

## **LEVERAGING THE SHARING ECONOMY FOR RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: A COMMUNITY-BASED DIGITAL PLATFORM MODEL FOR BAC NINH PROVINCE, VIETNAM**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Rural tourism plays a vital role in diversifying livelihoods, supplementing household income and preserving cultural heritage. However, many rural destinations suffer from seasonal demand, fragmented services and limited local ownership. This study explores the application of sharing-economy principles to rural tourism in Bac Ninh Province, Viet Nam, against the backdrop of regional administrative consolidation. Integrating literature on the sharing economy with a qualitative asset assessment and a SWOT analysis, this paper proposes the Bac Ninh Rural Culture Sharing Hub (BN-RCSH) - a community-oriented digital platform linking households, artisans, local guides, cooperatives and local authorities. The proposed model encompasses homestays, home-based culinary experiences, craft workshops, guided heritage tours and low-impact transport. Moving beyond basic digital booking, the framework emphasizes local supply coordination, institutional trust, service standardization and equitable revenue distribution. Key implementation challenges, including digital exclusion, regulatory compliance, cultural commodification and risk management are explicitly addressed. Positioned as a conceptual policy proposal rather than an empirical trial, the paper outlines a phased implementation roadmap and a robust monitoring framework to guide future pilot testing and policy design.

### **Keywords:**

sharing economy; rural tourism; community-based tourism; digital platform; cultural heritage; Bac Ninh; Viet Nam

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Rural tourism is increasingly discussed as a means of broadening local economic opportunities beyond agriculture and traditional manufacturing. When thoughtfully designed, it can connect visitors with landscapes, foodways, craft traditions, historic sites and everyday community life. It can also create supplementary sources of income for households that possess underused assets, including spare rooms, bicycles, cooking skills, agricultural knowledge and cultural expertise. However, the presence of tourism resources alone does not guarantee inclusive development. The benefits depend on how local assets are organised, how visitors find and purchase experiences and how the resulting income is distributed among residents.

The sharing economy offers one possible organisational approach. Digital platforms can connect dispersed providers with potential visitors, enable service discovery and booking and support trust through transparent information, reviews and payment records. In tourism, such arrangements may include short-term accommodation, home dining, guided walks, craft workshops and shared transport. The central opportunity for rural areas is not merely to imitate large commercial platforms, but to make local capabilities visible and accessible while allowing communities to retain a meaningful role in the design and governance of tourism products (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Sundararajan, 2016).

Bac Ninh provides a compelling setting for exploring this approach. The wider area associated with the former Bac Ninh and Bac Giang provinces combines cultural heritage, traditional craft villages, religious sites, agricultural landscapes and food products. Quan ho Bac Ninh folk songs were inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009 and UNESCO describes the tradition as a living practice that strengthens social ties between communities. Craft and rural experiences associated with Dong Ho painting, Phu Lang pottery, fruit-growing areas and local culinary traditions could complement visits to heritage sites and help extend visitor stays.

Nevertheless, tourism activity across rural areas has often been characterised by seasonality, fragmented products, limited digital visibility and uneven local participation. A visitor may attend a festival or visit a heritage site without being able to discover a nearby household meal, artisan workshop, farm experience or locally guided itinerary through a single, trusted channel. This disconnect between cultural resources and bookable experiences

limits the capacity of tourism to generate sustained local value. Against this background, the article aims to develop a conceptual and policy-oriented framework for applying sharing-economy principles to rural tourism in Bac Ninh. It makes three contributions.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1. The sharing economy in rural tourism

The sharing economy generally refers to digitally mediated arrangements through which individuals or organisations gain access to assets, services or capabilities that may otherwise be underused. In practice, the term covers a range of business models, including peer-to-peer exchange, short-term rental and platform-mediated service provision. These arrangements are not necessarily non-commercial: payment, reputation systems and platform governance are often central to their operation (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Sundararajan, 2016).

