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Tourism Development and Amenity Migration
in Hill Stations:

The case study of Sapa in Vietnam

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【Abstract】

Natural amenities and tourism were considered to be important factors for the establishment of hill stations in Southern countries in Asia during the colonial time as they were only served for colonial bureaucrats and their families. After around 100 years of development, hill stations are now the most popular mountain resorts in some South and South-East Asia countries. The paper studies the relation between tourism in hill station and amenity migration - a social phenomena of post industrialization and examines whether tourism and amenity migration can bring the revitalization for the regional and rural areas where hill stations belong. Field research was conducted in Sapa hill station in the Northern part of Vietnam and the research is mainly focused on domestic amenity tourists.

Key words:

tourism, amenity migration, hill station, Sapa

1. INTRODUCTION

Amenity migration originated in the mountain communities of North America in the last years of the 20th century, and is now a growing trend throughout the world (Sungaila, 2005). The development of amenity migration in rural and mountain regions is always accompanied by the development of tourism. The discussions and debates on the role of amenity migration, especially Tourism-Led Amenity Migration (TLAM), in regional and rural development have recently been discovered for the first time in tourism literatures. Nevertheless, research into amenity migration and regional development is mainly seen in countries in Northern America and Europe such as The United States, Canada and Sweden. Most of their studies are concentrated on analyzing natural amenities as local attractions such as the landscape, water resources, good natural environment and climate etc (Peter, 2000; Marcouiller, Kim and Deller, 2004; Pearce, 2005; Waltert and Schlapfer, 2007.). There has only been a few studies on other social amenities related to lifestyles, traditional cultures, heritages, health and beauty, especially in developing countries.

Concept of amenity and amenity migration

There have been lots of studies on rural and mountainous amenities and their role to the development of local communities. Amenities provide benefits to people through the direct consumption of specific aspects of land, natural resources and human activity (OECD, 1994). These benefits are immobile and are linked to a particular region. Amenities can be defined as *non-marketed qualities of a locality that make it an attractive place to live and work* (Power, 1988: 142 in Gary, 2001). Examples of amenities are wildlife and flora, recreational areas, cultivated landscapes, unique settlement patterns, historic sites, and social and cultural traditions (Gary, 2001). The phenomenon that people migrate or travel to a place rich in amenities is called amenity migration. Amenity migration as a social phenomenon appeared in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s when the population in rural areas grew at a faster rate than that of urban areas (Walter and Varna, 2005). In the 1990s, this phenomenon happened again with more than 64% population growth occurring in the rural areas.

Although the concept and study of amenities has a long history, the concept of amenity migration appeared only in the mid 80s and since then, has been defined by lots of researchers. According to Moss (2003) amenity migration is defined as *"people moving into the mountains to reside year-round or intermittently, principally because of their actual and perceived greater environmental quality and cultural differentiation"*. Other researchers also have proposed different definitions but their consensus is the idea that some people choose to move to places with attractive landscapes, appealing

cultures, interesting histories, low crime rate, warmer climate, cultural activities, medical care, educational opportunities, quality of life, recreational activities, etc.. for reasons mostly unrelated to job or business opportunities.

There are some reasons which led to the growth of amenity migration. Beck's (1995) study on amenity migration to British Columbia's Okanagan Valley offered an excellent review of many key driving factors including "anti-urban" push and "pro-rural" pull factors. Green (2001) has argued that one of the key forces behind this growth in high amenity areas has been the increase in retirees and recreation areas in rural America. The aging of the population has increased the number of people of retirement age who are searching for places of living that have low crime rates, low costs of living, and moderate climates. Green (2001) also figured out that another factor contributing to the growth in high amenity areas, however, has been the economic expansion of the 1990s. Demand for amenities is strongly related to income. As the population becomes wealthier, they are more likely to take advantage of the benefits offered in high amenity areas. Glorioso (2000) stated that amenity migration assumed that we are now in the post-industrial information age, and information and knowledge were replacing labor, land and capital (money) as the main producer of wealth (p.276). She cited Moss' (1994) six key factors that combined into two societal driving forces (SDF) which contributed to the occurrence of amenity migration:

SDF 1: Increasing Motivation for Amenity Migration

1. Higher valuing of the natural environment
2. Higher valuing of cultural differentiation, and
3. Higher valuing of leisure, learning and spirituality.

