strong ties, ethnic tourism enables different households to get involved together in tourism activities that help them strengthen social connections. For example, to deliver a Gong performance to visitors requires from 8 to 18 people in the village. Other households can offer *Cần* wine and traditional cuisine served with the performance. In the same vein, ethnic tourism supports locals to maintain traditional festivals and events that bring them together to attract visitors. However, participants emphasised one of the existing social issues within the community – a sense of jealousy that leads to difficulty in getting support from others to achieve community development. A participant gave an example; “*When I saw my neighbours had nothing better to do than drink, I asked them to do gardening in my restaurant venue for pay. But they refused because they thought that, if they worked for me, they would help me become richer than them in the community*” [...] *I think all of us need to admit our weakness to change. All of us need to think: how to do tourism better?*” (Group 3). Another participant stressed that; “*The future of local tourism depends on human and social capital. People over here do not necessarily need money. Instead, they need a good quality of life: good health, strong solidarity among the community, and a prosperous community*” (Group 5). Additionally, he suggested strengthening community cohesion by protecting Gong culture and distributing benefits fairly among the community because only a few households benefit from tourism, not all people in the village.

The first action identified with respect to *social capital* is the need for local community collaboration in tourism implementation. Building a link among local tourism suppliers was suggested. One group representative proposed to provide a fishing tour in which visitors can experience traditional fishery activities on *Lắk* lake (*cultural capital*) and buy local fishery specialities (e.g., *Thác Lác* fish cake, dried shrimp, or fresh goby) (*financial capital*). Maintaining and enhancing direct interactions between ethnic villagers and tourists was also discussed as one of the priority actions in developing ethnic tourism. This helps generate positive perceptions towards each other and makes visitors revisit the village. As a result, ethnic tourism can contribute to *bridging social capital* in the future. Additionally, participants indicated a need for

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coordination between local administrative departments and the community because of currently limited connection between authorities and local villagers.

Overall, the participants emphasised the strength of *bonding social capital* within the village despite still needing some improvements in community collaboration. Furthermore, many ideas and suggestions were generated to improve *bridging social capital* in terms of both host-tourist relationship and connections between the host community and other stakeholders.

6.4.5 *Financial capital*

While the value of a stable family income and the ease of trading local goods and services were emphasised by participants, responses from one group showed a desire for ethnic tourism to become not just a means of survival, but also a contributor to long-term sustainable livelihoods. They believed that ethnic tourism could help them achieve a stable family income, contributing to local economic development. Through ethnic tourism, local specialities and farming products are improved in both the quality and economic value in order to meet the needs of tourists who may make direct purchases or access the products through local restaurants, homestays, and shopping outlets. Indeed, tourists may open up markets beyond the village when taking products home to share with others and/or arrange for ongoing purchases directly from the local suppliers.

Physical materials and financial support/investment (e.g., machines and tools) in traditional pottery-making procedures are needed in ethnic tourism implementation. Local tourism will benefit from this by attracting more visitors to handicraft-making venues such as Yo Khoanh's house and her neighbours'. A favourable setting will offer more opportunities for hosts to easily share with tourists their traditional pottery as well as ethnic cultural values behind each product. Furthermore, participants also expressed the need for funding for PR and marketing campaigns. Aligned with target segments – *Explorers* and *Seekers*, appropriate marketing communication tools (e.g., social media) need to be invested in to better reach both segments and provide them with the right sort of information. By doing that, attractive ethnic destination images and messages will be promoted to the target segments, thereby generating more favourable interactions between them and hosts.

6.4.6 *Political capital*

Discussions of *political capital* mostly focused on what improvements and actions are needed. More specifically, there was a consensus on the need to enhance community participation in local tourism meetings and other administrative activities, enabling villagers to wield greater influence in ethnic tourism planning. This suggestion is consistent with Study 1 and findings from previous studies (e.g., Bramwell, 2014; Nunkoo, 2017) which have highlighted the limited opportunities for community participation in local tourism governance and planning. Apart from the planning process and decision-making, local villagers can also engage in ongoing tourism

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management through direct participation in tourism businesses or practices (Moscardo, 2023). However, to improve *political capital*, local tourism enterprises/ventures require guidance and support from local authorities and administrative agencies in terms of administrative procedures, paperwork for taxes, food hygiene, safety and security, and emergency procedures and evacuation. A local restaurant owner honestly shared that;

“At the end of this year, the food safety office team came to my restaurant for checking. They went into the kitchen and found that chicken feathers were on the floor. Then, they were going to issue a fine. To be honest, ... to solve the problem, I needed to offer them a bribe. Everything was sorted out. I think it is a very bad thing in our political mechanism. Similarly, it happens to tax procedure as well” (Group 3).

Young tourism entrepreneurs strongly suggested that the local government offer policies and incentives to assist their business in the early stages of development and operation. This not only motivates them to pursue tourism business but also helps them avoid failure.

Censorships or regulations about the ‘elephant topic’ on social media generated much discussion during the workshop. A representative of Group 3 explained; *“by using wrong words like ‘violating elephant via elephant riding’ or ‘elephant riding issues’ in broadcasts, the media misinterprets the public, negatively impacting local tourism and mahout jobs”*. More specifically, elephant riding tours are not necessarily the main reason for the decline in elephant population. The participant further clarified; *“Two or three people sitting on an elephant’s back are not a big deal compared to three or four huge wooden trees from our forest which weigh 20-30 tons. An elephant could easily carry those trees to help our ancestors build a house many years ago. For me, there are several reasons for a decline in elephant population. First, the main reason is that elephants are aging. They are so old now. Second, there are currently not enough forest or green areas to feed elephants”* (Group 3). In short, there are many reasons for the decline of elephants, not just elephant riding. If elephant riding tour is forbidden, the number of visitor arrivals will probably decrease. The need for clearer tourism management and planning strategies or guidelines was suggested to develop ethnic tourism. Participants further proposed clearer instructions, guidelines, and regulations to ensure sustainable tourism development (do’s/don’ts) and codes of conduct and restrictions in tourist attractions/areas.

Removing barriers related to sensitive issues in terms of politics, religion, security and defence in designing and providing village tours or trekking tours to remote areas is required. The issue re-affirms the geographical disadvantages in the ethnic tourism context (Carr et al., 2016). For example, a local tour guide said; *“It is difficult to run a tour programme which takes visitors to visit, stay overnight, and experience ethnic village lifestyle in some specific areas. Local police or defence will stop both tour guides and visitors to ask the official permission or even require us to cancel the tour”* (Group 4). In this vein, it is necessary to establish coordination between different stakeholders, such as local police, army, the local tourism department, and tourism

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companies, to provide clear information on which villages are accessible to tourists or which tour programmes are permitted to let visitors stay overnight in some remote villages. For example, at the provincial level, the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism (DCST) should communicate with other government agencies (public security/police, army, Department of Natural Resources and Environment) at the same level, then consult the Provincial People's Committee for issuing legal documents and clearer regulations related to ethnic tourism. The documents must be thoroughly distributed to lower governmental levels (district, commune, and hamlet/village). The DCST is responsible for not only spreading the documents promptly to tourism companies/practitioners but also liaising between the tourism industry and local government agencies.

In brief, improvements in *political capital* will initially empower locals in the tourism planning process and enable their tourism business to run smoothly. As a result, local tourism entrepreneurs can have more time to find ways to improve the host-tourist interactions and experience outcomes by creating favourable conditions and training staff (enhancing *human capital*) at all levels to overcome interaction difficulties. Furthermore, such improvements will probably help overcome the weaknesses of the existing governance structure. Tourism practitioners can avoid socio-political issues in ethnic tourism service provision, facilitating positive host-tourist interactions in some specific settings (i.e., remote village tours). Broadly, community empowerment is a managerial solution to sustainability (Li & Hunter, 2015).

6.4.7 *Built capital*

Participants' ideas about *built capital* reveal the need for improvements in a variety of physical facilities that support ethnic tourism. The ideas are also incorporated with priority actions suggested during the workshop. More specifically, participants pointed out their needs for;

- Improvement and upgrading of village's living space, for example, participants commented that "*toilets in private houses need to be upgraded, cleaned to first meet locals' basic needs, ensure their health, and then serve visitors*" (Group 1);
- Provision of appropriate facilities (e.g., shelves, marketing signages) to display and promote pottery products, thereby increasing their accessibility to visitors;
- Expansion of handicraft production facilities and the diversification of handicraft products such as bamboo toothpicks, pottery rice cookers, steamed sticky rice bowls;
- Adherence to the local tourism planning and architectural planning (e.g., general rural construction planning, signages, village map, etc) to facilitate residential and tourism facility construction; and
- Periodic evaluation of tourist market segmentation is necessary to enable DMOs to make decision in the destination marketing process. As a result, they identify potential markets

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that are likely to be interested in the ethnic destination's attractiveness while also maintaining or improving local *built capital* correspondingly.

By following the first two steps of the DCW approach, local capacity to understand and manage tourism planning in ways that both improve host-tourist interaction outcomes and positively contribute to community capitals was advanced. Discussions about current stocks of various community capitals were carried out and all current capitals were identified as needing improvement to meet their aspirational goals. Notably, *natural*, *cultural*, and *human* capital were strongly emphasised because of their importance to community well-being and their direct influence on the nature of host-tourist interactions and outcomes.

The next step - generating future tourism scenarios involved the evaluation of target markets based on detailed profiles of three visitor segments, how they interacted with local villagers, what difficulties they encountered, and how they perceived interaction quality and outcomes of ethnic tourism experiences. In order to make positive contributions to the five capitals which participants considered as important to local community wellbeing, participants prioritised two segments – *Explorers* and *Seekers* for future ethnic tourism scenarios.

All five participant groups chose *Explorers* as the top priority segment, explaining that it is desirable to attract *Explorers* to let them “*explore and learn indigenous culture, local natural landscape, rustic lifestyle, and a way of life of M'nong people over here*” (Group 2). The second priority segment were *Seekers* – who are attracted by various existing elements of community capitals. Both segments were prioritised because of their potential to make direct contributions to improvements in *natural*, *cultural*, *human*, and *social capital*. Notably, participants mostly emphasised the desirability of *Explorers* and *Seekers* to facilitate both natural exploration and cultural experiences that not only meets visitors' motivation but also directly contributes to promoting *natural* and *cultural capital*.

Regarding improvements in *human* and *social capital*, both segments were more likely to interact with villagers in a range of intensity levels. They seemed to face fewer interaction difficulties and have more positive interaction outcomes. By focusing on these two segments, good personal qualities of *human capital* within a community can be encouraged, increasing favourable interaction outcomes, and building up mutual relationships between ethnic hosts and targeted visitors which enhance *bridging social capital*.

Interestingly, although participants found *Enjoyers* want to enjoy local cuisine and Gong performances, it was perceived that “*They are more likely to be interested in entertaining rather than learning ethnic culture*” (Group 5). Some participants also suggested that local tourism practitioners somehow need to pay attention to *Enjoyers* and understand a diversity of mass market demands and update all tourists' trendy tastes.

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Along with the two prioritised segments, participants recommended a combination of ethnic tourism products which allow targeted visitors to explore and experience both local natural landscapes and ethnic culture. Group 4 stated that; *“We need to design new tourism product which let visitors stay overnight and stay longer in our village instead of usual daily tours (e.g., visiting Lak lake, taking elephant riding tour, short visitation without stay overnight)”*. Specific ethnic tourism products and service suggestions are listed in Table 6.5. The recommended ethnic tourism products and services above are directly linked to three capitals: *natural*, *cultural*, and *built*, all of which embody fundamental features of ethnic tourism. These attributes also form the nature of host-tourist interactions in the ethnic tourism context. By emphasising provision of these tourism products, participants anticipated an increase in opportunities for more intense and positive interactions that will enable both hosts and tourists to get to know and understand each other, thereby minimising interaction difficulties and yielding positive interaction outcomes.

Table 6.5

Ethnic tourism products and services recommended

Community capitals	Specific elements of the capital	Prioritised tourism products and services
Natural	Water resources	+ Waterfall bathing harmony with nature + Dugout canoe boating
	Mountains and forests	+ Trekking and climbing tours + Camping and picnic + ‘Cloud hunting’ tour from Chur Yang Lăk mountain peak – currently the most beautiful mountain for ‘clouding hunting’ in the South of Vietnam
	Natural landscapes	+ Outdoor BBQ and live acoustic singing and dancing + Sunrise/sunset watching
	Agricultural landscapes	Farming tours: Learning and experiencing local farming activities: annatto, pepper, cashew, cocoa, Robusta & Arabica coffee.
Cultural	Elephants	Elephant-friendly tourism products such as bathing, watching, photographing, feeding, or trekking to the woods with elephants
	Gong culture	Gong performances
	Pottery	Handicraft tours: Participating in pottery making and learning about local culture through pottery products.
	Cuisine	+ Choosing a typical dish which is reasonable price to serve visitors (e.g., <i>Pai tắk túp</i> – ‘volcanic bamboo shoot soup’)
		+ Cooking class which uses local ingredients and farming products
Built	Communal house	Visiting and learning about the traditional architecture
	Residential house	Homestay

Note. Elaborated by the author

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6.5 Summary and Implications

A noteworthy finding of this research highlights the distinction between which capitals are important to local community wellbeing and which capitals need to be prioritised for actions to improve the outcomes of host-tourist interaction and long-term ethnic tourism. Participants in all five groups discussed the top three capitals - *natural*, *cultural*, and *human* and their contribution to facilitating favourable conditions for host-tourist interactions and community wellbeing in general, while also suggesting prioritised actions in *human*, *political*, and *social capital*. It is evident that *natural* and *cultural capital* are fundamental to the lives and wellbeing of ethnic minorities in the region. Aligned with participants' perceptions of the importance of *natural* and *cultural capital*, prioritised tourist segments and ethnic tourism products were suggested to offer more extensive and intense interactions in which both parties have more opportunities to learn about one another, thereby achieving positive interaction outcomes.

The overlap of *human capital* in both discussions about what is important and what needs improvement underscores the advantages and disadvantages of local people's abilities and characteristics. Due to cultural 'exoticism', villagers themselves understand their ethnic culture better than anyone else, which is useful and can be improved in ethnic tourism implementation. Additionally, villagers are recognised to be 'naïve', 'honest', and 'hospitable'. The advantage of personal attributes will make visitors desire interactions with locals (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). However, local villagers lack tourism knowledge and skills, as well as have poor awareness of tourism impacts on their community place *human capital* as the top priority action through education, training, and improving community perceptions of tourism.

Improvements in *human capital* are not only meaningful for enhancing the ability of locals to participate in tourism decision-making, but also crucial to the ability to deliver meaningful and satisfactory experience to the targeted tourist segments - *Explorers* and *Seekers*. These segments are highly motivated to learn about ethnic culture and interact with the locals and are more likely to engage in a variety of interaction intensity levels. It is argued that improvements and investments in existing *human capital* will lead to increases in stocks of other capitals. This is a starting point for positive community change according to Emery and Flora's *spiralling-up* effect (2006).

