ASSESSMENT OF THE POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT OF AGRITOURISM IN BINH DINH PROVINCE, VIETNAM

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Article history

Received: March 29th, 2023 Received in revised form: April 28th, 2023 | Received in revised form (2nd): May 29th, 2023 Accepted: May 31st, 2023 Available online: October 10th, 2023

Abstract

This study evaluates the potential for agritourism development in Binh Dinh Province, Central Vietnam. The analytical hierarchical process is used to determine the weights of four factors with 25 measurement criteria to assess agritourism potential. The research results show that Binh Dinh Province has great agritourism potential based on four evaluation factors, including (1) local agricultural tourism resources, (2) the trend for agritourism development and the agritourism market, (3) the local community's willingness, and (4) the supporting activities of the local government. In particular, the local agricultural tourism resources factor received the highest score, followed by the local community's willingness and the supporting activities of the local government. The trend for agritourism development and the agritourism market was rated the lowest. Therefore, Binh Dinh has viable opportunities to encourage the growth of agritourism to improve farmers' livelihoods.

Keywords: Agritourism; Analytic hierarchy process; Binh Dinh; Potential.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.37569/DalatUniversity.13.4S.1129(2023)

Article type: (peer-reviewed) Full-length research article

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1. INTRODUCTION

Agricultural tourism is a model implemented by many countries around the world. While some developed countries, such as the United States, Austria, and Israel, have built this model over a long time, other countries, such as Thailand, the Philippines, and Taiwan, have developed the agritourism model rapidly. This model switches from traditional agriculture to agriculture combined with entertainment, bringing high efficiency to the agriculture and tourism industries (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008; Dadvar-Khani, 2015; Tüzün Rad, 2011). According to Fortune Business Insights (2019), the global agritourism market was worth US\$69.24 billion in 2019 and is expected to increase to US\$117.37 billion by 2027, with a compound annual growth rate of 7.42% between 2020 and 2027.

Agritourism is defined in a variety of ways. Miller and Cheng (2003) pointed out that the importance of agritourism is that it allows visitors to stay on a farm and engage in a variety of farm-related activities. As a result, agricultural activities may present opportunities for local farmers to diversify their businesses and raise their incomes, as well as for the general public to become more knowledgeable about agriculture (Knight, 1999). The Kentucky Agri-tourism Working Group (2003, p. 11) defined agritourism as "the economic activity that occurs when people link travel with agricultural products, services, or experiences." In sum, agritourism is described as a participatory activity involving tourists, agricultural producers, and their facilities and goods. Agritourism is a specific type of niche tourism that combines tourism with agricultural heritage. This type of tourism not only promotes economic growth, but also aids in cultural preservation and the growth of the traditional handicraft industry. It also enhances the image of the area and the local people.

Agritourism development is one of the goals of Binh Dinh Province's tourism development strategy, contributing to the socioeconomic development and enhancement of landscapes and the cultural and historical relics of the province's mountainous districts. In addition, agritourism helps diversify local tourism products and creates unique value within the tourism identity. The tourism development master plan of Binh Dinh Province to 2020 (UBND tinh Binh Đinh, 2016) identifies four districts in northern Binh Dinh (Hoai Nhon, An Lao, Hoai An, and Phu My) that bring many unique cultural identities along with historical values and rich natural conditions that have great potential for agritourism development. In addition, surveys and assessments of the potential for tourism development in this area were carried out by agencies in Binh Dinh. Binh Dinh has taken initial steps in creating tourism products in this area (UBND tinh Bình Định, 2016). According to the 2025 to 2035 tourism development plan for the northern region of Binh Dinh Province (including the four districts of Hoai Nhon, An Lao, Phu My, and Hoai An), the combination of eco-tourism and agricultural tourism is expected to attract about 200,000 tourists, with tourism revenue reaching about 280 billion VND in 2025. By 2035, 1,250,000 tourists are expected, with revenue reaching about 3,800 billion VND at a revenue growth rate of over 30% per year (UBND tinh Bình Định, 2019). In 2022, the People's Committee of Binh Dinh Province implemented a pilot project to develop tourism in traditional handicraft villages in Binh Dinh Province, including two in the northern districts of the province.