In rural tourism, the relevant resource is broader than physical property. A spare room can support accommodation; a family recipe can become a cooking experience; an artisan's skills can be shared through a workshop; and a resident's knowledge of local history can support a guided visit. A digital platform can make these opportunities discoverable and bookable, but it cannot substitute for the quality of the experience, community consent or sound local management.

For this study, the sharing-economy model is understood through five connected features: (i) digital intermediation that connects providers and visitors; (ii) more productive use of existing household and community assets; (iii) direct participation by local residents; (iv) trust-building through transparent information, standards and feedback; and (v) mechanisms for ensuring that economic benefits are distributed fairly and cultural and environmental assets are protected.

*Table 1. Analytical dimensions for a community-oriented sharing-economy model*

| Dimension                    | Core question                                              | Illustrative indicators for future assessment                                                   |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Digital access               | Can visitors discover and book local experiences easily?   | Share of providers listed online; booking completion; response time; digital literacy           |
| Community participation      | Do residents shape and deliver the tourism offer?          | Number and diversity of participating households; community representation in governance        |
| Economic inclusion           | Does tourism generate value for local providers?           | Revenue retained locally; provider earnings; repeat bookings; seasonal income variation         |
| Cultural integrity           | Are heritage and local knowledge respected?                | Community consent; artisan involvement; cultural interpretation standards; safeguarding actions |
| Service quality and safety   | Can visitors rely on consistent, safe services?            | Provider registration; safety compliance; visitor complaints; review scores                     |
| Environmental responsibility | Does growth avoid unnecessary pressure on local resources? | Waste practices; low-impact mobility; water and energy measures; visitor management             |

(Source: Author's synthesis)

### 2.2. Expected benefits and implementation risks

The potential benefits are interconnected. First, households may earn supplementary income by making existing assets and skills available to visitors. Second, visitors may access more personal and locally grounded experiences than conventional sightseeing alone can provide. Third, direct connection and transparent booking information may reduce search costs and improve the visibility of small providers. Fourth, demand for cultural experiences may encourage the transmission of songs, craft techniques, food knowledge and local history. Finally, shared transport, cycling and walking itineraries may help reduce dependence on private vehicles for short-distance travel.

These benefits should be treated as conditional rather than guaranteed. Platform participation can exclude households with limited digital skills or connectivity. Unregulated accommodation and food services can expose visitors and providers to safety, liability and reputational risks. Platform commissions or unequal bargaining power may concentrate value outside the community. Cultural practices may be simplified or staged primarily for commercial appeal. Effective implementation therefore requires a combination of digital tools, community organisation, quality standards, transparent benefit-sharing and appropriate regulatory oversight.

### 2.3. Research design and limitations

The article uses an exploratory qualitative design. It draws on a review of sharing-economy concepts and relevant policy materials, a structured synthesis of rural tourism assets described for the former Bac Ninh and Bac Giang

areas and a SWOT assessment of the proposed model. The analysis is organised around the relationship between local resources, digital intermediation, community participation and sustainable value creation.

### 3. RURAL TOURISM POTENTIAL AND CURRENT CONSTRAINTS IN BAC NINH

#### 3.1. A diverse portfolio of cultural, craft and rural assets

The combined geographical and cultural space associated with the former Bac Ninh and Bac Giang provinces offers a broad portfolio of potential experiences. In the former Bac Ninh area, Quan ho singing provides a distinctive cultural foundation, while Dong Ho painting and Phu Lang pottery offer opportunities for hands-on craft experiences. Historic and religious sites, including Dau Pagoda, But Thap Pagoda and Do Temple, can anchor itineraries that combine heritage interpretation with food, craft and community encounters.

The former Bac Giang area adds agricultural and ecological dimensions, including fruit-growing landscapes associated with Luc Ngan, local food products and heritage routes linked to sites such as Vinh Nghiem Pagoda and the Tay Yen Tu area. These resources are potentially complementary. A visitor could combine a cultural performance, a craft workshop, a local meal and a farm visit within a multi-stop itinerary, provided that travel times, seasonality and service capacity are managed realistically.

