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Developing Sustainable Tourism in Vietnam

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Abstract

Vietnam tourism is increasingly flourishing in all three regions: North, Central, and South. Each region has its own beauty and different conditions for tourism development. However, Vietnam tourism currently still has many problems. Tourism development is not synchronous, there is no close combination between tourism subjects and community subjects and the natural environment. In other words, Vietnam's tourism development is not sustainable. Meanwhile, sustainable tourism and sustainable tourism development are the new direction of the tourism industry in

many countries around the world. To integrate tourism with countries around the world, Vietnamese tourism needs to develop in the general direction of sustainable development. In this article, the authors clarify the concept of sustainable tourism, standards of sustainable tourism, analyze the current state of tourism development in Vietnam from a sustainable perspective, and thereby propose some solutions. To develop sustainable tourism in Vietnam in the coming time.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, Sustainable Tourism Development, Vietnam Tourism

1. Some basic content about sustainable tourism

For a long time, the concept of "tourism" has been widely used by scholars in books, newspapers and mass media. However, with each period of development, the concept of tourism also has different characteristics and is increasingly improved. The International Union of Official Travel Organizations (IUOTO) has introduced the concept: "Tourism is the act of traveling to a place other than one's usual place of residence for the purpose is not to do business, that is, not to do a job or a job to make a living."

In 1963, the World Tourism Organization, part of the United Nations, introduced the concept: "Tourism includes all activities of people who travel, temporarily reside, for the purpose of sightseeing, explore and learn, experience or for the purpose of rest, entertainment and relaxation; as well as for professional and other purposes, for a continuous period of not more than one year, outside the settled living environment; but excludes trips whose main purpose is to make money."

With the definition of tourism as presented above, it can be seen that tourism has the following characteristics:

- Tourism is a smokeless industry, causing little environmental pollution, helping tourists rest, reduce stress and learn many new things that tourists do not know. Tourism also contributes to the country's socio-economic development, creating jobs and increasing income for workers.
- Tourism products are services and goods provided to tourists, created by the combination of exploiting natural and social factors with the use of resources: Physical and technical facilities. Techniques and labor at a certain facility, region or country. Thus, tourism products are invisible.
- The production process and the product consumption process take place at the same time, the end of production is also the time when the product consumption is completed.
- The production process is carried out by many different stages, in other words because many people participate in the production process of the tourism industry.
- Products of the tourism industry cannot be stored and there is no inventory ^[1].

Sustainable tourism is understood as the development and provision of tourism activities suitable to the needs and tastes of tourists and indigenous people. However, conservation and restoration of resources must still be maintained to develop tourism activities in the future. Sustainable tourism is required to maintain intact cultural, biological, and ecological values while satisfying aesthetic, economic, and social needs of people. In other words, sustainable tourism is a type of tourism that helps

minimize costs and maximize the benefits of tourism to the community and the natural environment. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in a conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (1992), "Sustainable tourism" is the comprehensive development of tourism activities to meet the needs of tourists. Visitors' needs, while also paying attention to indigenous people, conserving resources and having a reasonable plan to manage resources. Sustainable tourism development also needs to maintain cultural values, biodiversity, and the development of ecosystems, while contributing to supporting human life." In the simplest terms, sustainable tourism is aimed at minimizing costs and enhancing tourism benefits for tourists and indigenous people. This is also a sustainable, long-term direction, without adversely affecting ecological resources^[5].

The concept introduced by the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1987 is the most general and widely used concept. According to UNCED, "Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without reducing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Thus, if an activity is sustainable, it can theoretically be performed forever.

The Earth Summit on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in 1992 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg (Republic of South Africa) in 2002 determined "Sustainable development is formed in the integration, intertwining and compromise of three interacting systems: The economic system, the socio-cultural system and the environmental system." The criterion to evaluate sustainable development is stable economic growth; Make good progress and social justice; reasonably exploit and economically use natural resources, protect and improve the quality of the living environment. Thus, sustainable development lies at the intersection of three circles: Economic sustainability, social sustainability, and environmental sustainability.

In Vietnam, the 2017 Law on Tourism provides the definition: "Sustainable tourism development is tourism development that simultaneously meets socio-economic and environmental requirements, ensuring harmony of benefits." of entities participating in tourism activities, without compromising their ability to meet future tourism demand". Sustainable tourism requires a comprehensive combination of three factors: Environment - Economy - Culture and Society. Specifically, this activity is carried out through the following characteristics:

- Environmentally friendly: Sustainable tourism activities will have minimal impact on the natural environment such as animals, landscape, energy... trying to bring good values to the environment, protecting the environment to the maximum extent.
- Respect social and cultural authenticity: Sustainable tourism will not harm the cultural values of each locality, but instead contributes to promoting and respecting that identity. This form of tourism also encourages stakeholders to develop, educate, monitor, and ensure cultural values when building sustainable tourism.
- Economic development: Sustainable tourism activities will create a stable, fair income for local communities and stakeholders.