However, agritourism development in Binh Dinh Province is still at a low level compared to the current advantages and investment potential of the province, as agritourism products are still monotonous. Only a few physical facilities and accommodations exist for guests. The ability to manage agritourism activities is still limited, as are activities promoting local culture to domestic and international tourists. Moreover, the development of agritourism in the area faces significant competition from neighboring localities such as Quang Nam and Da Nang (UBND tinh Binh Định, 2021). Therefore, researching and assessing the potential for local agricultural tourism development is an important activity to identify potential strengths to serve the targeted and effective development of agricultural tourism in the province.

This study focuses on two objectives: (1) determining weighting criteria for assessing the potential for agritourism development and (2) analyzing criteria for assessing the potential for local agritourism development. Based on the research results, this study provides some insights into positioning strategies for local authorities and tourism businesses to develop agritourism in Binh Dinh.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Tew (2010) defines agricultural tourism as a term that refers to farm visits or agricultural production processes, agricultural business for hobbies, education, or relaxation, encompassing agricultural, natural, and human resources. Nguyen and Nguyen (2014) state that agritourism is a popular type of tourism in areas with agricultural advantages that is often developed in parallel with rural tourism. The development of agricultural tourism brings opportunities for agricultural development and diversifies tourism, thereby improving the living standards of the people.

There have been many studies of agricultural tourism in countries with similar conditions to Vietnam. Yamagishi et al. (2021) studied the current situation and potential of the Philippines as an agritourism destination and identified the fundamental factors that hinder the development of agricultural tourism. Their study assessed the challenges faced by Philippine farmers in diversifying their farms and operating farm tours and used these challenges to develop strategies and policies for stakeholders. Their study also addressed the limitations of agritourism. The Philippines, with its vast agricultural land, has the necessary foundation for agritourism. With low agricultural output, the country sees farm tourism as a strategy to diversify farms and increase income for rural communities, but important initiatives on product development, education and training, management and entrepreneurship, marketing and customer relations, and government support must be implemented. The potential for capital investment to convert farms into agritourism destinations is hampered by the lack of important skills on the part of farmers. Therefore, developing business and hospitality skills is crucial for the development of agricultural tourism. Kumar et al. (2021) analyzed the interplay between factors conducive to rural tourism development in India. This segment has great potential but still lacks consistent means and measures to ensure the comprehensive development of rural tourism in India. Kumar et al. (2021) identified fourteen factors, nine of which had been previously found and five that were identified by experts, that influence rural tourism development. Liang et al. (2020) demonstrated that agricultural tourism activities in Taiwan that require mutual cooperation, such as "Do It Yourself" activities, feeding animals, or picking fruit and vegetables, increase tourists' intentions to visit. In particular, their study showed that the willingness of tourists with children (but not those without) to revisit was influenced by feeding or interacting with animals. Most countries that correctly assessed the importance of developing rural tourism and had early policies to develop this type of tourism have been successful: Northern and Central Europe (1950), Southern Europe (1970), North America (1970, 1980), China (1980), South Korea (1984), Japan (1995), and Malaysia (1995), among others.

Tüzün Rad (2011) investigated the impact of a women-oriented agritourism development model on the local economy of the village of Kosbucagi, Turkey. Their research indicates that people's cooperative spirit, willingness to promote their cultural heritage, availability of rural accommodation, potential agricultural tours, and the production activities associated with traditional local carpet weaving, handicrafts, and cooking, combined with the richness of the cultural and tourist resources, are proof that the necessary conditions exist for developing agritourism.

Das and Deori (2012) evaluated the ecotourism potential of Nameri National Park, India. Their research results reveal six criteria to evaluate ecotourism potential: importance, accessibility, seasonality, fragility, popularity, and permission. Tourism potential was assessed as the average of the scores of all these criteria in terms of supply and demand.