The strategic opportunity is to connect these resources into bookable experiences rather than promote each attraction in isolation. The proposed platform would allow a visitor to search for a themed itinerary, check availability, compare service information, reserve several components and provide feedback after the visit. For local providers, it would create a shared channel for promotion and coordination while preserving their ability to set service offerings and participate in decisions.

*Table 2. Potential rural tourism assets and possible sharing-economy products*

| Asset cluster                     | Examples from the study area                                                     | Potential bookable experience                                         | Community participants                                 |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Living cultural heritage          | Quan ho singing and village cultural spaces                                      | Small-group introduction to Quan ho, cultural exchange, heritage walk | Performers, cultural groups, knowledgeable residents   |
| Traditional crafts                | Dong Ho painting; Phu Lang pottery; other craft traditions                       | Hands-on workshop, artisan demonstration, make-and-take activity      | Artisans, craft households, cooperatives               |
| Food and local products           | Traditional family meals, seasonal produce, regional specialties                 | Home meal, cooking class, farm-to-table tasting                       | Households, farmers, food producers                    |
| Agricultural landscapes           | Fruit-growing areas and rural production landscapes in the former Bac Giang area | Seasonal farm visit, harvest experience, farm stay where appropriate  | Farm households, cooperatives, local guides            |
| Religious and historical heritage | Dau Pagoda, But Thap Pagoda, Do Temple, Vinh Nghiem Pagoda and related routes    | Locally guided heritage itinerary with nearby community services      | Local guides, heritage interpreters, service providers |
| Rural mobility and nature         | Village lanes, countryside routes and nearby attractions                         | Walking, cycling, shared local transport and short-distance transfers | Transport providers, youth groups, community operators |

(Source: Author's synthesis)

#### 3.2. Patterns and limitations in the existing tourism offer

The qualitative picture described in the source material points to several structural limitations. First, visitor flows are often concentrated around festivals, religious events and established attractions. This can create short periods of high demand followed by quieter periods, making it difficult for households to rely on tourism as a regular source of supplementary income. Second, local participation is frequently concentrated in small-scale sales or informal services, while residents have fewer opportunities to design complete experiences, manage bookings or influence destination-level decisions.

Third, the supply of accommodation, home dining, craft workshops and guided experiences is fragmented. A visitor may be able to locate a major attraction but find it difficult to identify a reliable nearby host, book a

workshop at a suitable time or arrange transport between rural sites. Fourth, the digital presence of small providers is uneven. Individual social-media pages and third-party platforms can be useful, but they do not necessarily create a coherent destination offer or provide common standards for information, safety and complaints.

Fifth, skills and infrastructure differ across locations. Providers may need support in hospitality, foreign-language communication, online promotion, customer service, hygiene, fire safety and financial record-keeping. Some sites may also require better signage, sanitation, parking, waste management or last-mile transport. These constraints cannot be solved by an application alone. A digital platform is most useful when it is embedded in a broader system of community training, service improvement and destination management.

**Table 3. SWOT assessment of rural tourism sharing in Bac Ninh**

| Strengths                                                                                                                                                                                                | Weaknesses                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Distinctive living heritage and craft traditions; proximity to major urban markets; a mix of cultural, religious, agricultural and culinary assets; potential for small-group experiences.               | Fragmented services; seasonal demand; uneven digital and hospitality skills; limited coordination across providers; variable standards and supporting infrastructure.                              |
| Opportunities                                                                                                                                                                                            | Threats                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Growing interest in authentic experiences; wider use of digital booking and payment; policy attention to rural tourism; potential to create linked itineraries across the former provincial territories. | Cultural commodification; safety and liability incidents; unequal platform bargaining power; digital exclusion; environmental pressure at popular sites; confusion over provider responsibilities. |

(Source: Author's analysis)

### 3.3. Implications for model design

The assessment suggests that the core problem is not a lack of tourism resources, but a coordination gap between resources, providers, visitors and local institutions. The model should therefore prioritise four functions: make small-scale services visible; help providers coordinate complementary experiences; establish minimum service and safety requirements; and ensure that community members participate in governance and benefit-sharing. These functions are more important than the choice of a particular software platform.