SDF 2: Greater Facilitation of Mobility

4. Increasing discretionary time,
5. Increasing discretionary wealth, and
6. Increasing access through improving and providing less expensive information and communication (IC) and transportation technology. (p.277)

In Moss's presentation at the Smithers Symposium on Mountain Community Development (2005), he remarked that the particular influence of the six contributing factors has changed since he initially proposed them. Nonetheless, they remain fundamental and have been considered as such by other scholars (Gripton, 2001).

Tourism-led amenity migration

Tourism is not identical to amenity migration but it plays an important role because it could be seen as the first stage to amenity migration (Price et al. 1997; Moss 2003; 2006). In field studies, so far, it is however close to impossible to distinguish between

tourism and amenity migration e.g. the difference between recreation homes and secondary residences, as the criteria are overlapping. In academic literature there is no consensus on the demarcation between tourism and amenity migration. For instance, Bartos (2008) considered a continuous stay of at least half a year imperative, Arnesen (2008) considered the possession of a minimally equipped second abode in order to meet the criteria of amenity resident. Milbourne (2007) and Ni Laoire (2007), also discussed the permanency of migration to rural areas. In a special issue of the Journal of Rural Studies (23, 2007), they emphasized that not all people moving to rural places may remain settled in these places. Looking at the processes of amenity migration and relation to tourism, the author of this article agrees with Gripton's (2001) ideas and divides this relation into four stage as follows:

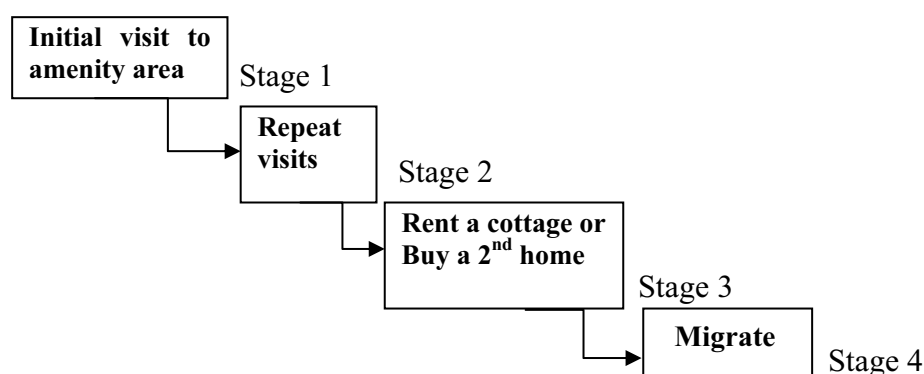
In the first stage, visitors come to a tourist destination (usually a rural or mountainous area) and they find that the destination is attractive and full of amenities.

In the second stage, the tourist destination becomes a favorite destination for the visitors and they return whenever they have time and can afford it. At this stage, visitors are called repeaters.

In the third stage, those repeaters who can afford will rent cottages or buy vacation homes in that tourism destination.

In the last stage, visitors completely migrate to the destination and live there as permanent residents and they are called amenity migrants.

All the stages reflect the relationship between tourism and amenity migration as illustrated in the figure below:



*Figure 1: Stages lead to amenity migration by tourism
(Reproduced from Stuart Valentich Gripton, 2001)*

The figure above proves that tourism often correlates positively with amenity migration (Stewart, 2002 in Sungaila, 2005). However, not all amenity migrants are led by tourism activities. Some migrants who are not necessarily rich still move to rich

amenity areas because they want to change their living environment or want to enjoy the lifestyle of the destinations.–

Researchers such as Moss (2003), Chipeniuk (2004), Sungaila (2005), only considered the last stage described in Figure 1 above to be amenity migration. The author of this article argues that amenity migration should also include stage 2 and 3 mentioned in Figure 1. In other words, repeat visitors (or repeaters) and cottages renters or second home owners are included in the concept of amenity migration because their temporary residences also play an important role in regional and local economic development. First time visitors to the destination may not be considered as such since it is difficult to evaluate whether or not they would be attracted by tourism amenities of the destination and would come back again. If they are attracted and desire to come back again, they then can be considered as the subject of amenity migration. Therefore, the term to describe people who move to high amenity areas should be “amenity mover”. This term was coined by Norman (2004) and has a larger meaning than the term “amenity migrant” used in previous researches. In conclusion, tourism is not the same as amenity migration but it always accompanies and appears in the amenity migration process.