Dinh et al. (2011) examined domestic tourists' satisfaction with tourism in Soc Trang Province. Their study aimed to determine how satisfied tourists were with components of the Soc Trang tourism product. Six variables were examined in the study: (1) security and safety, (2) environmental landscape, (3) human resources, (4) tourism infrastructure, (5) local activities, and (6) visitor satisfaction. The fact that environmental aspects, societal attitudes, and local activities are all average demonstrates that tourists are dissatisfied with Soc Trang Province's tourism sector. Moreover, according to Pham (2017), the factors needed to evaluate the potential of agritourism include (1) geographical location, (2) types of tourism resources (natural and human), (3) infrastructure and technical facilities, (4) tourism demand, and (5) national policies serving the development of agritourism. Bui (2017) analyzed the supply and demand factors needed to develop agritourism potential. The supply factors include tourism resources, technical infrastructure, sanitary conditions, security, the willingness of the local community, the capacity to participate in the organization and management of business activities, and the interest of the local government.

According to Vo and Ngo (2017), the basic conditions for the formation and development of rural tourism include (1) the uniqueness of rural tourism resources, (2) geographic location and accessibility, and (3) the competitiveness of tourism products in the market. Nguyen (2017) evaluated the potential for the growth of tourism in Ninh Binh Province, Vietnam. Both general and specific conditions have an impact on the availability of tourism services. General conditions include environmental conditions, visitor safety, political and social stability, and economic progress. Specific conditions

include the availability of tourism resources (natural and man-made), the preparedness of the organizational structure and general administration for tourism, the availability of a sizable skilled workforce, the variety of tourist products, policies for tourism development, and the involvement of local communities. All of the above factors have an impact on the availability of tourist services, which indicates how sustainably local tourism is developed. On the other hand, many factors affect the demand for tourism services, including income level, education level, and free time.

Based on previous research, the criteria to evaluate the potential for agritourism development are summarized in Table 1 below.

No	Main criterion	Sub-criteria	Sources
1	Local agricultural tourism resources	 Geographical location Natural resources, human resources The level of development of transportation, communications, accommodation facilities, and other services 	Priskin (2001), Vengesayi (2003), Crouch and Ritchie (1999), Pham (2017), Bui (2017)
2	The trend for agritourism development and the agritourism market	 The state of tourism development in the region The degree of linkage between agritourism sites with other tourist destinations/travel companies/accommodation services/other services Needs and behavior of tourists 	Ertuna and Kırbaş (2012), Pham (2017), Bui (2017)
3	The local community's willingness	 Skills of local residents Attitude of local residents 	Aref (2010), Tüzün Rad (2011), Ertuna and Kırbaş (2012), Crouch and Ritchie (2003), McGehee and Andereck (2004)
4	The supporting activities of the local government	 Participation in tourism activities by local authorities at all levels The promulgation of policies to develop agricultural tourism 	Pham (2017), Bui (2017)

Table 1. The evaluation criteria for local agritourism potential

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research site

Binh Dinh is a province in the central region of Vietnam. It has great advantages in sea and island tourism and the potential to develop agricultural tourism products. The province has many favorable conditions, such as a relatively mild climate, good soil, diverse mountainous terrain and landscape with a high greening rate, and a relatively pristine ecosystem associated with many famous agricultural tourist sites. These include the Go Loi

Tea area, green grapefruit in Hoai An district, the Tam Quan coconut forest in the town of Hoai Nhon, Squash village, and Chau Truc lagoon in Phu My district. In addition, this area also has many cultural and historical resources associated with the nation's history.

3.2. The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP)

Previous studies have used various criteria to assess the potential for developing agricultural tourism. Each criterion assesses a certain aspect of the potential for developing local agritourism. Therefore, the synthesis and comprehensiveness of evaluating the potential for developing agricultural tourism will contribute to the value of proposing reasonable solutions to create effective tourism products.