## 4. THE PROPOSED BAC NINH RURAL CULTURE SHARING HUB

### 4.1. Concept and operating principles

The Bac Ninh Rural Culture Sharing Hub (BN-RCSH) is proposed as a community-oriented digital and organisational platform that connects visitors with locally supplied rural tourism services. It should be understood as a coordinated destination network, not simply as a booking website. Its digital interface would support discovery, reservation, payment information, provider profiles, visitor feedback and itinerary planning. Its community layer would support training, quality improvement, conflict resolution and collaboration among households, artisans, cooperatives and local authorities.

Five principles should guide its development. First, community participation must be substantive: local providers should help determine the products, standards and use of platform-generated information. Second, service information and fees should be transparent. Third, safety and quality requirements should be proportionate to the type and scale of service. Fourth, cultural heritage should be presented with community consent and respect for local meanings. Fifth, the model should begin with a manageable pilot and expand only after its operational and economic performance has been assessed

**Table 4. BN-RCSH governance structure and responsibilities**

| Stakeholder group                     | Primary responsibilities                                                                                                                     | Accountability mechanism                                                           |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Households, artisans and local guides | Provide accommodation, meals, craft experiences, guiding or local transport; maintain accurate service information; follow agreed standards. | Provider profiles, service checklists, visitor feedback and periodic review        |
| Visitors                              | Choose services, provide accurate booking information, follow local guidance and offer constructive feedback.                                | Clear booking terms, review rules and accessible complaint channels                |
| Platform operator or cooperative      | Manage listings, booking requests, payments or payment links, customer support, data protection and provider onboarding.                     | Published fees, transparent ranking rules, service-level standards and audit trail |

|                                            |                                                                                                                             |                                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Local authorities and destination managers | Coordinate destination planning, safety guidance, heritage protection, infrastructure priorities and regulatory compliance. | Periodic monitoring, public reporting and community consultation       |
| Technology and training partners           | Support platform development, cybersecurity, digital skills, language training and service improvement.                     | Service agreements, training records and technical performance reviews |

(Source: Proposed by the author)

#### 4.2. Digital and community functions

At the digital level, BN-RCSH should offer a mobile-friendly catalogue of verified providers, searchable by location, experience type, price range, availability and accessibility needs. Listings should include clear descriptions, photographs supplied with permission, indicative duration, cancellation conditions, safety information and contact procedures. A booking function may initially link to established payment channels rather than build a complex payment system from the outset. The platform should also support Vietnamese-language content and progressively add English and other languages as local capacity develops.

At the community level, a local coordination group should help providers package complementary services, coordinate calendars and develop shared standards. For example, an artisan workshop may be combined with a local meal and a heritage walk, with each provider receiving an agreed share of the total price. Such packages should not be imposed from above: participating households and cultural practitioners should agree on timing, capacity, pricing and the conditions under which cultural practices can be shared.

Trust is a central operating requirement. Reviews should be linked to genuine bookings where possible and providers should have a fair process for responding to complaints or contesting inaccurate feedback. The platform should explain how ranking works and avoid allowing paid promotion to be confused with quality ratings. Personal information should be limited to what is necessary for bookings, stored securely and handled in accordance with applicable law.

#### 4.3. Service portfolio

*Table 5. Proposed service portfolio for BN-RCSH*

| Service line                   | Illustrative offer                                                                                           | Requirements before launch                                                                                    | Expected local value                                      |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Homestays and farm stays       | Family accommodation linked to village life or agricultural settings                                         | Registration and legal checks; hygiene; fire and emergency procedures; transparent facilities and house rules | Supplementary household income and longer visitor stays   |
| Home meals and cooking         | Traditional meals, market visits, cooking demonstrations and seasonal food experiences                       | Food hygiene; allergen information; clear menus and prices; suitable guest capacity                           | More direct sales for households and local food producers |
| Craft and cultural experiences | Dong Ho-inspired printmaking activities, pottery workshops, Quan ho introductions and artisan demonstrations | Consent from practitioners; fair remuneration; group-size limits; respectful interpretation                   | Support for craft transmission and cultural visibility    |
| Local guiding                  | Village walks oral history, heritage interpretation and themed itineraries                                   | Training in interpretation, visitor care, basic first aid and relevant licensing rules where applicable       | Employment and recognition for local knowledge holders    |
| Low-impact local mobility      | Walking and cycling routes, bicycle rental and compliant short-distance transfers                            | Vehicle and operator compliance; route safety; equipment checks; environmental guidance                       | Improved connections between dispersed rural experiences  |