Although the amenity migration phenomenon can occur in variety of places, the majority of research has focused on amenity migration in Sapa hill station in the Northern mountain region of Vietnam. This focus has been attributed to the growing number and rising rates of people moving into mountain regions as both visitors and residents and to prove that this phenomenon is not only happening in developed countries but also increasing in developing countries like Vietnam.

2. AMENITY MIGRATION IN HILL STATION IN VIETNAM

2.1. The formation of hill station in Vietnam

Hill station is a term used for a town usually at somewhat higher elevations. The term was used in colonial Asia (particularly India, but rarely in Africa), where towns have been founded by European colonial rulers up where temperatures are cooler, as refuges from the summer heat. They called the refuges they created “hill station”. These little towns carved from rocky mountainsides or nestled in the meadows of high plateaus began mostly as sanitariums or convalescent centers, but they soon became Europeanized highland resorts and, ultimately, escapist retreats far from the tumultuous cities and hot, parched lowlands below.

Though the age of European mercantile empire building and colonialism began with the turn of the sixteenth century, hill stations were largely a nineteenth-century

phenomenon. Most were established between 1820 and about 1885, through the French came late with Da Lat, in Vietnam, and the Americans with Baguio, in the Philippines, in the beginning of the twentieth century. The age of the hill station mirrored the period when seaside resorts, spas, and great mountains lodges were built in Europe and the United States. In some cases, the style and atmosphere of these European or American mountain retreats were consciously copied in the colonies (Barbara Crossette, 1998). Almost all of hill stations are at an altitude of approximately between 1,000 and 2,500 meters (3,500 to 7,500 feet); very few are outside this range.

In Vietnam, the hill stations were formed between 1893 and 1933 when the French came to see the mountains as sites for rest and recreation complexes. In this period of time, the French developed 6 hill stations in Northern and Central Vietnam: Bach Ma, Ba Na, Ba Vi, Tam Dao, Da Lat and Sapa. These hill stations provided seasonal refuges for beleaguered expatriates fatigued by tropical temperatures, diseases and other difficulties to which they were not accustomed. By far the jewel in the crown was Da Lat. The inveterate explorer and natural historian Dr. Alexandre Yersin first brought Da Lat region to the attention of the French. The Swiss-born Yersin lived in Nha Trang and had studied with Louis Pasteur. He is probably best remembered for identifying the bacillus *Yersinia Pestis*, the cause of bubonic plague, and developing a serum to combat the disease. Yersin was a strong proponent for the establishment of hill stations as health resorts and recreation centers. The hill station served this function for many years (Sterling, Hurley, Le, 2006). At that time, the French had planned to create Da Lat as a regional capital for Indo-Chinese Federation of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

The general features of the hill stations in Vietnam are that all the hill stations are in the altitude of around 1500 meters and the average temperature in the year is from 15-18 C degree. Barbara Crossette (1998) described, hill stations often had and still have - in addition to their offices, hospitals, country homes, churches, clubs, and libraries- at least one grand hotel or rustic lodge, boarding schools, a brewery, a lake (usually created by damming a stream), a botanical garden, wildlife sanctuaries, a golf course, hiking trails, a race gymkhana ground for competitive games, and plenty of horses or ponies of mountain rides. In the war time (1945-1975), except Dalat and Ba Na in the central region of Vietnam, the other hill stations in the North had not been used as tourism resorts or recreation centers. Only since the first Vietnam Tourism Year 1990, the function of hill stations has been waken up and now they are becoming the most popular tourism destination for both local and international visitors, especially Dat Lat and Sapa.

2.2. Case study of amenity migration in Sapa hill station

Overview of Sapa hill station

Sa Pa is a mountainous district in Lao Cai province, in the Northwest highland of Vietnam and shares the border with Yunnan province of China. The average altitude is 1,500 meters. The district is home of the 3,143 meter high Fansipan peak, the highest mountain in Indochina which is located in the Hoang Lien National Park – recently recognized as an ASEAN Heritage Park. The climate of Sapa is characterized by moderate and semi tropical features. The average temperature is around 15°C year-round. In May it is summer with temperatures around 13-15°C at night and 20-25°C during the day. There can be occasional heavy rain. In this study, the object of the field research is Sapa hill town, a part of Sapa district.