With a system of indicators to evaluate tourism potential, each criterion will have a different level of importance or impact, so it is necessary to determine the weights of the evaluation indicators. It is necessary to determine whether the indicators are equal or different in importance for tourism development. This study applied the AHP method to the analysis to solve these issues.

We conducted interviews with 39 experts in the field of agritourism to determine the evaluation criteria. Three main criteria were agreed upon by all of the experts: local agritourism resources, local community willingness, and local government support. The criterion with the lowest level of agreement was the trend of agritourism development and the agritourism market, with 79.48% (31/39 experts agreed). Four evaluation factors with 25 sub-criteria received a level of agreement over 70%, so we selected these factors and sub-criteria to measure the agritourism potential of Binh Dinh Province (Table 2). Then, the task in the second round was to determine the weights of these evaluation criteria.

No	Main criterion	Sub-criterion	
1	Local agricultural	The locale has beautiful natural scenery	M1.1
	tourism resourcesHumanistic tourism resources are diverse, rich, and attractive(M1)The local traditional craft village is still maintained	Humanistic tourism resources are diverse, rich, and attractive	M1.2
		The local traditional craft village is still maintained	M1.3
		Many interesting agricultural production activities are available	M1.4
		Special ethnic art and cultural performances exist	M1.5
		Local products and souvenirs are diverse and abundant	M1.6
		Unique, attractive, and delicious local traditional dishes are available	M1.7
		Local food safety is guaranteed	M1.8
		The local environment ensures security, order, and safety	M1.9
	Local guides	Local guides provide full local agricultural tourism information	M1.10
		Indigenous culture, customs, and festivals are preserved	M1.11
		The local infrastructure is convenient and modern	M1.12
		Technical facilities for agricultural tourism development are relatively good	M1.13

Table 2. Evaluation factors for agritourism potential

No	Main criterion	Sub-criterion			
2	The trend for				
	agritourism development and	Local agricultural attractions are visited on various tours	M2.2		
	the agritourism market (M2)	Local agritourism websites have many links to tour operators, accommodations, and other services	M2.3		
3	The local community's	Local people are willing to share space for agricultural tourism development	M3.1		
	willingness	Local people have a friendly and hospitable attitude toward tourists	M3.2		
		Local people are willing to participate in agricultural tourism activities	M3.3		
		Local people are willing to learn and improve their awareness and skills for agritourism	M3.4		
		Local people are interested in and support the policy of agritourism development	M3.5		
4	The supporting activities of the	The local government issues specific guidelines, policies, and plans to develop agritourism in the locality	M4.1		
	local governmentThe commune authorities at all levels(M4)agritourism development	The commune authorities at all levels can participate in the management of agritourism development	M4.2		
		Local authorities support material and technical investment to develop agritourism	M4.3		
		The local government strengthens, promotes, and supports the development of agritourism	M4.4		

Table 2. Evaluation factors for agritourism potential (cont.)

After determining the criteria, the study used the analytical hierarchical process (AHP) (Saaty, 1980) to build a AHP hierarchical tree (Figure 1).

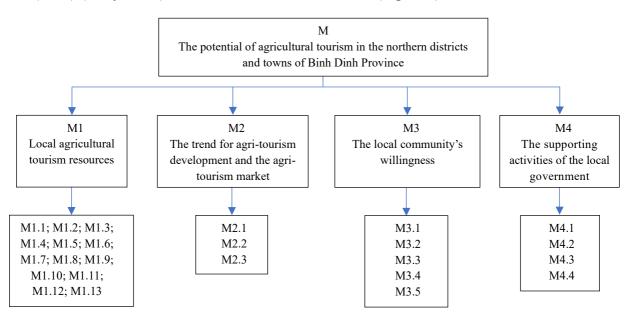


Figure 1. AHP hierarchical tree to determine rating weights

Next, in the second round, experts determined the scale to rate the relative importance of the evaluation criteria according to the importance ranking principle. For example, for two criteria denoted X and Y, the importance rating scale is defined as shown in Table 3.