Participants also suggested improvement in *political* and *social capital* as the second-highest priority. Greater community empowerment in tourism planning and community collaboration were suggested to resolve urgent problems existing within the community. Furthermore, young representatives of tourism start-ups in Lak sought guidance from local authorities in administrative procedures and incentives for their tourism business operations. Improvements in these two capitals can indirectly facilitate more favourable visitor experiences

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and the hosts' capacity to overcome interaction difficulties. Additionally, suggestions in the area of *political capital* not only help the younger generation succeed in their ethnic tourism start-ups but contribute positively to *human capital*, harnessing the enthusiasm of youth. Consistent with the key principle – 'success leading to success' of the Community Capitals Framework (Emery & Flora, 2006), this study found that despite improvements needed in all seven capitals, three capitals - *human*, *political*, and *social* are prerequisites in implementing ethnic tourism to increase positive changes in *cultural*, *natural*, *financial*, and *built capital*.

This study highlights the complex dynamic of a 'symbiotic relationship' among seven community capitals in the enhancement of host-tourist interaction outcomes in the context of ethnic tourism. Unique *natural* and *cultural capital* shape the nature of host-tourist interactions in the ethnic tourism context. Furthermore, the advantages of local *human capital* are a personal attraction for visitors who want to interact with hosts. Yet both parties encounter a variety of interaction difficulties that influence their experiences and perceptions of each other. From the host side, improvements in *human* and *social capital* will directly enable local people to navigate interactions confidently and deal with interaction difficulties, particularly with tourists from different cultural backgrounds (Fan, Qiu, et al., 2020; Pearce et al., 1998). Meanwhile, actions in *political capital* indirectly contribute to facilitating favourable conditions for host-tourist interactions in ethnic tourism. As a result, locals will engage more with tourists, exhibit their pride in ethnic culture, and preserve local natural resources (Su et al., 2014). Following this line, *social*, *natural*, and *cultural capital* are promoted in ethnic tourism. Locals are also empowered in tourism planning process to choose scenarios for improving *built*, *financial*, and *political capital*.

This study argues that positive interaction outcomes are an initial step to make improvements in *social capital* and contribute to increasing stocks of other capitals. However, to achieve positive outcomes, investments in *human capital* are the top priority. Again, the finding re-affirms the interrelationships, interdependencies, and synergies among the capitals (Flora, 2004) so that the community is 'trained' to be able to identify potential strategies and process of change, instead of being offered 'recipes', to use ethnic tourism as a tool contributing to local destination community wellbeing (Gutierrez-montes et al., 2009).

Interestingly, the importance of *financial capital* was under-emphasised in workshop discussions. The finding indicates that villagers were more concerned about the natural environmental, cultural conservation, and social networks than economic return, which is often recognised as one of the most popular benefits and a primary goal in many tourism projects associated with the poor/marginalised communities (e.g., Feng & Li, 2020). Perhaps this perspective of villagers can be an advantage to move towards destination community wellbeing by using appropriate ethnic tourism scenarios which pay more attention to all community capitals than only economic.

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This study demonstrates a contrasting picture of ethnic tourism in Lak (the Central Highlands, Vietnam) compared to another case study of community-based ecotourism (CBE) in Bilit village (Sabah, Malaysia) (Kunjuraman, 2022). In the current study, Lak youngsters were enthusiastic about participating in ethnic tourism. They were more interested in protecting natural resources and ethnic culture via tourism, contributing to improving local families' income. Importantly, they became a 'bridge' to convince and connect the elderly (e.g., Gong performers, dancers, craft-makers, wooden-carvers) to contribute their *human capital* to local tourism. The youth inspire elder villagers to get more involved in ethnic tourism. By contrast, only the older generation (i.e., homestay hosts are above 40 years old) participates in community-based tourism in Bilit village, and Kunjuraman (2022) identified the lack of interest by the younger generation as one of the challenges limiting sustainability of the CBE project in Bilit.

The findings show that the importance of capitals to community wellbeing varies from community to community or context to context. For example, the current study reveals that prioritised actions should be in *human* and *political capital* in the Central Highlands, Vietnam, while work by Shueb-Ur-Rahman et al. (2021) showed that, *social* and *cultural capital* have a considerable influence on improved destination community outcomes via tourism resource governance co-management in a remote area of Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh.

A significant implication of this research is that the incorporation of the Community Capitals Framework and DCW tourism planning approach is applicable to both developed (e.g., Magnetic Island, Atherton Tablelands, Bowen, and Whitsundays of Australia) and developing contexts (e.g., Can Tho and the Central Highlands of Vietnam), wherein the local community is centred to generate the tourism action plan for the destination. In this vein, the study responds to the criticism raised by Moscardo and Murphy (2015) and Moscardo (2023) regarding the effective rural community development strategy. The contribution of this study lies in an effort to utilise an alternative approach to understanding the local community capitals and contributing to poverty reduction as well as destination community wellbeing (Baker, 2008; Flora, 2004; Gutierrez-montes et al., 2009).

This study also adds to the application of community workshop methodology in tourism research (e.g., Benckendorff et al., 2009; Moscardo & Murphy, 2015; Ørngreen & Levinsen, 2017). The workshop allowed different stakeholder participants to identify and discuss some challenging problems which exist in community capitals (e.g., *human*, *social*, and *political*).

Time management is challenging when conducting the workshop. Participants were perhaps more interested in certain topics/questions than others, causing them to spend more time on such topics. Due to time and financial constraints, the current research stops at the generation of possible tourism scenarios step in which priority actions have been produced. The author

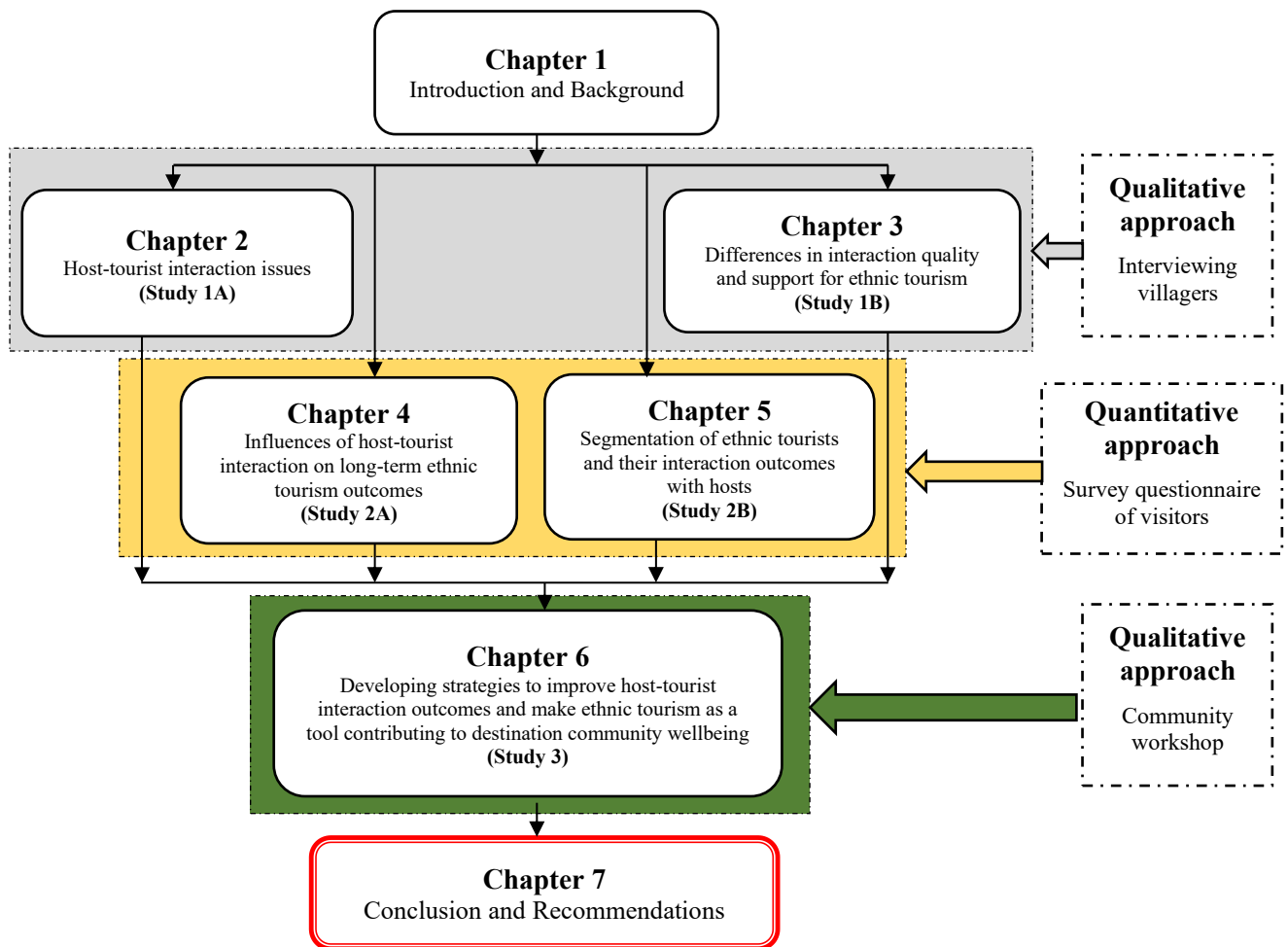
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suggests future research should continue this research in next steps of the DCW tourism planning approach to help local community achieve sustainable long-term ethnic tourism development in the Central Highlands region. Further, this approach can be used in other contexts with a different importance order of capitals within the community to explore its insight from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

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CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter synthesises the thesis in a holistic manner, and integrates the findings and implications from all three studies in this research. Theoretical and practical contributions of the research are highlighted. The limitations of this research are also addressed and subsequent recommendations for future studies are suggested. The last section of this chapter contains concluding remarks of this thesis.



7.1 Introduction

Host-tourist interaction is a core attraction of ethnic tourism, which is characterised by ‘exotic’ culture and ‘quaint’ people (Smith, 1989). Such unfamiliarity demonstrates cultural differences between hosts and tourists. Consequently, both parties confront challenges in such interaction that can negatively influence both hosts’ and tourists’ perceptions of each other and their experiences in ethnic tourism (Pearce, 1982; Reisinger & Turner, 2003; Su et al., 2014). While most of the existing research has focused on interactions between hosts and international tourists, namely cross-/inter-cultural interaction, there is a dearth of research on the interaction between hosts and domestic tourists in an intra-national context and the impact of interaction quality on ethnic tourism outcomes. Despite growing attention, insight into such interactions still remains insufficient, particularly in the context of ethnic tourism. Meanwhile three components of the interactions, including physical settings, content, and difficulties, are complex and nuanced in the ethnic tourism context. Furthermore, because host-tourist interaction is bidirectional (Su & Wall, 2010), it is necessary to investigate the interaction from both hosts and tourists’ perspectives.

Despite the great potential ethnic tourism, to date no study has been conducted in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, particularly on the topic of host-tourist interaction. Improving interaction outcomes will be helpful in increasing the stock of social capital in the host community. This is the initiating factor in the ‘*spiralling up*’ process to improve other community capitals (Emery & Flora, 2006). Ultimately, ethnic tourism can become a tool contributing to local destination community wellbeing.

To fill the knowledge gap, the present thesis was carried out by adopting the post-positivist paradigm and using a mixed-methods approach to investigate issues associated with host-tourist interaction and identify ways to improve interaction outcomes. Further, the research also highlighted how ethnic tourism can be used as a tool contributing to destination community wellbeing. Three studies were conducted to address five specific research objectives. More specifically, the five objectives were:

1. To understand the fundamental characteristics and features of host interactions with tourists in ethnic villages in the Central Highlands, Vietnam (Study 1A);
2. To explore differences in community perceptions of interaction quality and support for ethnic tourism based on the fundamental characteristics and features and level of tourism development (Study 1B);
3. To investigate the extent to which interactions with hosts influence tourists’ perceived long-term outcomes of ethnic tourism (Study 2A);

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4. To examine the relationship between tourist motives for visiting ethnic tourism destinations and the fundamental characteristics and features, quality of interactions, attitudinal and behavioural outcomes, and perceptions of the long-term outcomes of ethnic tourism (Study 2B); and
5. To engage with locals of a selected ethnic community to generate strategies to improve host-tourist interaction outcomes and develop ethnic tourism experiences that contribute to local destination community wellbeing (Study 3).

The conceptual framework was developed (see Figure 1.7 in Chapter 1) to guide the research by conceptualising a literature review and integrating four theoretical approaches: Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory (Pearce & Cronen, 1980), Travel Career Pattern (TCP) model (Pearce & Lee, 2005), Community Capitals Framework (CCF) (Emery & Flora, 2006), and Destination Community Wellbeing (DCW) Tourism Planning approach (Moscardo & Murphy, 2014). In Study 1, CMM theory was used to guide the author while conducting semi-structured interviews with ethnic villagers in order to explore the nature of host-tourist interaction, especially interaction difficulties which villagers encountered with domestic tourists. CMM also helped to outline various interaction difficulties aligned with its six contextual components. Then, it assisted in interpreting and understanding more thoroughly the six themes of interaction difficulties.

In Study 2, CMM was used to inform the design of a questionnaire and develop a construct to measure interaction difficulties from the perspective of tourists. To the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first quantitative tourism research utilising CMM to investigate interaction difficulties in the intra-national context. Additionally, the Travel Career Pattern model helped to explain tourists' travel motivation and how it is aligned with tourism experiences, their attitudes and perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes. Market segmentation based on travel motivation was carried out to group ethnic tourists to enable host communities to determine which specific segments should be prioritised to achieve better host-tourist interaction outcomes.

In Study 3, the Community Capitals Framework (CCF) and Destination Community Wellbeing (DCW) Tourism Planning approach were incorporated to investigate current stocks of community capitals and understand the interrelationship among different community capitals. Both CCF and DCW approaches were applied in one destination community to build the capacity of locals to identify ways to improve host-tourist interaction and select possible ethnic tourism scenarios that make positive contributions to all forms of capital and address community aspirational goals.