Sapa is known as one of the most famous hill station in Vietnam and was established by the French in 1903. From a wild land without local residents, in colonial time, the French had made Sapa become a famous health resort and recreation center. Although was discovered by the French in 1903, before 1909, only a small contingent of colonial troops was more or less regularly stationed there. The first permanent resident group arrived in 1910. Since then, thanks to an attractive continental climate, by 1912 a military sanatorium for ailing officers had been erected along with a fully fledged military garrison. Initially, official villas were built only for the military “top brass”. Yet in the late 1910s, company villas were established by important corporations wanting to mark their economic success, to be used as vacationing sites by deserving managerial staff. Then, from the 1920s onwards, several wealthy colonists with enough financial capital also had a number of private villas constructed in the vicinity (Michaud and Tunner, 2006). During the first Indochina War (1945-1954), Sapa was heavily damaged and until the economic renovation in 1980s, there almost was no tourism activity in Sapa. In 1990, Vietnamese government promoted national tourism industry by organizing event “National Tourism Year” and after 3 years, in 1993, Sapa was officially opened up for international tourists. In October 2003, Sapa, a hill town of 6,000 inhabitants, celebrated what local state officials announced to be the “*100 year anniversary of tourism in Sapa*”.

Tourism potential and amenity of Sapa

As partly mentioned above, Sapa is full of natural amenities for building a health resort. Although the highest temperature in summer in Hanoi and other lowland places can reach up to 38°C, the highest temperature in Sapa is around 20-25°C in the day time. Therefore, just after being discovered, the French built it to be a health resort. The first

French sanitarium was built in 1914 and all materials for building a high class health resort were transported to Sapa from Hanoi (according to the Tourism Management Development, Lao Cai Province). In the colonial time, the French called Sapa a “*Summer Capital of Indochina*”.

Apart from the amenity of climate, Sapa also has many picturesque landscapes, from the imposing scenery of Phansipan peak to the charm of terraced fields of H'Mong people on abrupt mountain slopes in Trung Chai commune, along the 20 km road from Lao Cai city to Sapa town. Terraced fields are also can be seen in Muong Hoa valley and many ethnic people`s villages such as Ly Lao Chai, Ta Van, Ta Phin, Ban Ho, etc. Sapa`s terraced fields are now one of the most favorite destinations of both national and international visitors, and were recently recognized as one of the world`s seven most beautiful and magnificent terraced fields in the world by US-based Travel & Leisure magazine. Tourism authority of Lao Cai province recently also proposed Vietnam government to ask UNESCO for recognition of the complex of the terraced fields, together with the ancient stone bank and Hoang Lien National park as world heritages.

Ethnic groups and their traditional cultures are being seen as tourism amenities in Sapa. Now, there are four main ethnic groups in Sapa, among whom the Hmong account for 52%, the Dao 25%, the Tay 5%, the Day (Giay) 2%. Kinh people have just migrated to Sapa since it was developed as an international tourism destination and mainly for business purposes. They are now accounted about 15% of Sapa`s town population. The ethnic minorities are found in all communes in Sa Pa District although less live within Sapa town itself. Many communes contain a number of ethnic groups living in often separate villages. Some villages of ethnic minority groups in the vicinity of Sapa town are now popular destination to visitors such as Cat Cat (H'Mong people), Ta Phin (Dao people), Ban Ho etc. The most attractive products of ethnic minority groups to tourists are their traditional textile with hemp and indigo to make colorful batik cloths or embroideries. Markets of ethnic minority groups where all of traditional handicraft and local specialties sold are also tourism attractions to visitors.

Present situation of tourism development

From 1993, tourism has been growing rapidly in Sapa. During the period from 1994 to 2000, the number of visitors to Sapa increased 80% annually while that of the national tourism was 26%. In 2007, the total visitors to Sapa were 305,907 (table 1), estimated 50 times more than the population of Sapa town and 6 times more than the total population of Sapa district.