Level	Definition	Explanation
1	Equal importance	Factors X and Y make equal contributions
3	Slightly more dominant and important	Factor X was selected and contributes somewhat more than Factor Y
5	More important	Factor X contributes more than Factor Y
7	Very important and obvious difference in impact	Factor X contributes much more than Factor Y, as clearly shown in specific cases
9	Extremely important, completely overwhelming	Factor X has outstanding importance; the contribution of Factor Y is negligible
2, 4, 6, 8	Intermediate levels between the above levels	There is a need for a compromise between the two factors

Table 3. The scale for evaluating the relative importance of the evaluation criteria

Source: Saaty (2008).

Next, a matrix was built to compare the evaluation criteria of the four factors according to the results of the discussion groups and to calculate the weights (Table 4).

Table 4. Matrix of criteria according to expert opinion and weighting for
agritourism potential in the northern districts and towns of Binh Dinh Province

Evaluation Criterion	M1	M2	M3	M4
	а	b	с	d
M1	1	A1	A2	A3
M2	1/A1	1	B1	B2
M3	1/A2	1/B1	1	C1
M4	1/A3	1/B2	1/C1	1
	\sum^{n}	\sum^{n}	\sum^{n}	\sum^{n}
	$\frac{a}{a}$	$\frac{2}{b}$	$\frac{2}{c}$	$\frac{d}{d}$

Source: Saaty (2008).

The consistency ratio (CR), which represents the consistency of expert opinion in the discussion process, is computed as

 $CR \le 0.1$ (10%) is suitable.

The consistency index (CI) is calculated as $CI = (\lambda_{max} - n)(n-1)$, where n is the number of criteria, and λ_{max} is a specific value of the comparison matrix;

The relationship between CR and CI is given by CR = CI / RI, where RI is a random index determined according to Table 5.

	Table 5. Random index														
N	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
RI	0	0	0.52	0.89	1.11	1.25	1.35	1.4	1.45	1.49	1.52	1.54	1.56	1.58	1.59

The process for establishing the assessment weight of each criterion is shown in Figure 2.

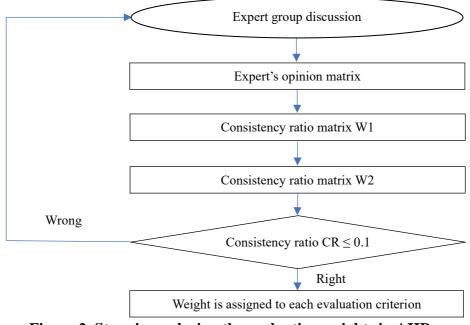


Figure 2. Steps in analyzing the evaluation weights in AHP

The total score for evaluating the agritourism potential of the northern districts and towns in Binh Dinh is calculated on the basis of the weights identified in the above step using the following formula.

$$M = \sum_{i=1}^{4} M_{i} * P_{i} (\%)$$

In which

M is the total score for evaluating the agritourism potential;

 P_i is the weight of i (i = 1, 2, 3, 4) calculated from the AHP results;

 $M_{\rm i}$ is the point of each criterion calculated as $M_i = \sum_{j=1}^n M_{\rm ij} * P_{\rm ij}$ (%);

 P_{ij} is the weight of the jth criterion (j = 1, 2, ..., n) of the ith pillar calculated from the results of the AHP analysis, and

 M_{ij} is the score of the criterion achieved according to the questionnaire.

The AHP analysis steps were repeated to determine the weights for the M1, M2, M3, and M4 sub-criteria.

3.3. Data collection and sample size

To achieve the research objective, we collected data by designing questionnaires to survey different groups of research subjects using the minimum sample formula

$$n = \frac{Z^2 p(1-p)}{e^2}$$

In which

n is the number of samples to be determined (sample size);

Z is the electable confidence-based Z-value. Normally, 95% confidence is chosen, so Z = 1.96, p = 0.5; and

e is the error.

