



# Tourism in marine protected areas: A view from Nha Trang Bay, Vietnam

Kim Hang Pham-Do<sup>a</sup>, Thuy Thi Thanh Pham<sup>b,c,\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Economics and Finance, Massey University, New Zealand

<sup>b</sup> The Norwegian College of Fishery Science, UiT- The Arctic University of Norway, Norway

<sup>c</sup> University of Nha Trang, Viet Nam

## ARTICLE INFO

### Keywords:

Marine protected areas  
Community's wellbeing  
Resource use  
Binary choice model  
Strategic games  
Sustainable tourism  
Nha Trang Bay

### JEL codes:

C78  
Q56  
C8  
O13

## ABSTRACT

Tourism development is considered a key accompanying strategy in creating alternative livelihood options for the communities living in and adjacent to the Marine Protected Areas. This paper examines the socioeconomic characteristics of the Nha Trang Bay protected area to determine the factors that influence the decision to participate in tourism sectors, and analyse whether these decisions would help to improve the economic well-being of the local communities. Using a mixed-method approach, including a strategic model and analysis of household surveys, the paper shows that tourism development has not yet helped to improve economic well-being of the communities, as was expected. The primary factors that prevent local residents from participating in the tourism industry are low levels of education, long distances between homes and tourism destinations, and perceptions of the effects of tourism. Thus, improving education and supporting the communities to meet multiple social and ecological goals should be a priority policy.

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the fastest growing businesses in the world. While playing a vital role in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, tourism is increasing social and environmental concerns, particularly in protected areas. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure broad participation and consensus-building (UNWTO, 2017). People who make a living from fishing have a direct dependency on marine resources and their ecosystem services (ESs). In many developing countries, however, the incomes of fishers are very small and unstable because of overexploited fish stock in the coastal areas, and limitation of offshore fishing due to old wooden boats (Garcia & Rosenberg, 2010). Without conservation initiatives, their lifestyle can threaten ecosystems, which will, in turn, influence the well-being of the same local communities (Pomeroy, Mascia, & Pollnac, 2007). The world has witnessed seen many collapsed and collapsing fish stocks, including those exploited by small-scale fisheries (Costello et al., 2012; Harasti, Davis, Jordan, Erskine, & Moltchanivskyj, 2019; Pauly & Zeller, 2016). It is important to find income alternatives that do not impair the livelihoods of coastal fishing and aquaculture communities (APFIC, 2010; Katikiro,

2016), and ensure that the marine ecosystem continues to provide people with goods and services such as food, game, water, air purification, spiritual fulfilment, and aesthetic enjoyment (Gosling & Hall, 2006; Summers, Smith, Case, & Linthurst, 2012; Triarchi & Karamanis, 2017).

Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are special areas of the marine environment, specifically established and managed to achieve long-term conservation with its associated ecosystem services and cultural values (Day et al., 2012). Since the last three decades, MPAs have become an important management tool for coastal and marine resources (Dudley, 2008; Fernandez & Pham Do, 2010; Halpem, 2003; Pauly et al., 2002). There are many different types of MPAs, but all share the purpose of (i) protecting biodiversity, (ii) preventing overexploitation, and (iii) developing non-attractive uses of ecosystems as well as other recreational activities for management of sustainable fishing systems (Alban, Appéré, & Boncoeur, 2006; Davies et al., 2018). Having restricted certain human activities for the multiple objectives (Claudet, 2011), however, MPAs also offers various tourist possibilities; the number of declared MPAs is increasing worldwide (Edgar et al., 2007; Bennett & Dearden, 2014; Gill et al., 2017).

To date, tourism is one of the world's largest industries. Many recreational pursuits rely heavily on marine resources, and marine-based

\* Corresponding author at: The Norwegian College of Fishery Science, UiT- The Arctic University of Norway, Norway.

E-mail addresses: [k.h.phamdo@massey.ac.nz](mailto:k.h.phamdo@massey.ac.nz) (K.H. Pham-Do), [thanh.thuy@uit.no](mailto:thanh.thuy@uit.no), [thanhthuypt@ntu.edu.vn](mailto:thanhthuypt@ntu.edu.vn) (T.T.T. Pham).

tourism is growing at a significant rate (Cvitanovic et al., 2018). Tourism development is able to consider as a key accompanying strategy in creating alternative livelihood options for the communities living in and adjacent to the MPAs. Existing literature on tourism management reveals that tourism industry has the potential to enhance local economies (Pyke, Pyke, & Watuwa, 2019; Ritchie, 1988) such as by generating employment, improving incomes, and raising the standard of living of the residents (Ahmed & Krohn, 1992; Kim, Uysal, & Sirgy, 2013; Lopes, Pacheco, Clauzet, Silvano, & Begossi, 2015). Despite these positive effects, the development of tourism in MPAs could create unequal value in ESs (Briassoulis, 2013; Gosling & Hall, 2006), and provoke conflicts among users (Christie, 2004; Lopes, Mendes, Fonseca, & Villasant, 2017); not all possible economic activities in MPAs, including tourism activities, can necessarily compete with the income gained from fishing (Katikiro, 2016). Moreover, international tourists can lead to an increase in the prices of local services and facilities (Dwyer, 2018), as well as a shortage of certain commodities (Cater, 1994a, 1994b; King & Stewart, 1996; Wall, 1997). There is potential for conflict over many tourism resources, whether natural or human-made, tangible or intangible (Bimonte, 2008; Lopes et al., 2017; Nagabhatla et al., 2019).