Content \ Years	In 2006	In 2007	Target to 2010
1. Income from tourism	100billions VND	150 billions VND	334.9 billions VND
2. GDP	60	61	65
3. Total of visitors	259,079	305,907	450,000
- National visitors	193,724	206,868	320,000
- International visitors	65,355	99,039	130,000
4. Number of hotel and lodging facilities	127	130	180
- Number of rooms	1,957	2,012	3,850
- Number of beds	3,691	3,777	7,700
5. Number of direct labours	1,000	1,500	2,500

Note: 1VND = 0.000054USD

Table 1: The synthesis of tourism development indexes in Sapa in 2006 and 2007

Source: Tourism Department – Lao Cai province

Thanks to the development of tourists in number, one of the most immediately obviousness is the phenomenal growth over a decade in the number of hotel and guest houses. These establishments are either state-owned or in private hand. (Di Gregorio et al, 1997 in Michaud and Tunner, 2006). According to the Tourism Department, Lao Cai's province committee, in 2007, there were 130 hotels and guest houses in Sapa town, much more than only 5 state - owned guest houses in 1994. In 1990, tourism and services were only accounted for 2% in GDP of Sapa district but it was up to around 61% in 2007 (according to Tourism Department in Lao Cai province, table 1)

In Sapa town, the center of Sapa district, tourism facilities and landscapes have been upgraded in recent years. The local government has tried to keep and follow the model of the French in building a hill station in colonial time. In 2002-2003, they created an artificial lake on in disused outskirts of the town. Another key feature aimed at attracting Kinh guests is the three kilometers clean and easy concrete walkway leading uphill from the town to the Ham Rong stone forest, a natural curiosity, crossing on its course a large human-made garden where a “traditional” minority dance show is performed for tourists. Another very popular walk is the concrete pathway leading downhill to the Cat Cat waterfall that slices through a real, albeit rapidly touristifying ethnic minority Hmong hamlet (Michaud and Tunner, 2006). Cultural performances of

ethnic minorities are also organized here for tourists. The traditional handicraft shops along the pathway are attracting tourists although tourist may find the same products in different shops and some products are not indigenous.

The development of town's physical infrastructure since the boom started is also significant. Streets in the center of the town have been straightened with spacious sidewalks, dust bins also have been fitted and the streets are becoming cleaner. Some of old villas and especially the old church from colonial time have been also upgraded and became an important tourist spot in the town. Tourists can feel safety in the town even in evening and find it easy to communicate with local ethnic peoples as many of them can speak Vietnamese, English and French fluently.

Amenity migration in Sapa

The amenity migration to Sapa can be divided into two stages. The first stage is since its establishment to 1945, the year of the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. This stage can be called the stage of colonial time. The second stage is since Sapa re-emerged as international tourist destination in the first years of 1990s to present.

In the stage of colonial time, just after establishing by the French as a health resort and recreational center, Sapa had passed the first amenity migration. The colonial troops can be considered the first migrants to Sapa when they stationed there after Sapa was discovered in 1903. In 1912, after building a military sanatorium for ailing officers, Sapa attracted not only French bureaucrats and military officers but also overseas and Vietnamese merchants. Many of them became the amenity and lifestyle entrepreneurs in Sapa. From 1910 to 1920, six buildings were built and by 1930, Tokin (name of the North of Vietnam in colonial time) government had built three big hotels (Fansipan, Vaumosse and Morellon) and 28 villas were also built in this time. Most of villas were belonging to several wealthy colonists and Vietnamese merchants. They early recognized the hill station could be used as a profitable holiday destination for slightly less affluent, yet still desirable colonists, those were presumed to be a small number of affluent Vietnamese vacationers. To attract tourist to Sapa and promote their business, the owners of three or four small hotel at time jointly set up the promotional Tourist Bureau in Sapa. The bureau launched a publicity campaign in 1924 with a Livret-Guide de Chapa (Syndicat d'initiative de Chapa 1924). The booklet attempted to convince less affluent French clientele to visit for short summer stays, with the healthy qualities of the location being praised, and the climate and contact with nature topping the list (Jennings2003; Reed 1995). According to information provided by transport business found in archives, in 1928, among 900 Europeans tourists to Sapa, 90% of them stayed

in Sapa in three weeks or less and in 1939, the number of tourists to Sapa was up to 3000. A consequence of its own success, the hill-station's hotels and the few vacant villas that could be rented out were sometimes insufficient to accommodate everyone, and in some years a number of families could not find a place to stay, not even in a "native house" (Michaud and Tunner, 2006). In 1940, the total villas built in Sapa were up to more than 100 and tens of big hotels.