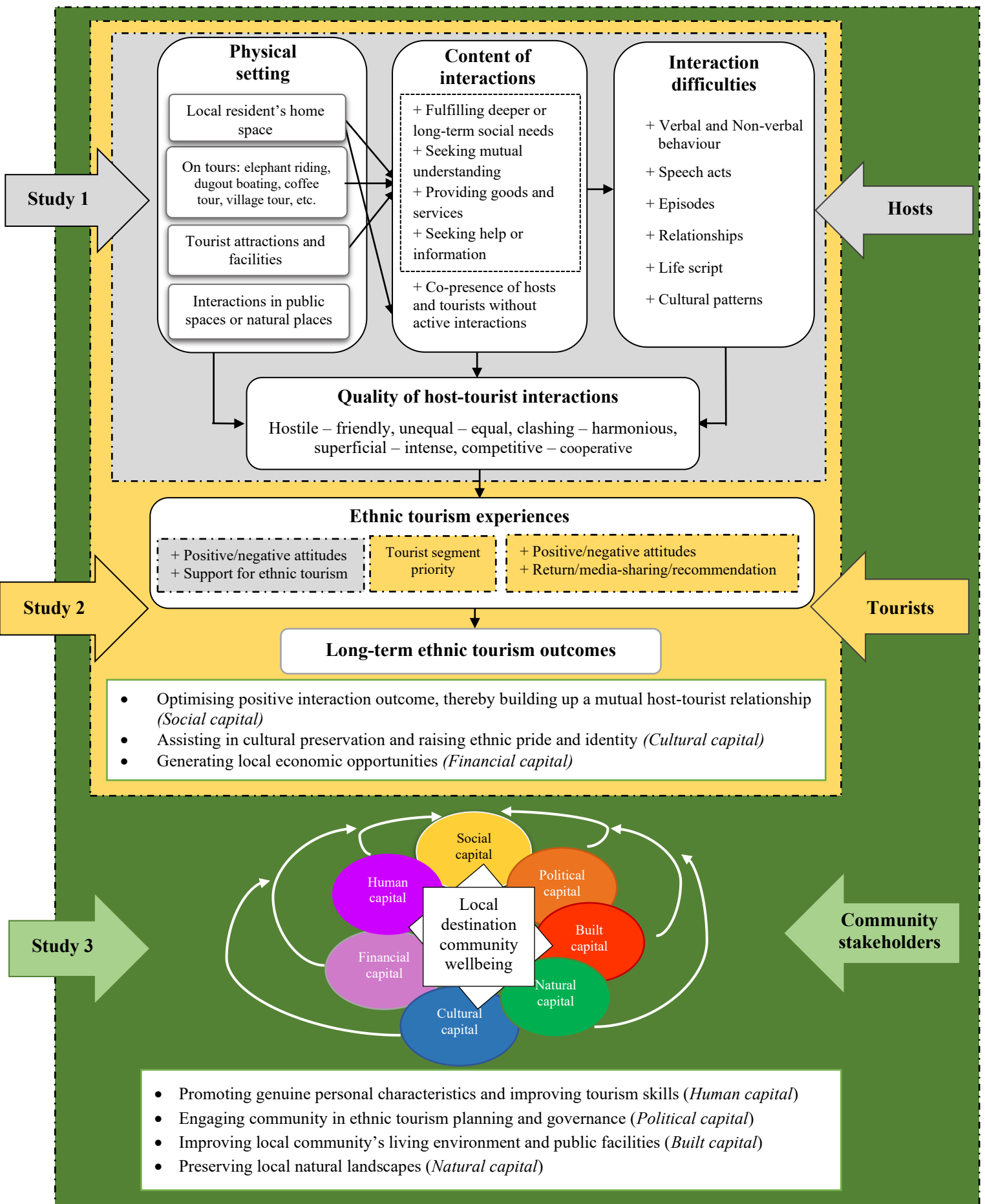
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7.2 Synthesis of research findings

Figure 7.1 provides a visual summary of research findings from the three related studies, providing insight into interactions between hosts and domestic tourists in the ethnic tourism context. Further, a broader view is presented with a connection of host-tourist interactions to local destination community wellbeing, such that proposed strategies to improve interaction quality in ethnic tourism can offer a possibility for ethnic tourism to be used as a tool to address community aspirations.

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Figure 7.1 Summary of research findings



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7.2.1 *Complexity of the host-tourist interaction: physical settings, content, difficulties, and quality*

A particular highlight of this thesis is credible explanation of complex insight into host-tourist interaction in the ethnic tourism context. Three elements – physical setting, content, and difficulties – were simultaneously considered to evaluate the quality of interaction. Four specific physical settings were identified: local private house, tours (e.g., elephant riding, canoe dugout boating, village tour, etc.), tourist attractions and facilities, and public spaces. In these settings, the content of interaction varied across five intensity levels from low to high: co-presence without active interactions, seeking help or information, providing goods and services, seeking mutual understanding, and fulfilling deeper social needs. Notably, both hosts and tourists encountered interaction difficulties across the four settings. The difficulties were found in six contextual elements: verbal and non-verbal behaviour, speech acts, episodes, relationships, life script, and cultural patterns.

Due to distinctive characteristics, the influences of each setting on content, difficulties, and interaction quality differed. A local private house had positive influences on interaction content and quality, and reduced interaction difficulties (see Chapter 4). The house is a unique space, providing tourists close physical proximity and the opportunity to learn about local social rules as well as ethnic culture. As a result, tourists could avoid certain difficulties whereas hosts appeared more tolerant of tourists' unexpected behaviours. In the local private house, host-tourist interactions were more likely to occur at high intensity levels. Therefore, both parties found their interaction friendly, harmonious, or intense. Although tourists sometimes just passed by the local house and took photographs without any interaction with hosts (see Chapter 2), these incidents perhaps occurred very rarely. Again, this research re-affirms the uniqueness of local house where intense interactions took place, fostering favourable quality within the context of ethnic tourism as found in previous research (Domenico & Lynch, 2007; Zhang et al., 2017).

Tours and tourist attractions and facilities negatively influenced satisfaction with content but did not significantly influence difficulties or quality of interaction. A variability of intensity levels in the two settings helped to explain this result. More specifically, elephant riding tours and Gong performances at the ethnic tourist attraction points are iconic, prominent tourism products in the Central Highlands. Tourists could be offered opportunities to explore the elephant habitat or Gong culture and engage closely with villagers to better understand local way of life. However, during peak seasons, elephant tour itineraries were often shortened to accommodate back-to-back bookings. Meanwhile larger Gong venues were required and even Gong performance agenda could be modified to serve a larger number of visitors. Consequently, content of interactions became superficial and brief in such instances, whereby both hosts and tourists stopped at the commercial relationship.

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Public space had no influence on the content, difficulties, or quality of interaction. The explanation for this result could be that tourists briefly interacted with hosts in public settings to seek information or simply via random co-presence without any active interaction. As expected, this lack of effect might be attributed to the absence of shared space or physical interaction.

The present thesis highlights a clear and significant relationship among content, difficulties, and quality of interactions. Greater satisfaction with interaction content led to fewer perceived difficulties and a more positive interaction quality, regardless of the intensity levels. Moreover, interaction difficulties had a negative influence on perceived quality of interactions.

7.2.2 The relationship between community-related factors and interaction quality shapes the host attitudes towards ethnic tourism

Results indicate more positive interaction led to more positive attitudes of hosts towards tourism development in the locality and stronger support for ethnic tourism. This is consistent with previous tourism research (Carneiro et al., 2018; Fan et al., 2019; Joo et al., 2018; Su et al., 2014). It is noteworthy that the quality of interaction was aligned with socio-psychological aspects within the community including cultural capital, social capital, participation level in tourism, and perceptions of tourism impacts. For example, as found in Chapter 3, Lak and Lac Duong villagers had high awareness of their pride and ethnic identity (cultural capital). Both communities possessed close ties in bonding social capital and Lac Duong had stronger bridging capital as they were more well-connected with other tourism stakeholders (e.g., tour operators, travel agencies, hotels, and tourism marketers). Villagers in two communities were participating in local tourism at high levels, and they tended to be more willing as well as confident with interacting with tourists. In this vein, they were more likely to find such interactions to be positive. Despite perceptions of both positive and negative impacts of ethnic tourism, they were still more likely to support ethnic tourism development. Notably, compared to other communities, Lac Duong villagers participated in tourism at the highest level, and they perceived interaction more positively, with active management of such interaction. That is consistent with their supportive attitude and a desire for decision-making involvement.

By contrast, due to poor acknowledgement of cultural capital and weak links between the community and other tourism stakeholders, Buon Don was less interested in tourism participation. This resulted in limited and superficial interactions with tourists, thereby the quality of interactions was perceived as both positive and negative. Likewise, they perceived tourism impacts on their community both positively and negatively. Although some participants expressed their supportive attitude towards ethnic tourism, such attitudes came from their perceptions of economic benefits while others did not care or lacked support for tourism.

At an early stage of tourism development, Kon Ko Tu was very proud of their cultural values and still maintained closely knitted bonding social capital while heavily depending on

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outsiders for tourism implementation. They seemed to passively participate in local tourism activities and were less confident in interacting with tourists. Despite perceived positive interaction, this sentiment depended on situational factors. Following this, villagers believed tourism has not negatively impacted their community yet, thereby were more likely to support tourism development but their voice was weak and ambivalent.

7.2.3 Salient influence of interaction quality on tourists' attitudes and intentional behaviours, resulting in positive perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes

Consistent with existing tourism research findings (Lin et al., 2019; Stylidis, 2020; Su et al., 2022; Wong et al., 2020), this thesis demonstrates the positive influence of interaction quality on tourists' attitudes and intentional behaviours, subsequently on their perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes. More favourable interaction resulted in more positive attitudes towards hosts and the ethnic community compared to pre-visit. Therefore, tourists will share their positive experiences about the Central Highlands on social media, want to return to the Central Highlands in the future, and recommend the Central Highlands to others (see Chapter 4).

As such, tourists gained more positive perceptions of long-term ethnic tourism outcomes regarding cultural, social, and economic aspect. For example, they wanted to learn hosts' language as well as ethnic culture, maintain an ongoing mutual relationship with the hosts, and believe in the contribution of tourism to local households' income. The finding reaffirms that interaction quality can facilitate the development of image and loyalty that assists in sustainable planning and marketing of the destination (Stylidis, 2020; Stylidis et al., 2021).

7.2.4 Segment priority – 'Explorers' and 'Seekers' – as an option to enhance positive interaction quality and greater ethnic tourism experiences

Based on travel motivation, three segments of ethnic tourists were identified in the present thesis. Two out of three segments, *Explorers* and *Seekers* were the most appropriate target tourists to enhance positive interaction quality and contribute to positive outcomes for the community (see Chapter 5). Both segments were motivated by local scenery, ethnic culture, and interaction with hosts which are core components of an ethnic destination. Particularly, they were likely to interact with hosts in various settings closely associated with ethnic culture such as local private house, traditional communal house, Gong venues, or even local markets or on the street to explore daily local way of life. In such settings, the two segments appeared to interact more with hosts in all intensity levels: for instance, exchanging gifts or personal contact with hosts for future communication, tasting ethnic cuisine, participating in Gong performances/local events, and handicraft-making procedure. Further, they also sought local travel recommendations, had a short chat, or took photographs with hosts.

Although both target segments were less likely to experience interaction difficulties compared to *Enjoyers*, they could not avoid challenges in their interactions with hosts. Hence,

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improvements in local human resources were suggested regarding communication skills, hospitality skills, proficiency in Kinh language, work performance and attitudes, and awareness of tourism. Currently, *Seekers* rated the interaction quality quite high and agreed that ethnic tourism makes positive social, cultural, and economic contributions to the local community whereas *Explorers* rated the quality of interaction as moderately positive. Subsequently, *Explorers* expressed neutral opinions on ethnic tourism outcomes contributing to the local destination community. Recognising this, appropriate strategies are needed to not only attract more of the two target segments but importantly, to develop tourism experiences that are consistent with the local community aspirations. The implications have inspired further discussion and a proposal of clear strategies in the next study.

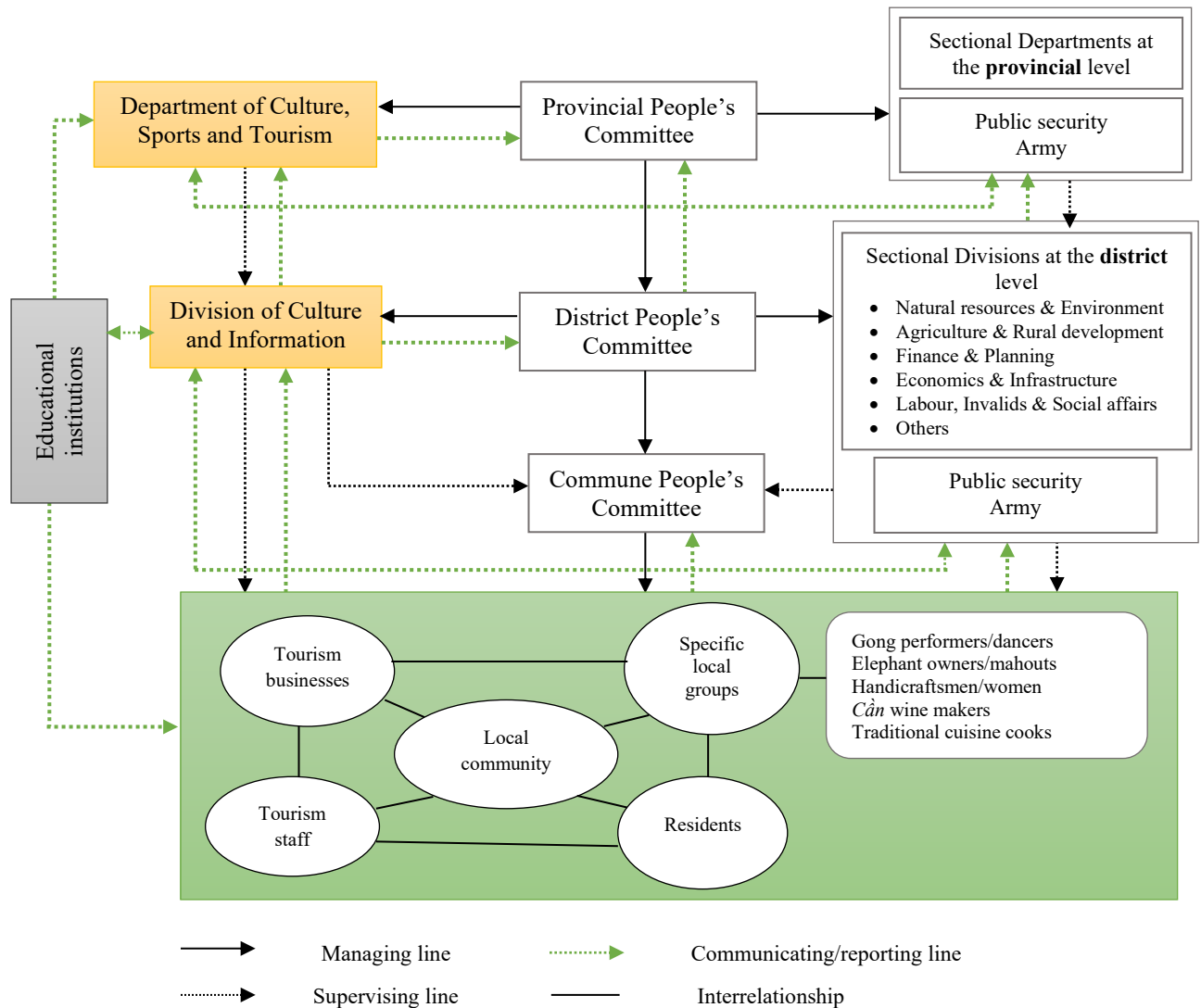
7.2.5 Top action priority in Human capital and Political capital to improve host-tourist interaction quality (social capital) as an entry point for improvements in other community capitals

A main goal of this thesis is to identify strategies to optimise positive host-tourist interaction outcome that help increase *bridging social capital* in ethnic communities. Due to the ‘*spiralling up*’ effect (Emery & Flora, 2006), other community capitals can be improved, and thereby contribute to making ethnic tourism a tool to achieve local community aspirations. However, to improve *social capital* in the context of ethnic tourism in the Central Highlands, top priority action was placed on *human capital* and *political capital*. Taking Lak district as a typical example, Figure 7.2 depicts proposed communication channels between the grassroots community and local government agencies to make improvements in both *human* and *political capital* through directly supporting ethnic communities. The Division of Culture and Information should be able to play a more active role in liaising between the grassroots community, other sectional divisions at the district level, District People’s Committee, and the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism (DCST).

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Figure 7.2

Proposed communication channels between the grassroots community and the local government agencies



This research shows both advantages and disadvantages of current *human capital* within the ethnic communities. With local wisdom, villagers are able to generate more intense interactions, allowing tourists to learn about 'exotic' ethnic culture and local way of life. Additionally, their genuine characteristics of 'naiveness', 'honesty', 'friendliness', and 'hospitality' attract tourists to interact with them. Nevertheless, locals need to be educated and trained to improve perceptions of being involved in tourism and maximise their advantages. Simultaneously, the locals can build capacity to actively navigate their interactions with tourists and, at times, overcome interaction difficulties.