Sustainable tourism has the following meanings:

- Economic development: Sustainable tourism brings many benefits to economic development, creating fair and stable income for local communities and stakeholders.
- Protecting the living environment: Sustainable tourism development can help protect the living environment. This type of tourism has a low impact on the natural environment.

In addition to minimizing impacts on the environment, it also helps ensure the human living environment, through which people benefit.

- Minimize social evils: Sustainable tourism development helps reduce social evils through providing jobs for local people.

Looking deeper, sustainable tourism helps resource exploitation activities become scientific and conscious, ensuring resources reproduce and develop for future generations to continue and take advantage of.

2. Current status of sustainable tourism in Vietnam

Vietnam has more than 40,000 relics and landscapes, of which more than 3,000 relics are ranked national relics, 5,000 relics are ranked provincial level. Vietnam is also one of the few countries in the world that has many heritage sites recognized by UNESCO, including: Thang Long Imperial Citadel, Hoi An ancient town, Trang An scenic complex, Hue ancient capital, Ho Dynasty citadel, My Son Sanctuary, Phong Nha - Ke Bang National Park, Ha Long Bay. This is one of Vietnam's tourism potentials to attract international visitors. Furthermore, throughout the territory of Vietnam there are about 117 museums - places that preserve the nation's historical process with heroic marks that attract tourists to learn about Vietnamese history^[2].

Vietnam has 54 ethnic groups, each region and each ethnic group has its own cultural identity, customs, and lifestyle, creating its own charm. Vietnam also has famous intangible cultural heritage: Hue royal court music, Central Highlands gong cultural space, ca tru, quan ho, Xoan singing, Gong festival, Hung Vuong worship... to attract tourists. In particular, the Vietnamese people have a tradition of hospitality, which is one of the attractive and sympathetic factors for international tourists.

The complex and prolonged developments of the COVID-19 pandemic have directly and comprehensively affected socio-economic activities, in which tourism is one of the industries most heavily affected. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has put travel service businesses in crisis, with 90 - 95% of businesses having to stop operations or change their business models. In 2021, the number of workers still working full time is only 25% compared to the previous year, unemployment has increased, income has decreased, causing a significant impact on people's lives.

Many experts believe that the COVID-19 epidemic and travel restrictions will pull tourists back to domestic tourism and travel close to home. The rise of domestic tourism also promotes the need for outdoor activities, close to nature and the countryside. The trend of ecotourism is likely to be promoted in the near future with diverse forms, limited purposes within family and close friends, and limited contact with strangers and outside society^[3].

Since the end of the COVID -19 pandemic, tourism activities in Vietnam have focused on developing towards sustainable tourism, with many resorts receiving international green certificates from EarthCheck and Green Growth 2050. The number of accommodation locations in Vietnam that have achieved green certificates in recent years, including: Banyan Tree Lang Co resort, Caravelle Saigon Hotel; Angsana Lang Co (EarthCheck Gold Certified); Avani Quy Nhon Resort, Anantara Mui Ne Resort and Spa, Harbor View Hai Phong Hotel, Anantara Hoi An Resort (Gold certified by Green Growth 2050)...

Besides, respecting the local community is also a top concern when 84% of Vietnamese tourists want to have authentic experiences, bearing the cultural characteristics of the place they travel to, 98% believe that Raising awareness about culture as well as preserving heritage is important, 88% want to ensure that the economic impact revenues brought by the Tourism industry will be distributed equally among all social classes. In addition, 64% of Vietnamese tourists will avoid popular destinations and attractions to ensure they do not put more pressure on already overcrowded places, and at the same time, contribute to dispersing the good benefits. the beauty of traveling to places and communities with fewer in the past year, up to 52% of Vietnamese tourists took highly conscious actions, such as turning off the air conditioner/heater in the room when going out, and 52% brought their own reusable water bottles instead of buy bottled water when traveling, and 44% participate in activities to support the local community. In fact, 55% of travelers admit they feel uncomfortable if their property doesn't have recycling facilities.

In Vietnam, 100% of Vietnamese tourists responded that in the coming year, they want to stay in places committed to sustainable tourism. However, 14% of Vietnamese tourists said they did not stay at a sustainable accommodation in the past year, 47% of tourists did not know that such accommodations existed, and 42% of tourists could not find any options at the hotel. Destination and 54% of tourists do not know how to find it. In fact, up to 41% of Vietnamese tourists believe that in 2021, there will still not be enough options for sustainable tourism.

Besides the favorable potential for tourism development, Vietnam Tourism still has some limitations that lead to the untapped potential and at the same time the risk of affecting the sustainability of the industry.

Firstly, the professionalism when building tourism products and promoting them is not high. Vietnam's tourism products are slow to innovate, monotonous, lacking uniqueness, little creativity, overlap between regions, low added value contained in tourism products, lacking uniformity and lack of connection in product development, products are slow to innovate while tourist needs change dramatically. New tourism products mainly exploit the value of available resources; there are not many complementary products to attract tourists, stimulate their spending needs, and increase local revenue. The lack of complementary products also reduces demand for arrivals, as well as the likelihood of tourists returning. Besides, although the promotion and advertising work has received attention, it still has many limitations, is not professional, not methodical, and not effective; just stopped promoting the general image, not yet creating resonance and specific appeal for each tourism

product and brand. Security, safety, and hygiene factors are not yet guaranteed. In fact, in recent times, unsanitary, security and order problems at tourist destinations have often occurred; Parachute taxis, solicitation, street peddling, fraud, and forcing tourists still regularly occur in many localities, especially during the peak season.