The population of Sapa town and its vicinities had been growing quickly due to the development of the resorts. The construction of mountain roads, hotels, villas and sanitariums required thousands of labors. Many were the local labors but some of them were from other lowland provinces. The builders of the mountain road had to depend on local labors to dig and level the roadbed. They called the workers "coolies," derived from kuli, an Indian word whose origins and meaning are colonizers. Kuli now is still popular in Vietnamese when addressing people who have to work hard with low income. After the construction finished, many of them settled in Sapa as permanent residents or to find new jobs. Other migration groups to Sapa were ethnic minority groups. The development of infrastructures attracted them to move closer to Sapa and settled permanently in the vicinity. For the affluent class, Sapa was utilized as a second home resort. From the start of the summer season in June, the French social elite posted in the delta sent their families and household staff ahead to enjoy the comforts of their villas, until they could join them for a few days or weeks at a time. Families then completed their stays by August or September before shifting back to their urban residences (Michaud and Tunner, 2006). Therefore, beside the name '*Summer Capital of Indochina*', Sapa with its alpine feel and continental climates, was also considered an '*escape back to French*' (Jenning, 2003, p168). However, during the Indochina war, more than 200 villas and colonial buildings were destroyed by Viet Minh sympathizers or in the early 1950s by French air raids and the role of Sapa hill station entered a prolonged sleep until the first years of 1990s.

The second stage of amenity migration began in 1993 when Sapa was officially opened for international visitors, a little bit later than Da Lat (1986). Now, thanks to the development of information technology and mass media, Sapa is becoming popular to all national and international visitors. The traffic is also getting more convenient and tourists can easily go to Sapa by bus or night train from Hanoi. According to the result of a questionnaire survey on amenity migration in Sapa hill station conducted by the authors of this paper, 98.9% of the visitors came from cities and urban areas while only 1.1% was from rural and mountainous regions. Among the total of 204 visitors interviewed, 43.5% have been in Sapa for at least 3 times. This result reflected the

demand of city and urban dwellers for tourism and recreation in high amenities rural areas, especially when the economic conditions are being improved. When being asked why you chose Sapa for your destination, most of the interviewees answered that they were attracted by natural amenities of Sapa such as beautiful landscapes, wildlife and flora, and especially Sapa has a clean environment and cool climate.

Evaluations	<i>1.Strongly disagree</i>	<i>2. Disagree</i>	<i>3.Fairly agree</i>	<i>4.Agree</i>	<i>5.Strongly agree</i>	<i>Response Count</i>
1. Sapa is one of the most attractive mountain resort in Vietnam	1.0% (2)	1.5% (3)	21.4% (42)	42.9% (84)	33.2% (65)	196
2. Sapa has much of natural amazing phenomenon and beauty landscapes	1.5% (3)	2.1% (4)	19.6% (38)	51.1% (103)	23.7% (46)	194
3.Climate in Sapa is pure and comfortable	0.5% (1)	1.0% (2)	6.2% (12)	40.2% (78)	52.1% (101)	194
4. Climate in Sapa is suitable for tourism around the year	1.5% (3)	14.4% (28)	30.3% (59)	37.4% (73)	16.4% (32)	195
5.Natural environment in Sapa is clean	0.5% (1)	5.7% (11)	31.8% (61)	45.3% (87)	16.7% (32)	192
6.Sapa has a lot of clean and fresh fruits and vegetables	1.5% (3)	2.6% (5)	21.5% (42)	52.8% (103)	21.5% (42)	195
7. Sapa has an unique and diversification of wildlife and flora	1.0% (2)	1.5% (3)	25.6% (50)	56.9% (111)	14.9% (29)	195
8. There are many tourism attractions in Sapa	1.5% (3)	5.6% (11)	35.7% (70)	44.4% (87)	12.8% (25)	196
9. Sapa is an ideal place for relaxing, health recovering and entertaining.	1.0% (2)	2.1% (4)	26.7% (52)	43.6% (85)	26.7% (52)	195
10. Sapa has an ideal living environment for retirees and old people	1.0% (2)	9.2% (18)	32.3% (63)	39.0% (76)	18.5% (36)	195
10. Sapa is an ideal place for building second home or vacation house	1.5% (3)	11.7% (23)	36.7% (72)	35.2% (69)	14.8% (29)	196
Answered questions						197
Skipped questions						7