The Division of Culture and Information should collaborate with DCST and educational institutions to organise education and training initiatives for the local community. These programmes should cater to different groups within the community, including tourism staff,

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specific groups (Gong performers/dancers, elephant owners/mahouts, handicraftsmen/women, *Cần* wine makers, and traditional cuisine cooks), and residents based on their requirements. Additionally, professional training programmes associated with certifications should be provided to local tourism staff such as receptionists, housekeepers, tour guides, and on-site interpreters. At the lowest government level, the Commune's People Committee should directly support locals in terms of finance and policy to open special classes related to ethnic culture such as Gong performances, handicrafts, traditional food and beverage, which allow local artists to teach and transmit their knowledge and skills to village children. For example, there should be a proper policy for recruiting and remunerating artists who are involved in the classes. The Commune's People Committee should consult higher-level government officials to allocate an adequate budget for paying these artists when they deliver the classes (e.g., Ha Giang province (Ha Giang Provincial People's Committee, 2019)). This would help instil a sense of love and pride in ethnic culture to the younger generation while also providing great encouragement to local artists.

Improvements in *political capital* were also strongly suggested to tackle common barriers and problems regarding community empowerment and collaboration, tourism organisational structure, local policies, and standards and assessment procedures. Engaging the locals in tourism planning and management is vital because ethnic tourism is based on 'quaint' people and their 'exotic' culture (Smith, 1989; Yang, 2016). Locals themselves possess, use, and aspire to improve their community capitals (Jacobs, 2007), particularly *cultural*, *natural*, and *human capital* while implementing ethnic tourism. Therefore, they have the right to get involved in tourism decision-making processes, but lack skills and knowledge as described above (see more detail in Chapter 6) that require *human capital* improvement. Again, this research indicates a 'symbiotic relationship' among community capitals to achieve enhancement of host-tourist interaction outcomes in the context of ethnic tourism.

Locals should maintain close-knit interrelationships within their community. They can directly report their concerns to, or seek information/advice of, the Commune People's Committee on socio-economic or day-to-day matters in general and the Division of Culture and Information on cultural and tourism issues in particular. The Division of Culture and Information should improve its role as a liaison between the local community and DCST to foster ongoing conversation and promptly offer tourism assistance to the locals.

The Division of Culture and Information must communicate with other sectional divisions at the district level (e.g., Division of Natural Resources & Environment, Public Security, and Army) to consult with District People's Committee, who subsequently should consult with Provincial People's Committee in order to administer the local tourism sector and issue legal documents or guidance. As a result, tour operators, travel agencies, and freelance tour guides will receive precise information about where visitors are allowed to visit, particularly in remote

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villages where socio-political issues are sensitive. Thus, they can design appropriate tour programmes accordingly.

The Division of Culture and Information also needs to communicate with other sectional divisions (e.g., Finance & Planning, Agricultural & Rural Development, and Labour, Invalids & Social Affairs) to consult with District People's Committee about community financing policies. Following that, the Division of Culture and Information should assist the locals, specifically tourism start-ups, in accessing local government loan/grants/funding. Further assistance regarding administrative procedures, tax incentives, or interest rate deductions on loans to small businesses is necessary to assist tourism start-ups in running their business operation smoothly as well as avoiding failure at the very beginning stage. Importantly, guidance and assistance must be clear and handy to make community investment funding and political instruments accessible for the locals. Such information, for instance, should be informed and/or regularly updated on notice boards at the Commune People's Committee venue or the traditional communal house where all local events and public meetings are usually held.

Censorships or regulations about the 'elephant topic' on social media need to be more explicit to preserve ethnic culture while sustaining locals' jobs associated with elephants and attracting visitors. The Provincial People's Committee needs to exercise its authority to regulate the issue. This is consistent with Bennett et al. (2012) who emphasise the need for policies and legislations, as well as political support, to develop tourism, particularly in indigenous or aboriginal community contexts.

Through improvements in *human* and *political capital*, favourable conditions of host-tourist interaction will be facilitated to enhance hosts' capacity to overcome interaction difficulties and generate positive tourist experiences. In this way, *social*, *human*, and *political capital* will be initially increased in developing ethnic tourism, subsequently leading to improvements in other capitals; *cultural*, *natural*, *financial*, and *built capital*.

7.3 Theoretical contributions

7.3.1 *Contribution to the literature on host-tourist interaction*

This thesis provides a comprehensive understanding of host-tourist interaction in the context of ethnic tourism. More importantly, interaction issues between ethnic hosts and domestic tourists are uncovered, especially interaction difficulties. It is re-affirmed that cultural distance obviously exists between two parties – hosts and tourists, regardless of whether the tourists are foreign or domestic (Pearce, 1982; Reisinger & Turner, 2003; Upadhyay, 2020). This research helps to understand 'what is going on' in host-tourist interaction by simultaneously considering both physical setting and content of interaction. Of the four settings identified, 'tour' adds to the existing body knowledge of physical settings in which host-tourist interaction occurs. The tour

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reflects distinct features of ethnic tourism in the Central Highlands, Vietnam such as elephant riding, canoe dugout boating, trekking to forest, coffee tour, village tour, and so on. The dynamic and inherently complex interplay between the business sphere and home sphere in local private houses (e.g., Domenico & Lynch, 2007; Lynch, 2005; Zhang et al., 2017) are further explored by examining diverse content of interactions, which sorts of difficulties both parties encountered, and how they feel in such interactions.

This thesis confirms the substantial influence of host-tourist interactions on both perceptions of each other and ethnic tourism experiences. Notably, the core goal of the research is to identify strategies to foster positive interaction outcome that help improve *social capital*. Arguably, *social capital* is a starting point in ethnic tourism implementation to ignite increases across other community capitals. More specifically, having positive interactions with visitors encourages locals to engage in ethnic tourism and do a better job of creating tourism experiences. In this vein, locals are more motivated to build their capacity (i.e., *human capital*) which subsequently creates positive changes in *political, cultural, natural, financial, and built capital*. This research enriches the significance of ‘*spiralling-up/down*’ effect (Emery & Flora, 2006), which allows for understanding of the interdependence, interaction, and synergy among the capitals where use of the assets in one capital can have positive or negative effects over the quantity and possibilities of other capitals (Gutierrez-montes et al., 2009). This thesis for the first time bridges the topic of host-tourist interaction with a destination community wellbeing approach (Moscardo & Murphy, 2014) to tourism planning so that ethnic tourism can be used as a tool to address local destination community aspirations.

Another contribution of this thesis is as a supplement to scarce ethnic tourism research in the Vietnamese context – a multi-ethnic country. Particularly, to the best of the author’s knowledge, this is the first research on host-tourist interaction in Vietnam’s Central Highlands, while most of the existing research related to ethnic minorities in Vietnam has focused on the North, such as Sapa or Hoa Binh (Bott, 2018; Ngo & Pham, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2020; Truong et al., 2014).

7.3.2 *Contribution to theories*

The usefulness of the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory (Pearce & Cronen, 1980) in this thesis is evidenced in analysing difficulties in interaction between hosts and tourists who have different cultural backgrounds. The interaction difficulties are explained in alignment with six contextual levels of CMM: verbal and non-verbal behaviour, speech acts, episodes, relationships, life script, and cultural patterns. Although CMM has been applied in multi-discipline research (Bruss et al., 2005; Christiansen & Lorås, 2020; Cronin et al., 2021; Pearce, 2007), this study is the first to employ CMM to explore interaction difficulties in the ethnic tourism context. This study has contributed back to CMM theory by revealing interactions

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in a more complex context between ethnic hosts and domestic tourists in a variety of settings, in contrast to previous applications to more structured and/or one-on-one social interactions, for example between parent-obese children (Bruss et al., 2005), professional/consultant-client (Pearce, 2007), or therapist-client (Cronin et al., 2021). Furthermore, from a methodological approach, CMM also assisted in guiding the investigation of interaction difficulties and interpreting the meaning of participants' responses. Subsequently, this theory is used in developing questionnaire statements and a construct regarding interaction difficulties. Accordingly, this thesis enriches a wide applicability of CMM to human communication as well as cultural interactions.

This thesis sheds light on understanding the travel motivation of domestic tourists to ethnic destinations in Vietnam's Central Highlands based on the Travel Career Pattern (TCP) model (Pearce & Lee, 2005). The study adds to TCP literature by being used as the basis for segmenting and comparing travel patterns amongst groups, particularly how they are involved in on-site interactions with ethnic hosts and how they perceive interaction quality and long-term ethnic tourism outcomes accordingly. Consistent with the key principle of TCP theory, the study findings reveal that less important motives in the middle- and outer- layer are influenced by the levels of previous travel experience. Such motives significantly contribute to shaping the overall travel pattern.

By incorporating the Community Capitals Framework (CCF) (see Flora et al., 2016) and Destination Community Wellbeing (DCW) approach to Tourism Planning (Moscardo & Murphy, 2014), the spectrum of host-tourist interaction is broadened by linking interaction outcomes to local destination community wellbeing. Furthermore, this thesis has not only contributed to sustainable tourism destination planning and governance but also emphasised on the interrelationship and synergy among seven community capitals. Improving host-tourist interaction outcomes can help to increase stocks of *social capital*, subsequently increase other community capitals through '*spiralling-up*' effect (Emery & Flora, 2006). Notably, a novel perspective of this thesis is that improving interaction outcomes must consider existing stocks of capitals and address local community aspirations. The use of the DCW approach places focus on building capacity for the communities to engage in local tourism decision-making processes, particularly in the context of ethnic tourism, where locals often face many common barriers (see Moscardo, 2023; Timothy & Tosun, 2003).

7.3.3 *Contribution to methodology*

The mixed methods approach has been becoming popular in social sciences research (Allmark & Machaczek, 2018; Denzin, 2010). This thesis also makes a certain methodological contribution to mixed methods by investigating the interaction from both sides – host and tourist – in the context of ethnic tourism. Using the mixed methods, qualitative and quantitative research

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approaches can come together to build on their ‘complementary strengths’ (Shannon-Baker, 2016) which enable the author to go in-depth interaction between ethnic hosts and domestic tourists. Multiple data sources have been collected via three methods: semi-structured interview, survey questionnaire, and community workshop. This thesis can prove that the mixed methods approach provides stronger evidence and more confidence in the research findings.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ethnic villagers to explore interaction issues, thereby gaining deep insights into ‘what going on’ in such interactions. Importantly, because this thesis was conducted in ethnic communities, the indigenous research approach (N’Drower, 2020) was adopted to establish a favourable rapport between the author and locals. Prior to official interviews, the author made initial contact and spent time in the villages observing local way of life and having informal conversations with locals rather than merely interviewing. Bringing gifts and having food or beverages were also meaningful to create a friendship with participants based on respect and genuineness. By doing so, the thesis expands advantages of a qualitative research approach, which not only allows researchers to achieve insider perspective, and ‘capture’ the multidimensional and dynamic nature of reality (Jennings, 2010), but also creates a relationship between the researcher and the ethnic communities. Returning to the same villages, survey questionnaires of domestic tourists were conducted. The findings help to determine and validate relationships between three elements of interaction (physical setting, content, difficulties) and quality of interaction, subsequently between the interaction quality and tourism experiences as well as perceived long-term ethnic tourism outcomes.

Placing the local community at the centre of ethnic tourism planning and governance, the use of workshop offered opportunity to bring the research findings back to the locals and engage them in further discussion of tourism planning process. The workshop can serve as a ‘test’ of the DCW approach to ethnic tourism planning in the Central Highlands. This thesis proves the application of the mixed methods to provide a more complex understanding of a phenomenon that would not have been assessable by using one approach alone (Shannon-Baker, 2016), especially when working with ethnic minority people. Furthermore, this thesis supports the important compliment that benefits and credibility of the mixed methods help researchers develop trust and rapport with the community that further benefits the community beyond simply the products of the research (e.g., Denscombe, 2008; Hanson et al., 2005; Moura et al., 2022).

7.4 Practical contributions

Findings from this thesis provide valuable information for ethnic villagers, local tourism practitioners, and policymakers to facilitate positive host-tourist interaction outcomes, thereby enhancing the core attraction of ethnic tourism and proposing strategies tailored to local destination community wellbeing. Taking the Lak community (Dak Lak) as a typical example,

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local villagers can gain a better understanding of what elements contribute to their interaction with tourists and how interaction is important in developing ethnic tourism. Due to their preferences and capabilities, villagers are able to actively generate intense interactions, which allow both parties to learn about one another and promote ‘exotic’ ethnic culture. At times, villagers are also more conscious of interaction difficulties to overcome and more tolerant towards tourists’ mindless behaviours; for example, when tourists visit their home or interact with them during elephant riding tours or Gong performances.

Tourism practitioners should pay more attention to tourism activities and service provision in which closer interactions can be facilitated. The content of interactions at tourist attractions and supporting facilities needs to be improved (see Chapter 4). For instance, tour operators/Gong venue owners should design tour options/gong performance programmes which allow tourists to engage more with ethnic cultural practices or participate in the performances. Yet time constraints and tourist preferences also need to be considered. Tourism staff attitudes and performance play an important role in generating positive interaction outcomes. Therefore, tourism practitioners should organise short on-site training and coaching for their staff in terms of soft skills and hospitality skills which were highly suggested by both tourists and community stakeholders (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 6). They can also communicate with the Division of Culture and Information and educational institutions to implement professional training courses. By taking advantage of local wisdom and experiences, tourism enterprises should recruit more villagers to provide local guide services, Gong performance, handicrafts, or traditional cuisine in order to better deliver ethnic tourism experiences to tourists and simultaneously help locals earn extra money.

Policymakers can gain a holistic picture of existing community capitals and ethnic tourism situation in their localities (e.g., Lak) when receiving the findings of this thesis. As a result, they will have sufficient and reliable information on which to develop local tourism strategies addressing community aspirations in the long-term. Importantly, priority actions regarding *political capital* are directly useful for local authorities to issue policy instruments to tackle problems when implementing ethnic tourism. Segmentation enables marketers to conduct marketing and destination branding strategies in such way to attract targeted segments: *Explorers* and *Seekers*. By doing this, more favourable host-tourist interaction outcomes will be fostered while minimising interaction challenges. Policymakers can utilise the research findings as well as the workshop approach to get local villagers and businesses further engaged in tourism decision-making process as a response to the call for sustainability (Moscardo, 2023; Ngo & Pham, 2021; Nunkoo, 2017).

Feedback and compliments from some stakeholders who participated in the workshop indicate ‘real’ contributions of this thesis to ethnic tourism development in the Central Highlands,

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particularly in Lak district. The results of Study 1 and Study 2 presented in the workshop provide valuable insights into host-tourist interaction issues as well as the current situation of ethnic tourism for different stakeholders. These results will also be shared with the other ethnic villages via a practical summary report in the near future.

The three discussion sections during the workshop helped locals recognise the importance of current capitals to their community well-being and find ways to improve outcomes, thereby making ethnic tourism as a tool to address their aspirations. The way participants engaged in the workshop discussions goes beyond the author's expectation because this approach is not familiar to ethnic people. The author recalls a participant's quote during a lunchtime conversation.