(Source: Proposed by the author)

#### 4.4. Selecting pilot locations

Pilot locations should be selected through transparent criteria rather than solely on the basis of the popularity of a landmark. Candidate areas associated with Quan ho, traditional crafts, religious heritage and agricultural

experiences can be assessed for community readiness, access, service diversity and environmental sensitivity. The exact administrative names and boundaries of candidate sites should be updated against the official administrative framework in force at the time of publication, particularly because the article considers the post-merger province.

**Table 6. Proposed criteria for selecting pilot locations**

| Criterion                             | What should be assessed                                                                       | Suggested evidence                                                      |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Distinctive local assets              | Presence of heritage, crafts, food, agriculture or landscapes that can support experiences    | Resource inventory; heritage and craft documentation                    |
| Community readiness                   | Willingness of households and cultural practitioners to participate and collaborate           | Community meetings; expressions of interest; governance commitments     |
| Basic access and services             | Road access, sanitation, signage, communications and emergency support                        | Site audit; accessibility review; infrastructure checklist              |
| Digital readiness                     | Ability to maintain listings, respond to bookings and use basic digital tools                 | Digital skills assessment; connectivity check; training needs           |
| Safety and regulatory feasibility     | Ability to meet relevant requirements for accommodation, food, guiding and transport          | Compliance checklist; consultation with competent authorities           |
| Environmental and cultural safeguards | Visitor capacity, conservation sensitivity and community control over cultural representation | Site management plan; practitioner consent; visitor-management measures |

(Source: Proposed by the author)

## 5. FEASIBILITY, EXPECTED IMPACTS AND IMPLEMENTATION RISKS

### 5.1. Potential economic, social and environmental contributions

Economically, BN-RCSH could create additional earning opportunities by enabling households and small producers to offer services directly to visitors. The principal mechanism is the conversion of underused assets and local knowledge into bookable experiences. The platform could also help extend visitor stays by connecting a major attraction with accommodation, food, craft and guided activities. However, any claim about additional income, visitor growth or job creation must be tested using baseline and follow-up data rather than assumed in advance.

Socially and culturally, the model could strengthen local participation in tourism planning and create incentives for intergenerational transmission of craft skills, songs, food knowledge and oral histories. These outcomes depend on whether practitioners are fairly paid and retain control over how their heritage is represented. Cultural activities should not be reduced to performances detached from their community context. Consent, appropriate group sizes and respect for local protocols should be integral to service design.

Environmentally, the platform could encourage walking, cycling, shared local transport and better visitor distribution. It could also help communicate waste-reduction expectations and site-specific conservation guidance. Yet digital promotion may increase pressure on fragile sites if demand grows without capacity management. Environmental safeguards should therefore be established before promotion is scaled up.

### 5.2. Principal risks and mitigation measures

**Table 7. Implementation risks and proposed responses**

| Risk                         | How it may arise                                                                         | Mitigation response                                                                                        |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Digital exclusion            | Older residents or low-capacity households cannot manage online listings and bookings.   | Offer in-person onboarding, shared community support and simple mobile-first tools.                        |
| Inconsistent service quality | Providers differ in hygiene, hospitality, safety and communication.                      | Use proportionate minimum standards, training, checklists and periodic reviews.                            |
| Unclear responsibility       | Visitors are uncertain who handles cancellations, complaints, injury or service failure. | Publish service terms, define platform and provider responsibilities and establish a complaint pathway.    |
| Unequal value distribution   | Commissions, ranking or package design favour a small number of providers.               | Disclose fees, explain ranking, monitor provider participation and support transparent revenue allocation. |
| Cultural commodification     | Heritage practices are simplified or staged without community control.                   | Require practitioner consent, community review and culturally appropriate visitor guidance.                |

|                               |                                                                            |                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Environmental pressure        | Promotion increases traffic, waste or crowding at sensitive locations.     | Set capacity limits, promote off-peak visits and track environmental indicators.              |
| Weak financial sustainability | The platform cannot cover maintenance, customer support or training costs. | Pilot a lean model, disclose operating costs and test a mixed funding model before expansion. |