Table 2: The result of natural amenities migration evaluation in Sapa

Looking at the tendency of amenity moving to Sapa, this paper divides the current domestic amenity tourists to Sapa into two separate groups. The first is affluent class

who became rich in post-Doimoi policy. They are predominantly Hanoians but also Saigonians and a few originating from Hai Phong or Da Nang, who come to Sapa in air-conditioned cars or SUVs (sport utility vehicle) for a weekend trip. Most of them are young tourists who succeed in their own business and go to Sapa for relaxing, enjoying the cooler temperatures. According to the results of the survey, the numbers of tourists, who are affluent class or doing business in private sectors, are increasing rapidly. Among 167 tourists interviewed by questionnaires, tourists who are doing business are 67 people, accounted for 40.7%, highest rate compared with other groups. Of course, only a small number of them belong to affluent class as mentioned above but are affluent consumers in Sapa. The formation of affluent class tourists in Sapa mirrored the French elite class who once holidayed in Sapa during the summer months, staying in their personal villas. Now, Vietnamese affluent class seems to be doing what the French did 100 years before by buying land in the center or vicinity of Sapa town to build their villas or second homes. The result in table 2 also shows that 50% of interviewees agree with the evaluation that Sapa is an ideal place for building second homes or vacation houses. At present, along Nguyen Chi Thanh road which connects Sapa's center to Thac Bac (silver waterfall), a famous destination in Sapa's vicinity, there were lots of villas and bungalows built and many others are under construction. Since 2004, when the local government released a new plan of developing Sapa to be the most charming mountainous town in Vietnam in cooperation with Bordeaux University – France, Sapa has been facing with a boom of second home development. This phenomenon happens not only in Sapa but also in other rich amenity mountainous areas like Ba Vi or Tam Dao hill station.

The second group is still Vietnamese tourist but not on the rank with affluent group just considered. They may include public servants, students, retirees etc and go to Sapa by public traffic vehicles. In this group, according to the survey, public servants or state workers from all level of governments are the most crowded, accounted for 30.5%. They are called *Bienche* tourists by Michaud and Tunner (2006) because they belong to the socialist *Bienche* system with a state position considered permanent. Far more secure in their jobs than private sector workers, state employees also have the opportunity of enjoying statutory perks, one possibility being an annual free collective trip for a few days somewhere in the country. However, *Bienche* tourists have some limitations for the destinations vary greatly depending on the region where the workers are based, on the number of potential participants for they are used to bring their family members in *Bienche* trips, and the most importance is depending on the amount of money available for that year. For these reasons, Sapa was chosen as a *Bienche*

destination of many state agencies in the North. Traveling and staying in Sapa are still considered much cheaper and easier than other *Bienche* destinations such as Da Lat or Nha Trang. Not like affluent class, almost of *Bienche* tourists cannot afford buying villas or building second homes but they are the largest number of repeaters and can afford renting bungalows for short time vacations. Besides *Bienche* tourists, students and retirees are important segments of amenity movers to Sapa today.

Thanks to the development of tourism, the numbers of lifestyle entrepreneurs are also increasing rapidly. There are 3 main businesses including hotels and restaurants, traditional arts and craft; local medicines and herbs. However, almost of these entrepreneurs are Kinh people who migrated to Sapa from delta provinces or from Laicai city. According to Tourism Department of Lao Cai province, among 130 hotels and lodging facilities in Sapa in 2007, except some old hotels and guest houses are state owned, the rests are belonging to Kinh entrepreneurs or foreign investments. The situation is also not different with traditional crafts and local medicines. In 2003, when Sapa celebrated its 100 year of birth, the population of Sapa town was 6000 but in 2008, it grew up to around 8000 residents. There were 2000 new residents in Sapa town in only 5 years and averagely 400 new residents per year in Sapa. A simple calculation shows that if annual population growth rate in rural areas in Vietnam in recent years is 1.5%, population added per year are only around 100 people. Therefore, the rest of around 300 new residents per year should be from other regions and can be called amenity migrants. Of course, only some of them have become lifestyle or tourism entrepreneurs, the others may be workers in hospitality industry, second home owners or just normal citizens of Sapa town.