“Thank you for inviting me to this workshop. I found it is a great chance to gather all local tourism enterprises sitting together to speak up, listen to each other, discuss, and find ways to improve interaction outcomes as well as develop ethnic tourism. Moreover, the attendance of handicraftsmen and local residents is also important to raise their awareness of tourism. I appreciate the presence of local authorities and tourism department representatives here too because it allows us to let them know what challenges we are facing and where we need their assistance”.

7.5 Limitations of the research

Although the limitations of the three studies have been described in the relevant chapters, it is acknowledged that, as a whole, this thesis has certain limitations. Firstly, data collection for Study 1 and Study 2 was disrupted due to the second wave of COVID-19 in Vietnam. The first fieldwork in two villages (Lak, Buon Don) was conducted before a wave of COVID hit (late December 2020 and early 2021), while the second fieldwork to the other two villages (Lac Duong, Kon Ko Tu) was postponed until post the COVID hit (March 2021). In terms of interviewing villagers, because of COVID, some Lac Duong and Kon Ko Tu participants temporarily closed their businesses such as homestay, home-visit, Gong venue, and coffee shop or stopped participating in tourism to get back to farming. Some other participants, who had been serving primarily international tourists, had to shift to serving domestic tourists for continuing their tourism business. Therefore, their perception of tourism impacts as well as interaction difficulties were perhaps biased during this sensitive period. In terms of surveying domestic visitors, questionnaires were distributed to visitors (in Lak and Buon Don) on an occasion of the Lunar New Year (Tết holiday) which is one of Vietnam's peak seasons for domestic tourism. Consequently, responses collected were somewhat dominated by the travel purpose of holiday or VFR, whereas the perceived quality of interactions might be biased by increased service prices, rushing, or long-waiting times due to a situation of being short-staffed.

Secondly, language barriers also constrained the author from fully comprehending the true meaning of all dialogues when interviewing ethnic villagers. For example, some participants (e.g., the elderly) found it difficult to express their opinion due to a lack of Kinh/Vietnamese

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language proficiency. In some cases, the interviews tended to take longer than intended because the author needed to further explain or elaborate the research questions so that the participants were able to respond accordingly. Additionally, when conducting the community workshop in Study 3, the group discussions took place in a mix of Kinh and local ethnic dialects, with some group members translating the question content and responses for others.

Thirdly, time and budget limitations were also encountered in this thesis. The author was located in Australia during the study period, travelling overseas for data collection cost extra time and money. Therefore, the author was only able to stay 5-10 days in each village. It would be better to spend more time in the studied sites to develop a rapport with ethnic villagers and better understand local way of life. Furthermore, time constraints led to a hectic workshop schedule in Study 3. Participants seemed to be stressed and reluctant to discuss the priority actions in the last session, potentially resulting in the omission of certain information.

Lastly, conducting research-related to ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands was extremely challenging because of socio-political concerns from the Vietnamese government, since serious land and culture conflicts between ethnic minority groups and Kinh people occurred after 1975 (see Dang & Nguyen, 2023). Furthermore, the author was a PhD candidate in an Australian university that means her research is related to ‘foreign’ influence. Thus, it was harder to obtain a current ‘red stamp’ from each district’s authority for permission to conduct research in the ethnic sites. Despite both the provision of a Letter of Introduction from Dalat University (Vietnam), where the author has been a senior lecturer, and the use of personal networks with some of the local government officials, it took a while for the author to obtain approval from the local authorities. Political sensitivity also has potentials to limit the author’s free expression of attitudes (see Nguyen, 2021).

7.6 Recommendations for future research

Following the fact that Vietnam is the world’s fastest-recovering domestic aviation sector and the world’s fifth fastest-growing aviation market post-COVID-19 (Ong, 2023; Tung & Duc, 2023), future research can replicate the application of CMM theory to verify or add and further explain all indicators and additional items (if possible) regarding interaction difficulties that are encountered by ethnic hosts and domestic tourists. A survey questionnaire could be done by both parties to examine how difficulties influence the quality of interaction. Utilising CMM from the practical approach, future research may consider developing specific interventions for both hosts and tourists to minimise interaction difficulties in the ethnic destinations.

Despite extensive tourism research related to ethnic minorities in Northern Vietnam (e.g., Sapa) (Bott, 2018; Cuong, 2020; Nguyen, 2021; Truong, 2014), research on host-tourist interaction is still limited. Comparative research on this topic could be carried out between the

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Central Highlands and the North of Vietnam to identify similarities and differences between the two regions. As a result, strategies for improving interaction outcomes and making ethnic tourism contribute to destination community wellbeing could be generalised throughout Vietnam – a multi-ethnic country.

With respect to the indigenous research framework (N'Drower, 2020), the author herself is strongly committed to returning to the Central Highlands' communities in the near future to share the findings of the whole thesis. Realistically, the results of Study 3 will benefit local villagers, tourism practitioners, and policymakers to go forward together in order to improve interaction outcomes and achieve the communities' aspirational goals. As a senior lecturer at Dalat University, the author is also inspired to propose a project funded by the regional/local government level to engage with different community stakeholders as a following-up research to this thesis.

The value of the DCW approach to build capacity for effective local tourism governance was evidenced. Therefore, further steps along this path need to be carried out in the local communities. More specifically, viability assessment, selection of scenarios, implementation, and sustainability monitoring need to be done to make the Central Highlands become a sustainable long-term ethnic destination.

7.7 Concluding remarks

Ethnic tourism has been widely recognised as a rural development strategy in marginalised areas, particularly in the Asian context (China, Thailand, Laos, or Vietnam). Host-tourist interaction is a key attribute of ethnic tourism, which delivers 'exoticism' to tourists while preserving ethnic culture. Strategies to improve interaction outcomes are critical to ethnic destination management and planning. This thesis offers an insight into host-tourist interaction in the context of ethnic tourism to both academics and tourism practitioners and policymakers. A novel approach of this thesis is linking the improvement of interaction outcomes with contribution of ethnic tourism to local destination community wellbeing. By doing so, ethnic tourism can be developed in such way to address local community needs and aspirations rather than merely in terms of tourism numbers or profits. Moving forward, this thesis opens up new questions inspiring tourism scholars: What challenges may host communities face in ethnic tourism development due to socio-political or socio-economic changes within Vietnam? Can ethnic tourism sustainably offer a 'blessing' rather than a 'blight' for the host communities in Vietnam's Central Highlands?

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Ethics Approval H8159

This administrative form
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Appendix B. Interview guide for host community (semi-structured interview guide)

Date & Code number:

Tell me a little bit about yourself.....

Age:

Ethnic group:

Gender:

Place of current living:

Marital status:

Level of education:

Annual household income:

Length of residence:

Topic	Probing question
As a member of ethnic community I am interested in your cultural values and what aspects of your culture you share with visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is unique about your ethnic group ○ What are cultural rituals and traditions that are important to your community ○ What aspects of your culture are important to preserve/protect ○ What are those cultural activities/traditions/rituals you are willing to share/not share ○ What do you want tourists to know/understand about your culture when they leave?
Tell me more about your role, sense of belonging and connections in the community, and your connections to others outside the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do you have a role or social position in your village? <p>Social networks (bonding, bridging, linking):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Within your ethnic community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of relatives in your village? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Number of times (monthly, annually) to visit you socialise with relatives/friends within your ethnic community</i> ○ Are you a member or go to the chapel/church/pagoda or member of any groups? <i>if yes: which ones</i> - Outsiders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ With <i>Kinh people/other ethnic groups</i>, ○ Tourists, ○ Tour operators, tourism entrepreneurs, local commercial vendors, ... ○ Establish relationships with ‘outsiders’? Or get outsiders’ support? Establish/involve in networks with outsiders to support for tourism development <p>Trust and cooperation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do you feel comfortable asking your neighbours for help? ○ How well do people in the village get along with each other well or are there any conflicts? Willing to help in an emergency if you need, cooperation for the village problem solving ... ○ Do you feel that you can trust people in your village, local businessmen, tourism entrepreneurs, tourists, local administrators)? ○ Participate in communal activities, traditional festivals, events, ... e.g. planting trees; cleaning communal house; attending wedding ceremonies, new house celebrations, funerals ○ Attend village meeting/assemblies attending

<p>Tell me about your level of involvement with the local tourism industry?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do you directly or indirectly benefit from/participate in the tourism sector? <p>If <u>Yes</u>, What kind of job are you employed/self-employed related to tourism? (e.g. local guide, performer, mahout, craft maker, selling ethnic souvenirs, providing homestay, serving at local restaurant, local vendors ...)?</p> <p>Employment status? (e.g. owner, manager, employee, ...)? Full-time or part-time job?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How long have you been doing this job? ○ Do you enjoy the job? ○ How long do you work per day? ○ How often do you work per week? ○ Have you had a previous job? ○ Is this current job as a main source of your income?
<p>In what ways do tourists and the tourism industry impact your ethnic culture and village?</p>	<p>What are the benefits of ethnic tourism to you and your village?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social ○ Cultural ○ Economic <p>What are the negative consequences of ethnic tourism to you and your village?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social ○ Cultural ○ Economic
<p>Tell me more about when and how you interact with tourists</p> <p>And</p> <p>can you tell me about a specific encounter that you found difficult or challenging?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physical setting <p>Environment, in which do you interact with tourists?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content of interaction experiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How often do you communicate or interact with tourists? ○ Level of interaction intensity (interaction activities) ○ What interesting things do you like to share with tourists? Why? ○ What do you want tourists learn or know about your ethnic culture and the local way of life? ○ What don't you want to share with tourists? Why? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interaction difficulties (CMM theory) <p>What difficulties do you interact with tourists?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Verbal & Non-verbal behaviours: <i>language fluency, polite language usage, facial expression, eye gaze, spatial behaviour, touching, posture, gesture, ...</i> ○ Speech acts: <i>tourists' level of formality, respect to hosts, behaviours of interrupting or talking over others, appropriateness of talking topics</i> ○ Episodes: <i>the situation or sequences of behaviours, arrangements</i> ○ Relationships: <i>social role playing in the interaction (host-guest, businessman – customer/buyer, host – stranger, minority- dominant)</i> ○ Life scripts: <i>individual views themselves in relation to others (tendency to be dominant in the conversation, revealing personal things about himself/herself, trying to take charge of things when together)</i> ○ Cultural patterns: <i>expressing attitudes, feelings, emotions, greetings and farewells, self-disclosure, making or refusing requests, daily routines, or personal questions, ...</i>
<p>In general, do you enjoy your interactions with tourists? Do you think the tourists enjoy interacting with you and others from your village?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do you like to interact with tourists? ○ What are your feelings about the interaction with tourists? (<i>harmonious or clashing, friendly or hostile, intense or superficial, equal or unequal, cooperative or competitive</i>) ○ Do you feel any conflicts exist between you and tourists? ○ Do you think your community like tourists? Yes, No? <i>Please explain why?</i>

What have you heard from other people in the village about their interactions with tourists?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do you think tourists feel enjoyable or satisfied when interacting with you or experiencing tourism activities in your village? ○ How do you think tourists feel after the interaction? ○ How do you think tourists go away thinking about you and your community? ○ Overall, are you satisfied with the host-tourist interaction?
Do you support ethnic tourism in your village? Are you in favour of tourism in your village?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do you want to continue participating in tourism? ○ Would you like to see more/less tourism?
What are your suggestions for improving the future ethnic tourism in the village?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Would you like to become more involved in local tourism activities? Yes, No (<i>economic outcomes</i>)?? <i>If Yes, how?</i> ○ Would you like to be involved in the decision-making process or have more empowerment in local tourism development? (<i>political capital</i>) ○ In your opinion, what should we do to protect your ethnic culture and enhance your ethnic identity? (<i>cultural capital</i>) ○ In your opinion, what should we do to improve the quality of the interaction between your community and tourists? (<i>social capital</i>) ○ What future developments should be made to improve the overall attractiveness of your village? ○ From your perspective, what does the village need to do to further develop ethnic tourism?

Thank you so much for your cooperation!

Appendix C. Photos of conducting interviews with ethnic villagers



Appendix D. Questionnaire for domestic visitors



**JAMES COOK
UNIVERSITY
AUSTRALIA**

INTRODUCTION

Location of survey

- ☐ Kon Tum
☐ Dak Lak
☐ Lam Dong

Greetings!

My name is Nguyen Thi Thanh Kieu and I am currently studying for my PhD at (Tourism) in James Cook University, Australia. I am conducting research into host-tourist interaction of ethnic tourism in Vietnam's Central Highlands. The overall aim of this research is to create good quality of host-tourist interaction, as a result to produce positive outcomes of ethnic tourism in the Central Highlands, Vietnam. The information collected is confidential and will only be used for academic research in order to identify the interaction issues between hosts and domestic tourists engaged in ethnic tourism. It will take you about 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Your participation is entirely voluntary and we would sincerely appreciate your support.

Are you able to take the time to respond to my questions?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

A. GENERAL VISITATION INFORMATION

Which place have you visited in the Central Highlands? (multiple response allowed)

- ☐ Kon Tum
☐ Gia Lai
☐ Dak Lak
☐ Dak Nong

Thinking about and reflecting about good times and past memories

	Very important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Very unimportant
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How did you arrange your trip?

- ☐ Independent
☐ On a package
☐ Other (Please specify):

With whom are you travelling?

- ☐ Alone
☐ With family
☐ With incentive trip (company)
☐ With a group of friends
☐ With tour group
☐ Other (Please specify):

What means of transportation did you use to get to the Central Highlands?

- ☐ Airplane
☐ Bus
☐ Private/Rental Car
☐ Motorbike
☐ Other (Please specify):

What means of transportation are you using within the Central Highlands? (multiple response allowed)

- ☐ Bus
☐ Private/rental car

- ☐ Lam Dong

What is the main purpose of your trip?

- ☐ Holiday/leisure
☐ Business/professional
☐ Events
☐ Visit friends and family
☐ Other (Please specify):

Please indicate how important each one of the following travel motivation statements is to you on this trip to the Central Highlands

	Very important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Very unimportant
Experiencing something new and different	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Taking a rest or escaping my daily routine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strengthening relationships with others (family, friends, colleagues)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Viewing local natural scenery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning about ethnic minority culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gaining a new perspective on life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interacting with local people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Experiencing thrills and excitement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having others know that I have been here	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Experiencing something romantic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Doing things my own ways	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Experiencing the peace and calm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- ☐ Taxi
☐ Motorbike
☐ Bike
☐ On foot

Which of the following sources of information have you used to plan your trip to the Central Highlands or the village? (multiple response allowed)

- ☐ Been here before
☐ Word of mouth
☐ Travel agents or tour wholesalers
☐ Advertising, travel article or documentaries (TV, radio, movies)
☐ Travel book, guide or brochure
☐ Social media (Facebook, Instagram, personal blog, Youtube, ...)
☐ Online websites
☐ Other (Please specify):

Which of the following types of websites did you use? (multiple response allowed)

- ☐ Official and Government Tourism sites
☐ Accommodation sites
☐ 3rd party accommodation sites - eg. Booking.com, Trivago.com, Agoda.com, ...
☐ Airline sites
☐ Travel review sites - e.g., TripAdvisor
☐ Travel agency sites
☐ Car hire sites
☐ Other types of sites

On this trip, do you stay overnight in the Central Highlands?

- ☐ Yes

☐ No

If Yes, how many nights do you stay in the Central Highlands?