Second, Vietnam does not have an infrastructure system including roads, with enough safety standards and easy access for tourists to travel quickly and safely. And convenient. For example, Tram Chim National Park in Dong Thap is one of the gardens with many rare bird species, such as red-headed cranes, melaleuca forests, ghost rice fields, and pipe grass fields. Tram Chim National Park is likened to a narrow Plain of Reeds with a diversity of rare flora and fauna. However, to get deep into the area and learn about the diversity of flora and fauna in the garden, the transportation system and bus routes during the day are not very convenient. As part of the project to develop the garden in the coming years, Tram Chim garden is expected to have a closed project from Tan Son Nhat airport to Tram Chim, to create favorable conditions for tourists to access Tram Chim. Birds with ease.

Third, specific policies for community tourism and agricultural tourism are not clear; human resource training policies, tax policies, land policies, immigration policies at times and places that are difficult to access and procedures are still complicated; The ability to access guidelines and policies on investment support of tourism businesses is not high, due to barriers in processes and procedures (due to applying policies from other sectors).

Fourth, when people are in tourist areas, they often violate the property of the tourist area without being aware of the long-term impact on the ecological environment and the long-term benefits for the community. Copper. There is also the problem of people exploiting and using resources inside Tram Chim garden, people in the area encroaching and fishing with electricity, or burning beehives to collect honey, causing forest fires, especially during the season. Dried. The same thing happened with U Minh Thuong forest, causing many obstacles for forest control.

Fifth, the lack of cooperation between related industries. Businesses work individually and independently for the personal benefit of each business. Policies from destination management agencies are still quite fragmented. At the same time, management agencies have not been able to connect businesses so they can develop together in a common direction.

Sixth, businesses and management agencies do not truly understand sustainable tourism as well as how to apply and practice sustainability. Currently, many travel companies are understanding sustainability as a type of tour and advertising sustainable tours in parallel with the company's other tour products. They see sustainable tourism as a product to exploit. This makes sustainable development misleading in companies.

Seventh, there is fear of rising costs. Travel companies are concerned that investment will be costly and that when expanding on a large scale, it will put pressure on company profits. Meanwhile, the sustainability factor here does not necessarily need to be applied all at once and can start from things close to the company, such as energy saving regulations or resource use here.

3. Some solutions to develop sustainable tourism in Vietnam

To develop tourism in a sustainable way, the tourism industry needs to propose a number of key solutions as follows:

Firstly, culture, biodiversity and environmental protection must be preserved and promoted, especially the value of historical heritage, national cultural identity, traditions and unique identities of the community. Local communities, at tourist destinations. Maintain and improve landscape quality, both in rural and urban areas, to avoid environmental degradation. Sustainable tourism aims at green, clean, friendly and safe tourism. Supports the conservation of flora and fauna. Environmental protection must be respected by management agencies at all levels and must become a mandatory requirement in planning tourism development projects and strategies of the province and tourist areas and destinations.

Second, in terms of planning and investment, on the basis of the master plan, continue to direct the review and preparation of detailed planning for each key tourist area, point, cluster and area, in which, special Pay attention to planning green urban areas. Pay attention to properly addressing the interests of the State, workers and businesses to create trust and attract social resources to perfect existing tourist areas, spots and clusters of the Northern region's caliber to create strength. Attraction and diffusion.

Third, in order to diversify tourism products and increase their attractiveness to tourists, localities are interested in exploiting products of different types of tourism with specific strengths. In addition to exploiting existing tourism products, cities focus on developing additional cultural and historical tourism products, culinary tourism, shopping tourism, ecological agricultural tourism and waterways. Conference and seminar tourism (MICE), medical tourism...

Fourth, restructure the tourism industry, from promotion activities, target market positioning to building appropriate products, prioritizing the development of stimulus packages, and close cooperation between the tourism industry. And related service providers such as aviation, goods production, tourist services, during the pandemic, people tend to raise awareness about "green lifestyle", protect the living environment and natural environment, contributing to building a sustainable local community.

Fifth, deploy many activities for tourism businesses to improve knowledge about sustainable development, how to have differentiated products, responsible tourism with local communities, environmental protection, and application of criteria for sustainable tourism development..., ensuring the goals of sustainable tourism development... include: Economic efficiency; Local development; Meet tourist satisfaction; Preserving cultural values; Protect nature; Environmental protection; Effective use of resources; Social Security; Social balance.

Sixth, there needs to be a human resource training policy. Currently, we are lacking quality human resources in both tourism management, human resources, and application of science and technology. Review and supplement mechanisms to attract high-quality human resources and train and foster existing professional skills and human resource tourism practices; Applying science and technology in environmental protection, in tourism management and development, and in human resource

training requires paying attention to the cultural factors of human resources.

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