Like many other countries with long coastlines, Vietnam has established a network of MPAs since 2001. The main objective here has been to enable local island communities to effectively protect and sustainably manage the marine biodiversity, in partnership with other stakeholders (Tuan, Long, Tuyen, Hoa, & De Vantier, 2005). At the same time, tourism has become a major sector of economic activity in Vietnam, and all indications are that it will continue growing in the years to come.<sup>1</sup> Despite the growing interest in tourism, an emerging question is whether tourism is the best option for the economic well-being of local communities. There is an urgent need to understand communities' behaviours in order to develop sustainable tourism. This study offers new insights into the recent debate on whether tourism development is a good solution for the economic wellbeing of the communities living in and adjacent to the MPAs. The aim is to analyse the challenges of tourism development as well as to determine how best to sustainably exploit marine resource and preserve the livelihoods of local communities in the MPAs.

In this paper, we investigate whether tourism has had a positive economic effect on local communities and identify factors that influence the local residents' decision in participating or not participating in tourism. Using a mixed-method approach, including a strategic form game and empirical analyses, this paper shows that tourism development has not yet helped to improve local communities' economic wellbeing, as was expected. The primary reasons for this are low levels of education, long distances between home and tourism destinations, and a perception that tourism exerts a deleterious effect on these communities. This study provides evidence that tourism is not always a final-good solution or panacea for local communities. There are complexities and imbalances.

## 2. MPA and tourism development in Nha Trang Bay

Located in the south-central coast of Vietnam, the Nha Trang Bay Marine Protected Area (NTB-MPA) was established in 2001 with a total area of approximately 250 km<sup>2</sup>, encompassing 38 km<sup>2</sup> land, 14 islands, and 212 km<sup>2</sup> surrounding water, as shown in Fig. 1.

The residents mainly live on two islands (Hon Tre and Hon Mieu), concentrated by four communities (Bich Dam, Dam Bay, Vung Ngan, and Tri Nguyen), with more than half of the population living on Hon Mieu, the island closest to the mainland. Due to low birth rates and

emigration, the population has declined from 5647 residents in 2004 to 4793 in 2017 (NTBMPA Management Board, 2018; VNAT, 2018). Although the overall literacy rate is high (95%), the education level is low; only 65% of adults have been to primary school – i.e. schooling given to young people aged 6 to 10 – while women, in general, have a lower educational level than men. At present, all communities have primary schools and kindergartens, but there is only one secondary school located in Hon Mieu, to which children from other islands have to move to continue their studies.

The establishment of the NTB-MPA introduced a zoning scheme comprising a core zone, a buffer zone, and a transition zone. In 2014, these names and their boundaries were changed and adjusted, and currently, the regulated zones are strictly protected, for ecological rehabilitation, or slated for development. As represented in Table 1, the zone regulations were set up for conservation and protecting the marine environment. However, the MPA has also been developing as a major destination for tourism in Vietnam (Dung, 2009). Tourists have access to the strictly protected zone where they can participate in many kinds of water sports, except motorized sports. The ecological rehabilitation zone includes the islands and water 300 m around Hon Tam, Hon Mot, Hon Mieu, the remaining part of Hon Tre, and additional waters of 300 m surrounding the strictly protected zone. The rest of the Nha Trang Bay is made up of the development zone, where there is no restriction to activities but they have to follow the rules on environmental protection and aquaculture facilities. Generally, destructive fishing and polluting activities are not allowed in any of the three zones.<sup>2</sup>

Fishing is the primary source of livelihood for the most residents in the NTB-MPA. Though most fishing vessels are small-scale wooden boats featuring simple equipment, commercial fish products from this area contribute 30% of total landings in Khanh Hoa Province (KHHSO, 2016). Aquaculture has developed rapidly in Nha Trang Bay since the mid-1990s and today is a significant source of income for approximately 30% of the households. Similarly to the fisheries, most aquaculture farms are small-scale and family-run (Van, 2013). Table 2 presents the characteristics of the settlements in NTB-MPA.

The two prevalent models of tourism in NTB are the island tour and the sea tour. The NTB-MPA offers various tourist possibilities. The number of tourists who visited the area has been increasing rapidly over the last years. In 1995, there are only 30,000 visitors (Tuan et al., 2005). In 2016, tourism turnover reached 12,998 billion VND (560 million US\$), the total number of visitors reached more than 4.5 million people, of which more than 1.1 million international visitors. Particularly, in the first half of 2017, more than 2.6 million visitors arrived in the south-central city of Nha Trang, Khanh Hoa Province; international arrivals rose by 180% year-on-year to 949,000, while the average length of stay increased by 90% to 3.3 days (VNAT, 2018). Currently, 114 travel service companies are operating in the MPA. Most of them are domestic. Eight companies offer diving services, and seven offer other water-based sporting activities, while 30 companies and 67 households provide transport services within the MPA, mainly for tourists. The dominant actor in the NTB-MPA is the Vingroup Joint Stock Company (NTB-MPA Management Board, 2018), which operates several luxury hotels, villas, and restaurants, as well as a huge amusement park on Hon Tre. Today Vingroup operates two of the three large tourism projects that are under construction, located on Hon Mot and Hon Tre. The other companies (i.e. Maico Dalat and Hon Tam Companies) operate the projects on Hon Mieu and Hon Tam. Based on a contract with the provincial government, Hon Tam Company plans to undertake a conservation program that combines all envisioned tourism services on Hon Mun Island.

<sup>1</sup> In the first half of 2017, about 3 million tourists visited the Khanh Hoa province, up 22% from the same period last year, earning more than 7.5 trillion VND (330 million USD) in revenue (VNAT, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> According to Dung (2009), the water area of NTB-MPA is being considered as a major nursery ground to supplement fish larvae to other coral reefs of Vietnam and maybe Cambodia due to a high abundance of larvae.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/13463428>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/13463428>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)