IN TOTAL, how much money did you spend on each of the following items, both for yourself and for other people with you (thousand VND)?
Please enter numbers only (E.g. 50.00)

Accommodation, including any meals & drinks where you are staying and any amounts prepaid before leaving home	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Meals, drinks, and food	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Tourism, entertainment, events and other leisure activities	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Tour guides/tour services	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Transport, such as taxis, public transport, petrol, car hire and vehicle repairs	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Retail Shopping - such as souvenirs, gifts, books, clothing, etc.	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Any other Expenses	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Total	<input type="text" value="0"/>

The total amount of your tour package (VND)?

- ☐ Less than 3,000,000 or 3,000,000
☐ 3,000,001 - 5,000,000
☐ 5,000,001 - 7,000,000
☐ 7,000,001 - 10,000,000
☐ Above 10,000,000

B. HOST-TOURIST INTERACTION IN ETHNIC TOURISM

	Yes	No
specialties, traditional food		
I've observed how to make handicrafts, and/or coffee, local specialties, traditional food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've talked together with local guide during trekking/biking/boating/elephant riding/village tour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've had short chats with the host when searching information about the village/local services (local restaurants, local tourist sites, local weather, groceries, local clinics, pharmacy stores,)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've asked for/sought a help (pick-up/drop-off service, purchase local products)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've sought local travel recommendation or travel itinerary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've observed local way of life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've exchanged personal contact details with the host for future communication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've exchanged gift with the host	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've made friends with ethnic people (host)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Now please tell us how satisfied you are with each of the interactions you've had with members of the ethnic community.

	Completely satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Cor dis:
I've stayed at the host's house	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I've enjoyed meals with the host	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I've had a long conversation with the host for learning and sharing together	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I've learned to speak ethnic language via the host	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I've tasted ethnic food & beverages (C��n wine, coffee, cake, ...)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I've participated in traditional musical/dancing/Gong performance)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I've observed traditional musical/dancing/Gong performance)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I've participated in local events (rituals, ceremonies, parties, festivals ...)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

Please tell us in which of the following physical settings have you interacted with ethnic people (multiple response allowed)

- ☐ Private host's house
☐ Traditional communal house
☐ Food and beverage establishments
☐ Local commercial shops (souvenir shop, groceries ...)
☐ Traditional dancing/musical/Gong performance venue
☐ Local events (religious, cultural, sportive)
☐ Tourist attraction points
☐ On tours/trekking/biking/boating/elephant riding
☐ Local market
☐ On the street

Please tell us which sorts of interactions you have had with ethnic community (host).

	Yes	No
I've stayed at the host's house	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've enjoyed meals with the host	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've had a long conversation with the host for learning and sharing together	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've learned to speak ethnic language via the host	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've tasted ethnic food & beverages (C��n wine, coffee, cake, ...)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've participated in traditional musical/dancing/Gong performance)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've observed traditional musical/dancing/Gong performance)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've participated in local events (rituals, ceremonies, parties, festivals ...)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've observed the local events (rituals, ceremonies, parties, festivals ...)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've interacted with the host when they provide me goods and services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've taken photos with host	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I've participated in the production of handicrafts (weaving, embroidering, pottering), and/or coffee, local	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Completely satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Cor dis:
I've observed the local events (rituals, ceremonies, parties, festivals ...)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I've interacted with the host when they provide me goods and services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I've taken photos with host	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I've participated in the production of handicrafts (weaving, embroidering, pottering), and/or coffee, local specialties, traditional food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I've observed how to make handicrafts, and/or coffee, local specialties, traditional food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I've talked together with local guide during trekking/biking/boating/elephant riding/village tour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I've had short chats with the host when searching information about the village/local services (local weather, local tourist sites, local clinics, pharmacy stores, money exchange spots,...)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I've asked for/sought a help (pick-up/drop-off service)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I've sought local travel recommendation or travel itinerary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I've observed local way of life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I've exchanged personal contact details with the host for future communication	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I've exchanged gift with the host	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
I've made friends with ethnic people (host)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about your interactions with local ethnic people (tick N/A in case you are NOT experiencing this situation)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	N
I misunderstood/misinterpreted because of different dialects, regional accents, or jargons.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt confused in the communication because of the host's way to express in Vietnamese.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt uncomfortable when the host avoided to look at me or looked at somewhere when we were talking.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I did not know what was happening when the host frowned.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I did not know the appropriate physical distance I should keep between the host and me in our interaction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt confused when the host refused to hold or shake my hands.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I misunderstood because of host's postures and/or gestures.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I did not know whether I should introduce myself to the host casually or formally.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I did not know how to show my respect to the host in our interaction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt confused when the host avoided to answer or kept silent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I did not know how to behave appropriately with different hosts who had different social statuses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt uncomfortable in the way the host talked over other people (their neighbourhoods, other ethnic people and/or tourists).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	N
I felt less confident in the first conversation or meeting with the host.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I could not respond quickly in different situations during our interaction because I was confused.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I could not recognise well between serious speaking and joke telling.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I did not know what I should say/do to the host at the end of our interaction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt I was not trusted by the host as I was an outsider of the village.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt to be distant because I was a customer/buyer/tourist.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt uncomfortable when the host considered our interaction as material relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt the host's interaction with us was unnatural.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt the host seemed to be shy in our interaction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt the host tended to be dominant in our interaction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt the host always tried to relate to his/her personal story/stuff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt uncomfortable with the set-up of the room/stage.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I did not know how to response well for the greetings and farewells that fit into the local way.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I did not know how to refuse host's request politely (be invited to drink local wine, taste 'exotic' food, dance, try traditional costumes, or purchase souvenir).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	N
I was not familiar with local eating practices (kinds of food, amount of food, time of eating, way of eating).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was not familiar with host's daily routine (e.g. time to go to bed/wake up, working time, meals time, ...)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I did not know how to be involved in religious events/practices.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt uncomfortable when the host asked about some very personal questions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt difficult to understand host's customs and taboos.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt to be misunderstood when tipping ethnic hosts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other – Please list any other difficulties or challenges you have encountered in your interactions with local ethnic people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other 1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other 2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other 3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

C. ETHNIC TOURISM EXPERIENCES FROM TOURISTS' PERSPECTIVE

Each item below describes two opposite aspects of your interaction that you have experienced with local ethnic people. Please mark in one of the five spaces in each row that best describes your position that you had in the overall interactions with local ethnic people.

Hostile	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Friendly
Unequal	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Equal
Clashing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Harmonious
Superficial	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Intense
Competitive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Cooperative

After your experiences with the ethnic people please tell us how strongly you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
My attitude toward ethnic people is more positive compared to pre-visit.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to express my gratitude to ethnic people by exchanging or presenting gifts to the host.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I found my interaction with ethnic people in the village to be rewarding and satisfying.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want to establish/maintain an ongoing mutual relationship with the host.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want to learn more about ethnic minority culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want to learn more about ethnic language.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe tourism can make positive contribution to the ethnic people's income in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe tourism provide more meaningful employment/jobs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe tourism will contribute positively to the quality of life of this ethnic village.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will share my positive experiences about the Central Highlands on social media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to return to the Central Highlands in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would recommend visiting the Central	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Highlands to others.

Strongly agree Neither agree nor disagree Somewhat disagree Strc

What were the TWO best features of your visit to the ethnic villages of Central Highlands?

What TWO things could be improved to make a visit to the ethnic villages of the Central Highlands more enjoyable?

D. PERSONAL INFORMATION

Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non-binary/third gender
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Age

- ☐ Under 20 or 20
- ☐ 21-30
- ☐ 31-40
- ☐ 41-50
- ☐ 51-60
- ☐ Over 60

Income per month (VND)

- ☐ Less than 5,000,000 or 5,000,000
- ☐ 5,000,001 - 10,000,000
- ☐ 10,000,001 - 18,000,000
- ☐ Above 18,000,000

How many trips have you taken within last 3 years (both domestic and international trips)?

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

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Education level

- ☐ Primary, secondary school, or high school
- ☐ Diploma
- ☐ Undergraduate
- ☐ Graduate and higher

Ethnic identity

Province/City

Occupation

- ☐ Governmental/Provincial employee
- ☐ Office staff
- ☐ Small-scale independent business
- ☐ Causal workers
- ☐ Farmers
- ☐ Students
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Other (Please specify)

Marital status

- ☐ Married
- ☐ Living with another
- ☐ Single
- ☐ Divorced/Separated
- ☐ Widowed

Appendix E. Photos of conducting questionnaire survey with domestic visitors



QR Code linked with the questionnaire and Keychains for gifting respondents



Appendix F. Constructs, variables, and measurable items

Constructs	Variables/Indicators	Items	Reference sources
Physical settings	Private house	Private host's house	(Ji Zhang et al., 2017)
	On tours	On tours/trekking/biking/boating/elephant riding	(Bott, 2018; Thái, 2018)
	Tourist attractions and supporting facilities	Traditional communal house Food and beverage establishments Local commercial shops (souvenir shops, groceries, ...) Traditional dancing/musical/Gong performance venue Local events (religious, cultural, sportive) Tourist attraction points	(Carneiro et al., 2018; Carneiro & Eusébio, 2012)
	Public spaces	Local market On the street	(Carneiro & Eusébio, 2012; Loi & Pearce, 2015)
Content of interaction	Fulfilling long-term social needs	I've exchanged personal contact details with the host for future communication I've exchanged gift with the host I've made friends with ethnic people (host)	
	Seeking mutual understanding	I've stayed at the host's house I've enjoyed meals with the host I've had a long conversation with the host for learning and sharing together I've learned to speak ethnic language via the host	
	Purchasing goods and services	I've participated in traditional musical/dancing/Gong performance) I've participated in local events (rituals, ceremonies, parties, festivals ...) I've participated in the production of handicrafts (weaving, embroidering, pottering), and/or coffee, local specialties, traditional food	

		<p>I've talked together with local guide during trekking/biking/boating/elephant riding/village tour</p> <p>I've interacted with the host when they provide me goods and services</p> <p>I've tasted ethnic food & beverages (<i>Cà</i>n wine, coffee, cake, ...)</p>	(Bott, 2018; de Kadt, 1979; Reisinger & Turner, 2003; M. M. Su et al., 2014; M. M. Su & Wall, 2010; Woosnam & Aleshinloye, 2013)
	Seeking information or direction	<p>I've had short chats with the host when searching information about the village/local services (local restaurants, local tourist sites, local weather, groceries, local clinics, ...)</p> <p>I've asked for/sought help (pick-up/drop-off service, purchase local products)</p> <p>I've sought local travel recommendation or travel itinerary</p>	
	Presence of hosts and visitors without active interactions	<p>I've observed traditional musical/dancing/Gong performance)</p> <p>I've observed the local events (rituals, ceremonies, parties, festivals ...)</p> <p>I've observed how to make handicrafts, and/or coffee, local specialties, traditional food</p> <p>I've taken photos with host</p> <p>I've observed local way of life</p>	
Interaction difficulties	Verbal and Non-verbal behaviours	<p>I misunderstood/misinterpreted because of different dialects, regional accents, or jargons.</p> <p>I felt confused in the communication because of the host's way to express in Vietnamese.</p> <p>I felt uncomfortable when the host avoided to look at me or looked at somewhere when we were talking.</p> <p>I did not know what was happening when the host frowned.</p> <p>I misunderstood because of host's postures and/or gestures.</p>	
	Speech acts	<p>I did not know the appropriate physical distance I should keep between the host and me in our interaction.</p> <p>I did not know whether I should introduce myself to the host casually or formerly.</p>	

		<p>I did not know how to show my respect to the host in our interaction.</p> <p>I did not know how to behave appropriately with different hosts who had different social statuses.</p>	<p>(Loi & Pearce, 2015; Lussa, 1994; Oktadiana et al., 2016; P. L. Pearce, 2005b; P. L. Pearce et al., 1998; W. B. Pearce & Cronen, 1980; Reisinger & Turner, 2003)</p>
	Episodes	<p>I felt confused when the host refused to hold or shake my hands.</p> <p>I felt confused when the host avoided to answer or kept silent.</p> <p>I could not respond quickly in different situations during our interaction because I was confused.</p> <p>I could not recognise well between serious speaking and joke telling.</p> <p>I felt uncomfortable in the way the host talked over other people (their neighbourhoods, other ethnic people and/or tourists).</p> <p>I did not know what I should say/do to the host at the end of our interaction.</p> <p>I felt to be misunderstood when tipping ethnic hosts.</p> <p>I felt uncomfortable with the set-up of the room/stage.</p> <p>I did not know how to response well for the greetings and farewells that fit into the local way.</p> <p>I was not familiar with local eating practices (kinds of food, amount of food, time of eating, way of eating).</p> <p>I did not know how to involve in religious events/practices.</p>	
	Relationships	<p>I felt I was not trusted by the host as I was an outsider of the village.</p> <p>I felt to be distant because I was a customer/buyer/tourist.</p> <p>I felt uncomfortable when the host considered our interaction as material relationship.</p>	
	Life scripts	<p>I felt the host's interaction with us was unnatural.</p> <p>I felt the host seemed to be shy in our interaction.</p> <p>I felt the host tended to be dominant in our interaction.</p> <p>I felt less confident in the first conversation or meeting with the host.</p>	
	Cultural patterns	<p>I felt uncomfortable when the host tried to talk about his/her personal problems.</p>	

		<p>I felt uncomfortable when the host asked about some very personal questions.</p> <p>I did not know how to refuse host's request politely (be invited to drink local wine, taste 'exotic' food, dance, try traditional costumes, or purchase souvenir).</p> <p>I was not familiar with host's daily routine (e.g., time to go to bed/wake up, working time, meals time, ...)</p> <p>I felt difficult to understand host's customs and taboos.</p>	
Quality of interaction	Harmonious	Clashing <---> Harmonious	(D. X. F. Fan, Qiu, et al., 2020; D. X. F. Fan, Zhang, Jenkins, & Lin, 2017)
	Friendly	Hostile <---> Friendly	
	Intense	Superficial <---> Intense	
	Equal	Unequal <---> Equal	
	Cooperative	Competitive <---> Cooperative	
Tourists' attitudinal and behavioural outcomes	More positive attitude	My attitude toward ethnic people is more positive compared to pre-visit.	(P. L. Pearce, 1982; Stylidis et al., 2021; M. M. Su & Wall, 2010; J. W. C. Wong et al., 2019)
	Positive sharing	I will share my positive experiences about the Central Highlands on social media.	
	Return	I would like to return to the Central Highlands in the future.	
	Recommendation	I would recommend visiting the Central Highlands to others.	
Long-term ethnic tourism outcomes	Cultural aspect	<p>I want to learn more about ethnic language.</p> <p>I want to learn more about ethnic minority culture.</p>	(Redicker & Reiser, 2017; M. M. Su & Wall, 2010; J. W. C. Wong et al., 2019; Xie & Wall, 2002; J. Yang et al., 2013)
	Social aspect	<p>I want to establish/maintain an ongoing mutual relationship with the host.</p> <p>I would like to express my gratitude to ethnic people by exchanging or presenting gifts to the host.</p> <p>I found my interaction with ethnic people in the village to be rewarding and satisfying.</p>	
	Economic aspect	<p>I believe tourism can make positive contribution to the ethnic people's income in the future.</p> <p>I believe tourism provide more meaningful employment/jobs.</p>	

Appendix G. The assessment procedure of the measurement model and structural model (Hair et al., 2021)