For international tourists, the first tourists to Sapa after its re-opening in 1993 were backpackers. They are varying in ages from those in their early 20s to seasoned tourists in their 60s. While most of Vietnamese tourists come to Sapa for climate, fresh vegetables and fruits, backpackers come to Sapa with completely different goals in mind. A few nongovernmental organization surveys of this segment of the tourism market have shown that they overwhelmingly come to Sapa to see the ethnic market, to visit the minority villages on treks, and to get away from the crowded lowlands (Di Gregorio et al 1997; Grindley 1998 in Michaud and Tunner 2006). For these reasons, Sapa is considered the *Heaven of Backpackers*. At the beginning of 1990s, backpackers were not encouraged in Vietnam in general and in Sapa in particular for they were thought not to bring benefit to the local communities due to low expense ability. However at present, they were warmly welcomed as other tourist's segments.

The second category of international tourists to Sapa is a small affluent segment

from Western or Asian countries with high expense ability. They usually buy tours in travel agencies and all services are well set up before their departure. In Sapa, luxury hotels like 4 stars Victoria Sapa are mostly chosen and the purpose of these tourists to Sapa is not to discover the exotic cultures of ethnic minority tribes like backpackers but mainly for health and recreation. They sometimes visit ethnic minority villages and Sapa vicinity but on deluxe cars or SUVs.

In 2007, there were 99,039 international tourists in Sapa, accounting for one third of the total 305,907 arrived tourists (table 1), a good result for Sapa while the national rate is around one sixth.

3. CONCLUSION

There have still some contending visions about whether tourism and amenity migration are really bringing sustainable development to the region while the local cultural identities of ethnic minority groups are being eroded by tourism impacts. Some social problems are emerging such as child labor abuse and prostitution. The mass moving of both tourists and migrants who are mostly Kinh peoples to Sapa is also making the land price inflate. The construction of villas and homes for new residents in the center and vicinities of Sapa may push the boundary between residential and undeveloped land further out, and finally many original ethnic minority residents will be driven out by high cost of living, rising demand for municipal services and higher taxes.

However, the development of tourism and amenity migration in Sapa in recent years has really brought the revitalization for not only Sapa town but also for other vicinities and Lao Cai province in general. Tourism and amenity migration have brought the infusion of new economic, institutional, and physical infrastructure capacity into the host region, lower rates of out-migration, increased property values and job opportunities. The quality of tourism and amenity services as well as the consumption ability of amenity movers to Sapa has been considerably improved. The number of tourists to Sapa in 2007 increased only around 20%, the social income from tourism and amenity services has increased up to 50% in comparison with those of 2006 (table 1) and until now, Sapa has been still growing incessantly in size and popularity. Among the two main groups of amenity movers to Sapa, the affluent group has much of possibility to become amenity migrants to Sapa and its vicinity. They represent for a new emerging capitalist class in Vietnam, of course not on the rank with those in well-developed countries, who are searching for new amenity lifestyles and health and they also reflect the increasing demand for amenity migration in developing countries. For the group of *Bienche* tourists, despite of the development of national economy in

recent years, the chance for most of them to possess a private car and a second home or villas in a high amenity place like Sapa is not in the near future and therefore they are only faithful repeaters at present.

In the aspect of management, the local government has implemented some measures and plans for tourism development in Sapa but the emphasis is mostly placed on how to increase the number of visitors to Sapa and broaden the size of the town. The importance of managing and further promoting of local amenities in Sapa now is how to improve the quality of tourism and social services, creating a new lifestyle and LOHAS (Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability) business for Sapa residents based on its advantages such as European climate and architectural style, the diversity of ethnic minority group's cultures and traditional crafts, and especially herb medicine and herb bath of Dao ethnic minority, which in recent five years have emerged as a new attraction. However, at present, although many local people traveled or moved to Sapa for work or pleasure and often formed a significant majority of the population, the town remained socially very much redolent of colonialism to the end and thus a little irrelevant to the majority of local populations.

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