(Source: Author's analysis and recommendations)

### 5.3. A phased implementation roadmap

A phased approach is preferable to immediate province-wide deployment. The first phase should focus on co-design and readiness assessment. Community meetings, provider mapping, regulatory consultation and a baseline study would identify which services can be offered safely and which require investment or training. The second phase should launch a small pilot in a limited number of locations and with a manageable portfolio of services. The third phase should evaluate actual performance and revise the model before any expansion.

**Table 8. Indicative implementation roadmap**

| Phase                                | Main activities                                                                                                           | Key outputs                                                              | Decision gate                                                                |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Phase 1: Co-design and readiness     | Map providers and assets; consult residents and authorities; review regulations; define standards; collect baseline data. | Pilot design, governance charter, provider register, baseline indicators | Proceed only where community consent and minimum compliance are demonstrated |
| Phase 2: Minimum viable pilot        | Launch a simple digital catalogue and booking process; train providers; test a limited number of experiences.             | Operational listings, trained providers, initial bookings and feedback   | Review safety, user experience, provider satisfaction and operating costs    |
| Phase 3: Evaluation and refinement   | Compare results with baseline; examine benefit distribution; address complaints and digital-access gaps.                  | Evaluation report and revised operating procedures                       | Expand only if minimum quality, inclusion and financial criteria are met     |
| Phase 4: Carefully managed expansion | Add locations and service types; develop linked itineraries; strengthen partnerships and marketing.                       | Larger provider network and coordinated destination products             | Annual review of economic, social, cultural and environmental outcomes       |

(Source: Proposed by the author)

### 5.4. Monitoring and evaluation framework

The pilot should be evaluated using a balanced set of indicators. Platform activity alone, such as page views or listings, is not sufficient evidence of rural development. Monitoring should track whether residents earn income, whether opportunities are distributed beyond a small group, whether visitors receive reliable services and whether cultural and environmental safeguards are respected. Baseline values should be collected before launch, with periodic reporting during and after the pilot.

**Table 9. Suggested monitoring indicators**

| Outcome area             | Core indicators                                                                                                                      | Measurement approach                                                     |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Economic performance     | Active providers; completed bookings; average provider revenue; proportion of package spending retained locally; repeat bookings     | Platform records, provider logs and periodic confidential income surveys |
| Community inclusion      | Households participating; representation of women, young people and older knowledge holders; training completion; provider retention | Provider register, training records and interviews                       |
| Visitor experience       | Satisfaction; review quality; complaint rate; booking response time; intention to recommend                                          | Post-visit surveys and platform feedback                                 |
| Cultural safeguarding    | Practitioner consent; number of locally led experiences; participation in transmission activities; reported cultural concerns        | Community review, practitioner interviews and programme records          |
| Environmental management | Waste practices; use of low-impact mobility; visitor pressure at sensitive sites; compliance with local guidance                     | Site audits, operator checklists and visitor-management records          |
| Platform governance      | Fee transparency; complaint resolution time; data incidents; ranking transparency; accessibility of information                      | Platform audit, complaints log and periodic public reporting             |

(Source: Proposed by the author)

## 6. DISCUSSION

The proposed model reframes rural tourism development as a coordination and governance challenge rather than simply a marketing challenge. Digital tools can reduce the distance between visitors and local providers, but inclusive outcomes depend on who controls the platform, how services are verified, what fees are charged and whether local communities have a meaningful voice. In this sense, BN-RCSH should be judged not by the sophistication of its technology but by its ability to connect fragmented assets while protecting local agency.