Stage 1: Measurement model assessment

Formative measurement model

Convergent validity (redundancy analysis): correlation of the formatively measured construct with the reflective single-item (global variable) construct, measuring the same construct: ≥ 0.7

Collinearity issues: $VIF \leq 5$

Significance and relevance of the formative indicators:

- p-value of outer weights: $\leq .05$
- outer loadings: ≥ 0.5 if indicators with nonsignificant weights
- p-value of outer loadings: $< .05$ if the outer loadings < 0.5

Reflective measurement model

Reflective indicator loadings: ≥ 0.708

Internal consistency reliability:
+ Cronbach's alpha: ≥ 0.7
+ Consistency reliability (ρ_A): ≥ 0.7

Convergent validity (average variance extracted): $AVE \geq 0.5$

Discriminant validity: HTMT: < 0.9 (for conceptually similar constructs)

Stage 2: Structural model assessment

2.1

Collinearity issues: $VIF \leq 5$, more importantly for the formative model

2.2

Significance and relevance of the path coefficients (the structural model relationships): original sample (O) & p-value ≤ 0.05

2.3

Model's explanatory power (R^2 : the coefficient of determination of the endogenous (dependent) constructs): $R^2 = 0.75, 0.50, 0.25 \rightarrow$ substantial, moderate, weak explanatory power)


Appendix H. VIF, outer weights' *p*-values, outer loadings and outer loadings' *p*-value


Construct	Indicators	VIF	Outer weights' <i>p</i>-values	Outer loadings	Outer loadings' <i>p</i>-values
Settings	Private house	1.000	0.000	1.000	0.000
	Tours	1.000	0.000	1.000	0.000
	Attraction facilities	1.000	0.000	1.000	0.000
	Public spaces	1.000	0.000	1.000	0.000
Contents	Longterm_SocialNeeds	1.220	0.001	0.062	0.462
	Mutual_understanding	1.118	0.763	0.122	0.210
	Purchasing_goods_services	1.953	0.000	0.927	0.000
	Seeking_information	1.793	0.526	0.516	0.000
	No_active_Interaction	1.986	0.000	0.799	0.000
Difficulties	Cultural_patterns	1.413	0.714	0.308	0.028
	Life_Script	1.457	0.011	0.111	0.434
	Relationships	1.448	0.000	0.894	0.000
	Speech_acts	1.729	0.706	0.461	0.000
	Episodes	1.657	0.725	0.256	0.030
	Verbal Nonverbal Behaviours	1.648	0.034	0.566	0.000
Interaction Quality	Cooperative	3.200	0.763	0.786	0.000
	Equal	2.777	0.027	0.818	0.000
	Friendly	2.977	0.006	0.882	0.000
	Harmonious	3.641	0.838	0.830	0.000
	Intense	3.889	0.000	0.971	0.000
Long-term outcomes of ethnic tourism	Cultural_aspect	2.905	0.105	0.760	0.000
	Social_aspect	3.125	0.000	0.890	0.000
	Economic aspect	1.895	0.000	0.930	0.000


Appendix I. Ethics approval H8964


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has been removed


Appendix J. Workshop invitation in Vietnamese and English


**TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC ĐÀ LẠT**
DALAT UNIVERSITY

**JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY**
AUSTRALIA

**TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC ĐÀ LẠT**
DALAT UNIVERSITY

**JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY**
AUSTRALIA

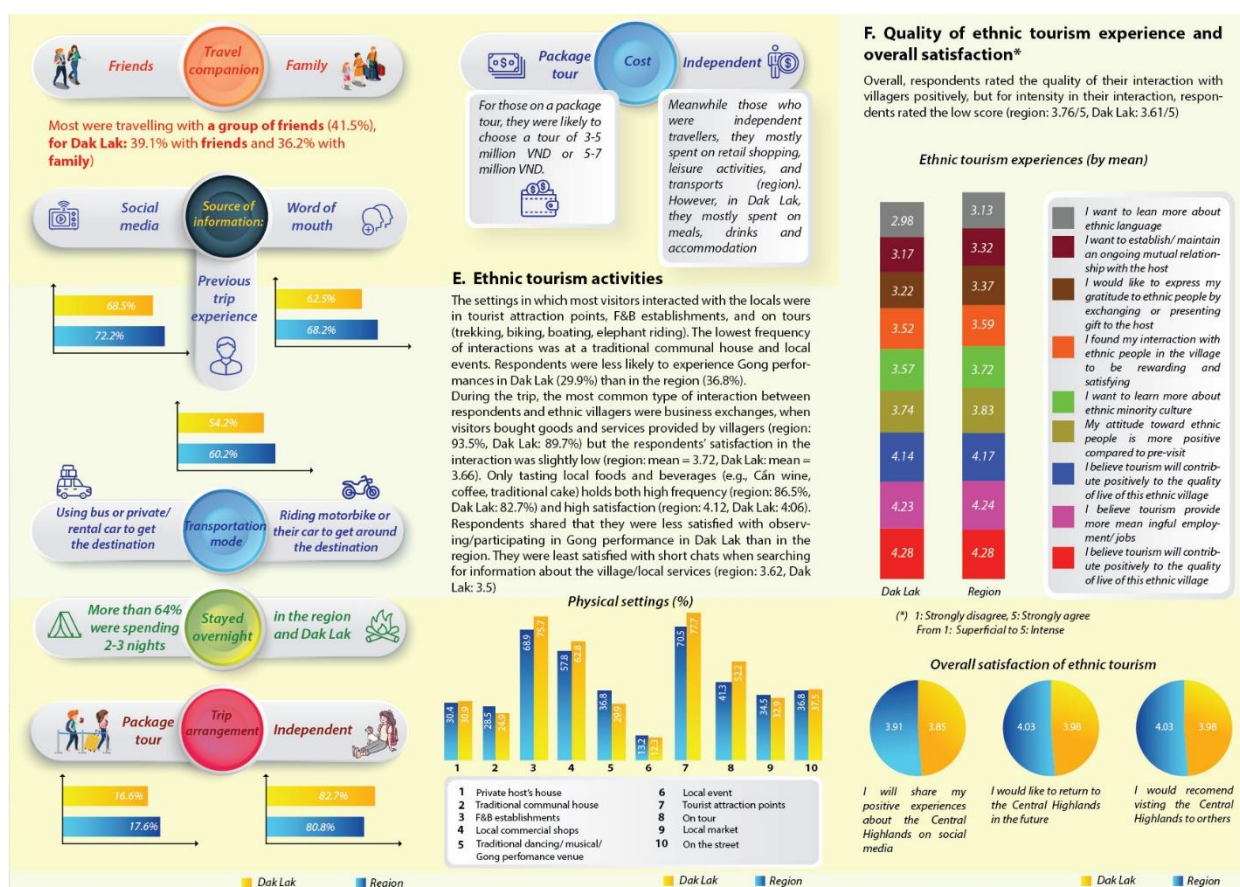
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**JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY**
AUSTRALIA

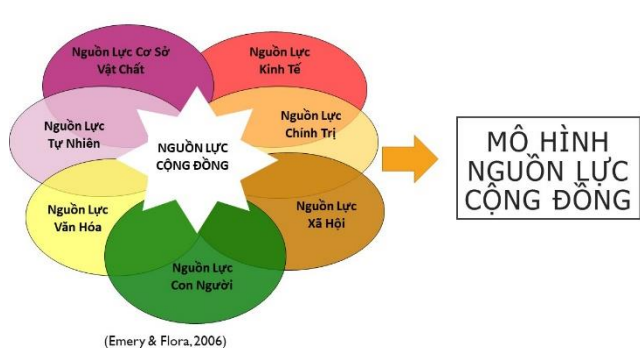
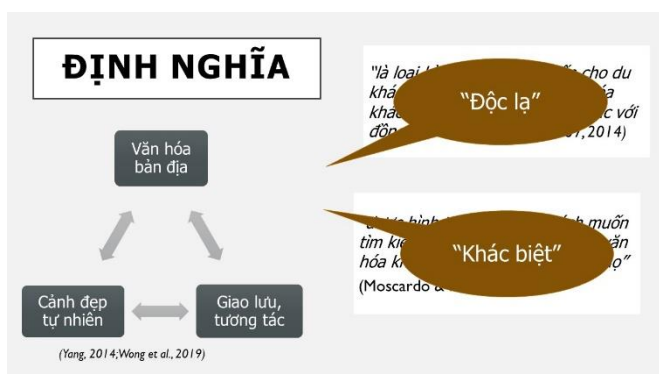
Appendix K_1. Domestic tourist market report – page 1



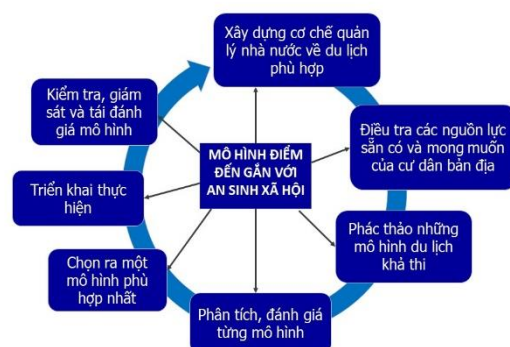
Appendix K_2. Domestic tourist market report – page 2



Appendix L_1. Theoretical background - Presentation 1 (in Vietnamese) by the author at the workshop



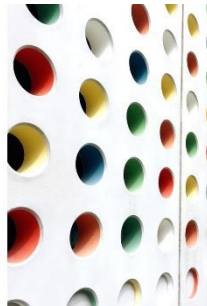
Nguồn lực	Đóng góp tích cực của du lịch vào các nguồn lực cộng đồng
Kinh tế	Tạo công ăn việc làm, tạo thêm cơ hội kinh doanh dựa vào du lịch cho bà con tại chỗ, kéo theo các lĩnh vực kinh tế khác phát triển (nông-lâm-ngư nghiệp, sản xuất, dịch vụ) → cải thiện thu nhập cho bà con địa phương và trong vùng
Cơ sở vật chất	Xây dựng hệ thống điện nước, internet, hạ tầng → hỗ trợ các ngành khác phát triển
Tự nhiên	Bảo vệ môi trường, bảo tồn tài nguyên tự nhiên, cảnh quan thiên nhiên địa phương → khai thác trở thành sản phẩm, dịch vụ du lịch
Con người	Hỗ trợ tập huấn; nâng cao hiểu biết, kỹ năng cho cư dân bản địa tham gia vào hoạt động du lịch → hỗ trợ giáo dục, chăm sóc sức khỏe cho cộng đồng
Văn hóa	Giữ gìn và bảo tồn văn hóa bản địa; tạo cơ hội kinh doanh, sản xuất, trình diễn cho những nghệ nhân, nghệ sĩ và thợ thủ công truyền thống
Chính trị	Tạo cơ hội và hỗ trợ nhóm yếu thế tham gia vào hoạt động du lịch, có tiếng nói trong phát triển du lịch cũng như sự phát triển chung của địa phương Khuyến khích sự liên kết, hợp tác giữa cộng đồng bản địa với các tổ chức/doanh nghiệp bên ngoài
Xã hội	Tạo cơ hội tổ chức các sự kiện, lễ hội địa phương Đẩy mạnh giao lưu, gắn kết cộng đồng



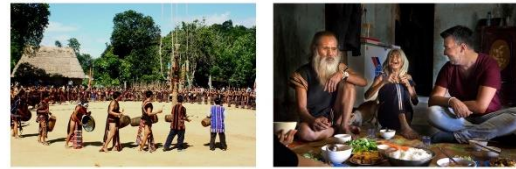
Appendix L_2. Theoretical background - Presentation 1 (translated in English) by the author at the workshop

Ethnic tourism and Community Capitals Framework

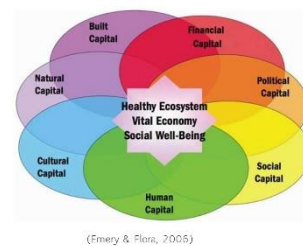
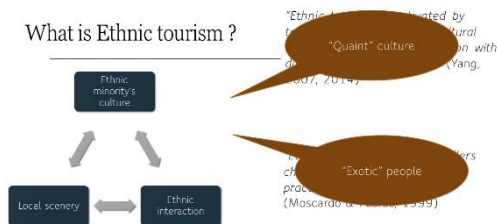
NGUYEN THI THANH KIEU
LAURIE MURPHY
TINGZHEN CHEN



What is Ethnic tourism ?



What is Ethnic tourism ?



Community Capitals Framework

How can tourism make a positive contribution to each of these capitals?

Capital	Positive Tourism Impacts or Contributions
Financial	Creation of jobs, business opportunities for locally based tourism businesses, but also their suppliers and also other sectors, and through these income for destination residents.
Built	Building of transportation, power, internet infrastructure to support tourism which provides greater opportunities for other economic sectors in the destination.
Natural	Resources and support are provided for the conservation and restoration of natural environments that serve as tourist attractions.
Human	Provision of training and education for residents working in tourism, supporting improved local healthcare and education.
Cultural	Incentives for the preservation of cultural traditions from the interest of tourists, improved business opportunities for local artists, performers and craftspeople.
Political	Tourism interest in ethnic minorities or marginalised indigenous populations of destinations can support greater political power for these groups, can encourage the development of networks and relationships that can be used for other things as well as tourism events.
Social	Tourists can support locally generated festivals and events that bring destination residents together and strengthen social connections.

Destination Community Well-being Framework



Appendix M_1. Current ethnic tourism issues - Presentation 2 (in Vietnamese) by the author at the workshop

THỰC TRẠNG DU LỊCH GẮN VỚI ĐỒNG BÀO DÂN TỘC THIỂU SỐ Ở TÂY NGUYÊN, VIETNAM

NGUYỄN THỊ THANH KIỆU
LAURIE MURPHY
TINGZHEN CHEN

THỰC TRẠNG HOẠT ĐỘNG DU LỊCH GẮN VỚI ĐỒNG BÀO DÂN TỘC THIỂU SỐ Ở LẮK (ĐẮK LẮK) VÀ TÂY NGUYÊN

ĐIỂM NGHIÊN CỨU

Thị trấn
Tây
Vực và thềm địa đới
Điểm nghiên cứu

VÍ DỤ VỀ SỰ THAM GIA CỦA CƯ DÂN ĐỊA PHƯƠNG VÀO DU LỊCH Ở LẮK

Nhân viên lễ tân
Làm rượu cần
Chèo thuyền độc mộc
Núi voi
Kinh doanh cửa hàng lưu niệm
Kinh doanh nhà hàng

VÍ DỤ VỀ SỰ THAM GIA CỦA CƯ DÂN ĐỊA PHƯƠNG VÀO DU LỊCH Ở BUỒN ĐỒN

Chợ thủ đất
Chợ thủ mặt bằng
Điểm nghiên cứu
Nhân viên kinh doanh địa phương

VÍ DỤ VỀ SỰ THAM GIA CỦA CƯ DÂN ĐỊA PHƯƠNG VÀO DU LỊCH Ở LẠC DƯƠNG

Nhân viên khu điểm du lịch
Biểu diễn công chiêng
Kinh doanh dịch vụ công chiêng
Kinh doanh nhà hàng
Kinh doanh tham quan nhà dân

Ví dụ về sự tham gia của cư dân địa phương vào du lịch ở Kon Tu

Dệt thổ cẩm
Đàn lát
Hướng dẫn viên địa phương
Kinh doanh Homestay

MỨC ĐỘ THAM GIA KHÁC NHAU CỦA NGƯỜI DÂN VÀO DU LỊCH

Địa điểm	Mức độ tham gia
Lạc Dương	Kinh doanh dịch vụ công chiêng, nhà hàng, lễ hành, hướng dẫn viên: chủ động và tích cực tham gia vào quá trình ra quyết định. Nhân viên cơ hữu hoặc bán thời gian tại các khu/điểm du lịch (KDL), bán hàng ven đường
Lắk	Kinh doanh nhà hàng, quầy lưu niệm, kinh doanh lễ hành/tour tuyến, hướng dẫn viên: thiếu tính chủ động và hạn chế tham gia quá trình ra quyết định. Nhân viên cơ hữu tại các doanh nghiệp du lịch trên địa bàn
Kon Tu	Kinh doanh homestay, hướng dẫn viên, biểu diễn công chiêng. Chỉ tham gia du lịch khi được mời/hỏi/đặt dịch vụ
Buôn Đôn	Nhân viên cơ hữu hoặc bán thời gian tại các khu/điểm du lịch (KDL), cho thuê mặt bằng, bán hàng rong. Chỉ tham gia du lịch khi được mời/hỏi/đặt dịch vụ

Người dân nghĩ gì tác động của du lịch?