For the 95% confidence level, the minimum sample size must be $n = 1.96^2 \times 0.5(1-0.5)/0.05^2 = 385$.

Therefore, we conducted a survey with a sample size of 400 distributed among the survey subjects, as shown in Table 6.

14	Tuble of Mulliber of Survey Subjects by Group								
No	Subjects	Quantity (votes)							
1	Local people	200							
2	Local authorities	50							
3	Tourism representatives	50							
4	Tourists	100							

 Table 6. Number of survey subjects by group

Half of the respondents are local people who best understand the potential for developing agricultural tourism in the locality. The evaluations of management agencies and representatives of tourism companies and tourists provided the study with more multidimensional perspectives on this issue. The descriptive statistics of the survey respondents are given in Table 7.

Tuble (12) Escriptive Statistics of the respondents											
Criterion	Gender Age				Location						
	Men	Women	Under 18	18– 35	36– 55	Above 55	An Lao	Hoai An	Hoai Nhon	Phu My	Other
Quantity (people)	182	218	6	218	122	54	44	64	93	75	124
Percentage (%)	45.50	54.50	1.50	54.50	30.50	13.50	11.00	16.00	23.25	18.75	31.00

Table 7. Descriptive statistics of the respondents

As shown by the data in Table 7, the survey sample consisted of 45.5% men and 54.5% women. The majority of participants (54.5%) were between the ages of 18 and 35, followed by those aged 36 to 55 (30.5%) and those aged 55 and over (13.5%). Regarding place of residence, 31.0% of the participants did not reside in the northern districts and towns of Binh Dinh Province, while 69.0% did reside in these areas, as shown in the table.

4. **RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

4.1. Evaluation of the criteria weights

The weights of the criteria for assessing the potential for agricultural tourism development using the AHP method are shown in Figure 3.

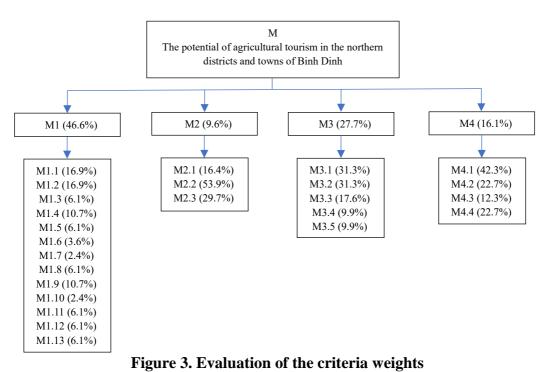


Figure 3 shows that the factor of local agricultural tourism resources (M1) is given the highest weight at 46.6%, followed by the weight of the factor of local community

readiness (M3) at 27.7% and the weight of the factor of local government interest (M4) at 16.1%. The factor with the lowest weight is the trend of agricultural tourism development and agricultural tourism market (M2) at 9.6%.

4.2. Assessment of agritourism potential in the northern districts and towns of Binh Dinh

The results of assessing the overall potential for agritourism development in Binh Dinh Province, Vietnam, are shown in Figure 4.

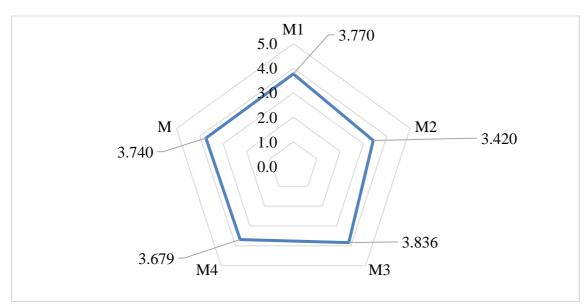


Figure 4. Network diagram of the evaluation criteria for agritourism potential in Binh Dinh Province

As shown in Figure 4, the potential for agricultural tourism development in the area is evaluated at a relatively high score of 3.740/5.000 points. In particular, the most appreciated factor is local agricultural tourism resources with 3.836/5.000 points, followed by the readiness of the local community with 3.770/5.000 points, and the supporting activities of the local government with 3.679/5.000 points. The trend for agritourism development and the agritourism market was rated the lowest among the four criteria.