The model also suggests that rural tourism products should be designed as networks of complementary experiences. A heritage visit can generate greater local value when it is linked to a meal, a craft workshop or a guided village walk. This approach can diversify the visitor offer and reduce dependence on a single attraction or festival. It requires coordination among providers, realistic scheduling, clear pricing and mechanisms to handle cancellations or changes in visitor plans.

A further implication concerns the meaning of sustainability. Economic viability is necessary, but it is not sufficient. A model that increases bookings while excluding less digitally capable households, weakening cultural practice or generating unmanaged waste would fall short of a sustainable-development objective. For this reason, the governance arrangements and monitoring framework are not supplementary components: they are core features of the proposed model.

Finally, the conceptual status of the proposal must be acknowledged. Without a documented baseline and measured pilot outcomes, it is not possible to conclude that BN-RCSH will increase income, reduce seasonality or improve conservation. The article offers a structured hypothesis and a practical implementation design. Empirical validation should follow through a pilot study that combines platform records, household surveys, visitor feedback, interviews with cultural practitioners and assessment of environmental impacts.

## 7. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

At the provincial level, authorities should establish a coordinated pilot programme that brings together tourism, culture, agriculture, digital transformation and rural development functions. The programme should define the pilot's governance structure, assign responsibility for provider support and visitor protection and coordinate infrastructure improvements with actual service needs. Pilot locations should be selected transparently, with community consent and clear eligibility criteria.

At the community level, cooperatives or destination-management groups can help small providers pool marketing, coordinate calendars, develop themed itineraries and resolve service issues. Training should cover digital listings, hospitality, basic foreign-language communication, food hygiene, safety, customer care, cultural interpretation and financial management. Small grants or appropriately designed credit may help households meet minimum standards, but support should be linked to clear quality and safeguarding commitments.

At the platform level, the operator should publish fees, booking conditions, review rules, data-protection practices and complaint procedures. The platform should not privilege large or highly connected providers by default. A transparent onboarding process and practical offline support are needed so that the digital transition does not deepen existing inequalities.

At the national level, relevant authorities should clarify how existing rules apply to different categories of small-scale tourism service providers, including accommodation, food, guiding and transport. Any experimental regulatory arrangement should be developed by competent authorities and remain consistent with public safety, taxation, consumer protection and heritage conservation requirements. Rural tourism policy can also draw on the Government's Rural Tourism Development Programme under Decision No. 922/QD-TTg of 2 August 2022, which approved a programme for rural tourism within the new rural development framework for 2021–2025.

## 8. CONCLUSION

Bac Ninh's combination of living cultural heritage, traditional crafts, religious and historical sites, agricultural landscapes and local food offer a strong basis for exploring a community-oriented sharing-economy approach to rural tourism. Yet these assets will not automatically translate into inclusive local development. Fragmented services, seasonality, uneven digital capacity, quality concerns and weak coordination can prevent rural households from capturing a fair share of tourism value. This article proposes the Bac Ninh Rural Culture Sharing Hub (BN-RCSH) as a conceptual model that combines a digital service interface with community coordination, quality assurance and local governance. Its proposed portfolio includes homestays and farm stays, home meals, craft and cultural experiences, local guiding and low-impact mobility. Its central proposition is that digital connection should be accompanied by transparent benefit-sharing, provider training, cultural safeguards and environmental management. The model remains a proposal and should not be treated as an empirically proven intervention. Its next step is a carefully bounded pilot with a verified baseline, clear legal responsibilities and transparent monitoring. If the pilot demonstrates meaningful local participation, acceptable service quality, fair distribution of income and respect for cultural and environmental limits, BN-RCSH could provide a practical framework for linking rural tourism resources across the wider Bac Ninh area and for informing similar initiatives elsewhere in Viet Nam.

**Note:** This article is an output of the scientific research project entitled "Developing a Sharing Economy Model for Rural Areas in Bac Ninh Province." Author information: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Do Anh Tai, Phenikaa University. Email: [tai.doanh@phenikaa-uni.edu.vn](mailto:tai.doanh@phenikaa-uni.edu.vn).

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