Tích cực

- “tạo công ăn việc làm cho người dân, đặc biệt là các bạn trẻ” (LK01)
- “kiếm thêm thu nhập cho gia đình” (LK01).
- “là cầu nối giữa các buôn làng/cộng đồng với nhau; Vd: M’Liêng – Buôn Jun” (LK05)
- “nếu nhà nào biết làm du lịch thì lợi ích của nó rất lớn” (LK02).

Tiêu cực

- “thương mại hóa, du lịch hóa” (LK02)
- “hiện tượng cò mồi trong du lịch” (LK02)
- “khiến du khách hiểu nhầm về giá trị văn hóa bản địa” (LK02).
- “ồn ào, mất lịch sự” (LK06)
- “Tôi không nghĩ du lịch tác động tiêu cực đến đời sống của buôn làng” (LK04).

Vấn đề tồn đọng

- Bảo tồn kiến trúc nhà truyền thống, dệt thổ cẩm, đồ thủ công mỹ nghệ, ẩm thực, rượu cần, công chiêng
- Đào tạo và tập huấn: kỹ năng giao tiếp, chăm sóc khách hàng.
- Giữ gìn chế độ mẫu hệ
- Liên kết bên trong cộng đồng
- Vấn

Lắ

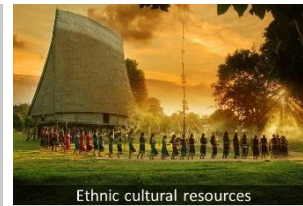
Tác động du lịch

Tích cực **nhiều** hơn tiêu cực

Appendix M_2. Current ethnic tourism issues - Presentation 2
(translated in English) by the author at the workshop

ETHNIC TOURISM ISSUES IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS, VIETNAM

Nguyen Thi Thanh Kieu
Laurie Murphy
Tingzhen Chen



Ethnic cultural resources



Natural resources

Tourism development potential



Map of study site



Examples of community participation in Lak's tourism



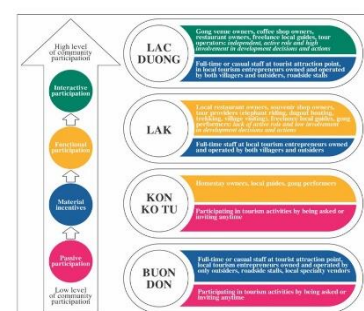
Examples of community participation in Lac Duong's tourism



Examples of community participation in Buon Don's tourism



Different levels of community participation in local tourism



Examples of community participation in Kon Ko Tu's tourism

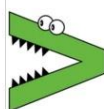


What did Lak villagers perceive tourism impacts on their community?

Positive

Negative

- ❖ *"Create job opportunities for local people, especially ethnic youngsters"* (LK01)
- ❖ *"Help us to earn more money from tourism participation"* (LK01).
- ❖ *"A bridge to connect us with other communities"* (LK05)
- ❖ *"If you know how to involve in tourism, the tourism's benefits are huge"* (LK02).



- "Making local culture becomes a commodity or too touristy" (LK02)
- "Middlemen phenomenon: higher commission for the middlemen or tour guides" (LK02)
- "Making visitors misunderstood our traditional values" (LK02).
- "I found them very noisy, impolite" (LK06)
- "I do not think tourism brings any negative impacts to the locality" (LK04).



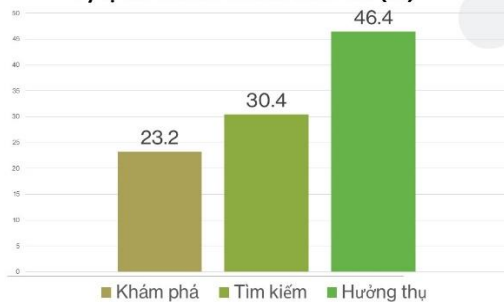
Appendix N_1. Domestic tourist segmentation – Presentation 3 (in Vietnamese) by the author the workshop



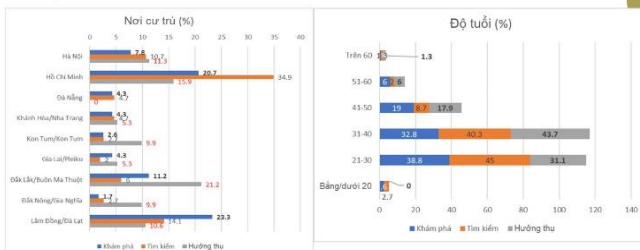
Thị trường khách du lịch nội địa đến Lắc (Đắk Lắk) và Tây Nguyên

Nguyễn Thị Thanh Kiều
Laurie Murphy
Tingzhen Chen

Tỷ lệ 03 nhóm khách đến Lắc (%)



Họ là ai?



Khám phá

Kinh nghiệm đi du lịch trong 3 năm gần đây: 1-3 chuyến (33%), 4-10 chuyến (51.3%)
Tour trọn gói: dưới 3 triệu (37.5%) và 3-5 triệu (33.3%)
Chỉ tiêu đơn lẻ khu du lịch tự túc: ăn uống và đi lại

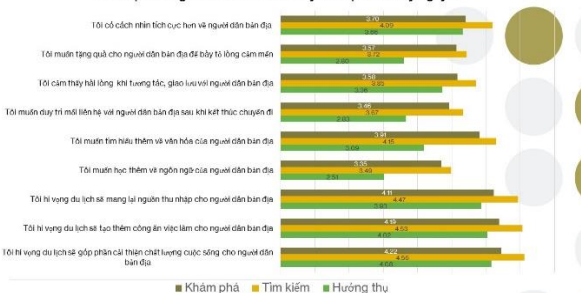
Tìm kiếm

Kinh nghiệm đi du lịch trong 3 năm gần đây: từ 4-10 chuyến (38.9%), 11-15 chuyến (12.2%)
Tour trọn gói: 5-7 triệu (40%)
Chỉ tiêu đơn lẻ khu du lịch tự túc: lưu trú và ăn uống

Hưởng thụ

Kinh nghiệm đi du lịch trong 3 năm gần đây: 1-6 chuyến (68.8%)
Tour trọn gói: 7-10 triệu (37.5%)
Chỉ tiêu đơn lẻ khu du lịch tự túc: lưu trú, ăn uống và đi lại

Mức độ hài lòng của du khách sau chuyến du lịch đến Tây Nguyên



Ai đi du lịch Lắc và Tây Nguyên?

Khám phá

- đi du lịch chủ yếu để tìm hiểu văn hóa bản địa, phong cách sống của cư dân địa phương; khám phá cảnh quan thiên nhiên; **giao lưu tiếp xúc với người dân**, qua đó có thêm những góc nhìn về cuộc sống và nền văn hóa mới.

Tìm kiếm

- đi du lịch để **tìm kiếm** những điều thú vị, nghỉ ngơi, kết hợp tham quan cảnh đẹp tự nhiên, tiếp xúc với người dân, tìm kiếm sự bình yên, và tích lũy thêm kiến thức bổ ích để giúp thấu hiểu bản thân.

Hưởng thụ

- it **quan tâm** đến văn hóa bản địa hay giao lưu, tiếp xúc với cộng đồng địa phương. Thay vào đó, họ muốn tăng cường mối quan hệ với gia đình/người thân/bạn bè/đồng nghiệp qua chuyến đi, **nghe** ngôi, tận hưởng cảnh quan thiên nhiên



Nhóm khách "Hưởng thụ" đến Đắk Lắk chiếm tỷ lệ cao nhất (46.4%)

Khám phá

Trình độ học vấn: Đa phần tốt nghiệp đại học và sau đại học (77.8%)
Nghề nghiệp: chủ yếu là học sinh/sinh viên (25%), buôn bán tự do (25%), và công chức viên chức (12.9%)
Tình trạng hôn nhân: kết hôn (41.4%) hoặc sống chung với người khác (37.9%)
Thu nhập: dưới 5 triệu (25.9%), 5-10 triệu/tháng (37.9%)

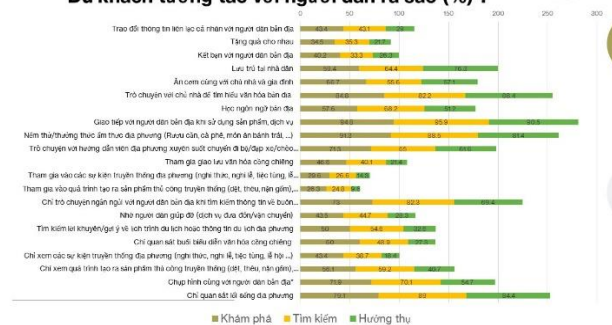
Tìm kiếm

Trình độ học vấn: Đa phần tốt nghiệp đại học và sau đại học (66.4%)
Nghề nghiệp: chủ yếu là buôn bán tự do (29.5%) và nhân viên văn phòng (25.5%)
Tình trạng hôn nhân: kết hôn (43.6%) và độc thân (28.2%)
Thu nhập: 10-18 triệu/tháng (34.2%)

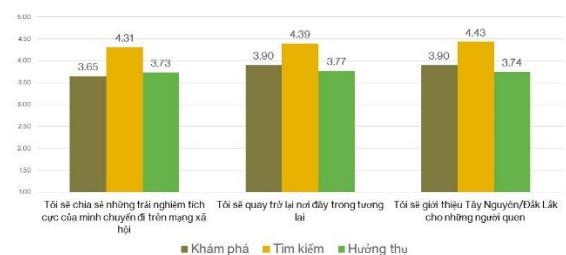
Hưởng thụ

Trình độ học vấn: Đa phần tốt nghiệp phổ thông (47%)
Nghề nghiệp: chủ yếu là buôn bán tự do (37.7%) và công nhân (20.5%)
Tình trạng hôn nhân: đã kết hôn (64.9%)
Thu nhập: 5-10 triệu/tháng (58.3%)

Du khách tương tác với người dân ra sao (%) ?



Hành vi của du khách sau chuyến đi

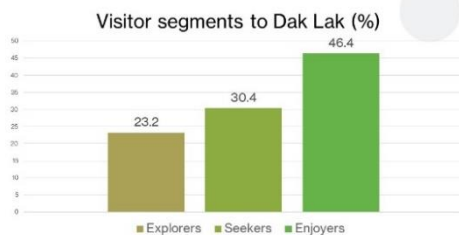


Appendix N_2. Domestic tourist segmentation – Presentation 3 (translated in English) by the author the workshop

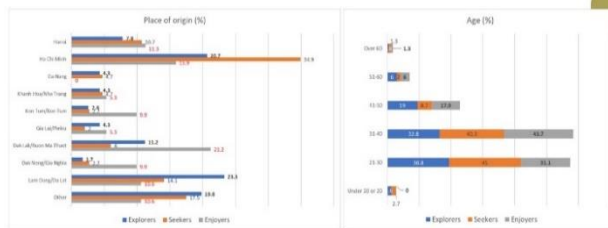


Domestic ethnic tourism market in the Central Highlands, Vietnam

Nguyen Thi Thanh Kieu
Laurie Murphy
Tingzhen Chen



Who are they?



Explorers

Travel experience in last 3 years: 1-3 trips (33%), 4-10 trips (51.3%)
Tour package: < 3m VND/package (37.5%), 3-5m/package (33.3%)
Average separate expenditure: F&B and transportation

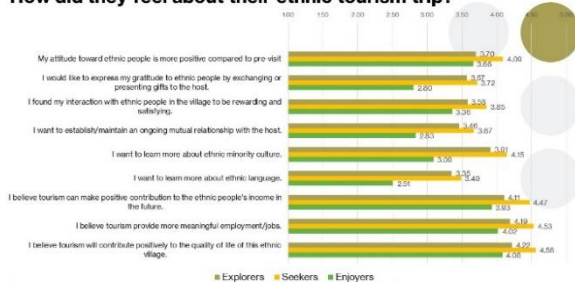
Seekers

Travel experience in last 3 years: 4-10 trips (38.9%), 11-15 trips (12.2%)
Tour package: 5-7m VND/package (40%)
Average separate expenditure: accommodation and F&B

Enjoyers

Travel experience in last 3 years: 1-6 trips (68.8%)
Tour package: 7-10m VND/package (37.5%)
Average separate expenditure: accommodation, F&B, and transportation

How did they feel about their ethnic tourism trip?



Who travel to Lak (Dak Lak) and the Central Highlands?

Explorers

- Highly motivated by learning about ethnic culture and local way of life, exploring local natural scenery and interacting with local people → gaining a new perspective on life.

Seekers

- Tried to seek different things: resting, viewing natural scenery, feeling peace & calm, learning ethnic culture, and learning themselves

Enjoyers

- Less motivated by ethnic culture or local people;
- More motivated in strengthening relationships, experiencing new things, resting, and enjoying the natural scenery



The 'Enjoyers' make up the largest segment of visitors to Dak Lak (46.4%)

Explorers

Education level: More likely to have graduate degree or higher (77.8%)
Occupation: mostly students (25%), small-scale family business (25%), and governmental staff (12.9%)
Marital status: married (41.4%), living with another (37.9%)
Income/month: < 5 million VND/month (25.9%), 5-10m VND/month (37.9%)

Seekers

Education level: More likely to have graduate degree or higher (66.4%)
Occupation: mostly small-scale family business (29.5%) and office staff (25.5%)
Marital status: married (43.6%), single (28.2%)
Income/month: 10-18m VND/month (34.2%)

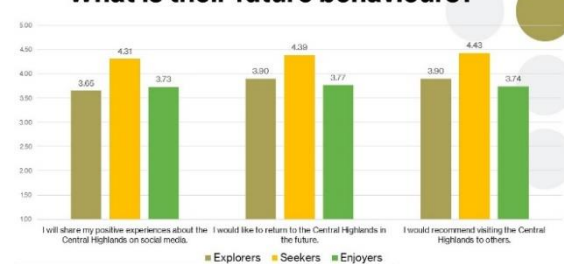
Enjoyers

Education level: More likely to have only primary or high school education (47%)
Occupation: mostly small-scale family business (37.7%), and casual worker (20.5%)
Marital status: married (64.9%)
Income/month: 5-10m VND/month (58.3%)

What did they do when travelling to DakLak?



What is their future behaviours?



Appendix O. Workshop activity