Tourism is expected to become a key economic sector in the general economic structure of Binh Dinh Province by 2030, which is one of the centers of tourism on the south-central coast. While sea island resort tourism and cultural-historical tourism are two priority products, community-based tourism and agritourism are complementary tourism products that help develop the province. Binh Dinh Province has issued many plans, policies, and schemes concretized by specific actions to promote agritourism development. Therefore, it is reasonable to estimate that support by the local government is the highest-rated factor. In addition, Binh Dinh is a locality with rich and diverse tourism resources, from sea and island tourism products to ecotourism and agricultural tourism.

Many visitors are highly satisfied with the attractions of agricultural tourism such as fresh air, beautiful landscapes, traditional dishes, attractive natural scenery, and security. Because resources for agritourism are readily available at an affordable price, it is advantageous to promote agritourism by encouraging the willingness of people to engage in agricultural tourism activities, protect environmental resources, preserve and maintain customs, and be prepared to share space for agritourism development with the local people. Notably, the trend for agritourism development and the agritourism market was assessed at a lower score than the other three criteria. This also comes from the development of agritourism in Binh Dinh, which has recently attracted considerable attention. Besides, agricultural tourism activities lack excitement, and visitors do not pay much attention to this product. Therefore, Binh Dinh needs to form linkages between localities when designing tours that are both suitable for tourists' needs and promote the potential of local agricultural tourism.

5. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study assessed the agritourism potential of the northern districts and towns in Binh Dinh Province based on four factors: the local agricultural tourism resources, the trend of agritourism development and the agritourism market, the readiness of the local community, and the supporting activities of the local government. In general, the survey respondents highly appreciated the potential for local agricultural tourism development, showing that Binh Dinh has plenty of prospective factors to develop agritourism. However, these localities need to pay attention to the trend of agritourism development and the agritourism market, which is the criterion that scored lower than the other criteria. The results of this study are similar to those of previous studies. The tourism development plan for the northern region of Binh Dinh Province highlights the area's diverse natural resources and topography as key strengths. These include agricultural tourism resources such as the Tam Quan coconut forest, My Binh lake, Chau Truc lagoon, and An Lao hill, as well as cultural resources of ethnic groups and local history. Vu (2021) provided evidence supporting the richness and diversity of Binh Dinh's tourism resources. The northern region of Binh Dinh Province has the potential to develop various types of tourism, including sightseeing (rural tourism associated with handicraft villages), ecological tourism, and cultural tourism. With the available potential, Binh Dinh has suitable solutions to promote the development of agritourism to contribute to raising income for farmers. These include promoting the development of agricultural tourism products associated with traditional agricultural activities, especially local handicraft villages; linking the development of agricultural tourism with other types of tourism such as cultural and historical tourism to create attraction and interest for tourists; and promoting the spirit and awareness of developing agricultural tourism among the local community.

The study has some limitations that need to be addressed in future studies. The study investigated a sample size of 400 with four different subject groups based on certain criteria. However, the sample size is not large enough to draw comprehensive conclusions. Future studies should conduct surveys with a larger sample size. The study used four criteria to assess the potential for local agritourism development on different

sub-criteria. However, it does not fully reflect all the criteria that represent the potential to develop agricultural tourism in the local economy. Further studies should assess the potential for local agricultural tourism development with criteria that have not been addressed in this study, such as operating time and the attractiveness and sustainability of the destination.

In the scope of this study, we assessed the potential for local tourism development and then proposed suggestions on tourist destinations and specific agritourism models to be implemented in the region. Future studies will evaluate the level of favorability for developing this destination/agritourism model. Therefore, future studies based on potential assessments will further develop these specific solutions to contribute to promoting the development of agritourism in the area.

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