

Tourism Products in Vietnam and Diversification

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Abstract: *In recent years, the tourist industry of Viet Nam has made a lot of dramatic changes. In addition to improve quality of services as well as business environment, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism has been trying to make its products more interesting to attract tourists. This is one of the goals to force for sustainable development in the future. This paper was completed with the survey data of 50 students and tour guides who are living in Ho Chi Minh City and it was also based on some books and journals. Thanks to the analysis method of Hancock by the time of July up to August of 2018, this research found out some difficulties, as well as benefits influencing the tourist products in this country. From then on, some solutions have been recommended with the purpose to diversify more creative products to contribute to the development of the country.*

Keywords: *Diversify, Tourism, Tourist products; Viet Nam*

INTRODUCTION

Vietnam is considered a country which has rich and diverse tourist potential. It has many advantages including more than 40,000 excellent places highly ranked by the country and eight World heritages recognized by UNESCO such as Thang Long Imperial Citadel, Hoi An Ancient Town, Trang An Ancient Citadel, Hue Citadel, Ho Citadel, My Son Holy Land, PhongNha - Ke Bang National Park and Ha Long Bay. Cuisine and culture are also two factors that are very popular and need to be preserved and developed. The tourist potential of this country is rather abundant, but how to exploit it as effective as expected is a big problem. To diversify and to make these products more interesting are not ever easy, since there are some products even met the opposition of the public.

1. CONTENT

1.1 Advantages of Tourism in Vietnam

The tourist potential of Vietnam is rather diversified, including natural tourism and human resources, which can be used to develop many types of tourism such as cultural tourism, ecotourism, beach tourism and relaxation tourism. This is also the conditions for Vietnam to vary tourist products(Xuan Hau & Anh Tuan, 2017).

With an area of 330,000 km² of land, Vietnam has a lot of hills, mountains, rivers and flat paddy fields. It has a rich and attractive tourism resource system. The beauty spots of Ha Long bay, Sapa highland, PhongNha-Ke Bang cave system and Van Phong bay always attract tourists. Besides, Vietnam also has long coastline, thousands of coastal islands and many beautiful beaches such as Nha Trang, Vung Tau, along with nearby islands such as Dao, Phu Quoc are outstanding strengths of Vietnam for the development of island tourism.

Vietnam does not only have nature but also experienced 4000 years of history. Historical vestiges of every period also attract tourists to explore and enjoy. Museums or ancient buildings around the country deserve to discover the hidden charms.

New resorts and hotels have been building along the country with high quality and great services such as Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi, Cat Ba Sunrise Resort or Reverie Saigon. These facilities will satisfy the most demanding customers.

Started from a low point, Vietnam's tourism has been developing step by step. Overcome difficulties and challenges, just tourism of Vietnam has proven its competitive in the market economy thanks to the solidity of people, investors, sectors and organizations.

And another important factor is that Vietnam has the human resource for tourism development. With a population of nearly 100 million people, most of them are young, active and hard-working, this country has the strength in labor market in general and in tourism development in particular. This is one of many elements that investors can pay more money for hospitality industry(Thuc & Vietnamese, 2016).

1.2 Limitations of Tourism in Vietnam

Tourist products of Vietnam have gradually affirmed its position in both the domestic and international market. Tourism has been a popular brand and known in many countries around the world. However, these products have some limitations, they are still fragmented, that is, travel agents do not find it easy to invest or even to choose good products to introduce to tourists(Thuc & Vietnamese, 2016). There are some causes that makes the quality of tourist products in Vietnam less competitive.

In addition to the achievements, the tourist industry in Vietnam still faces many difficulties and challenges. The competitiveness of Vietnam's tourism is still limited in terms of management of natural environment and social environment. Destination management, security and hygiene have not been implemented synchronously and efficiently. Professionalism in the construction and promoting tourist products has not been enhanced. Tourist products in Vietnam are still less creative and promoting products is still not effective. Besides, infrastructure as well as facilities, accommodation and tourist services has not developed in a proper way(Khuong & Nguyen, 2017).

Many tour operators only want to exploit the available tourist products and are not ready to make new products. They tend to invest less to explore new and great products. To make tourist products interesting, we need to have more ideas, we need more people who are challenging and are eager to work together. The enterprises which still have unfair competition, price pressure, devaluation may make travel products less valuable. In addition, sharing inequality between service providers and service users, particularly among communities and tour operators also is a problem.

First, entrance fees, transportation facilities and other facilities such as hotel or restaurant at tourist destinations always rise in peak seasons, however, tourist facilities are underdeveloped(Tseng, Chiu, & Nguyen Vo, 2011). In summer vacation on national holidays, the prices of hotels in some famous places such as Dalat or Vungtau which are rising rapidly. The not-good behavior of street sellers or a taxi driver may be also one of many factors that cause loss of sympathy in the eyes of international tourists. Besides, the shortage of staffs, especially tour guides, who can use foreign language fluently is also a major barrier to the promotion of tourism development. Then, prices of services are rather different between domestic and international visitors make the inequality and cause sympathy for international visitors to Vietnam even though the quality of these services are not so different. Vietnam itself has beautiful natural sceneries, great cuisines, ancient houses and traditional villages. But most of them no longer retain the inherent traits owing to the influence of modern life.

Second, local public transport is also a problem. Vietnam has no optimal transportation system. We do not have river bus services, local trams and convenient subway systems. Moving between cities and areas stills take a lot of time.

Third is the lack of special courses about tourism. Most of the training institutions only enroll basic courses from elementary to advanced levels but there are not so many specific courses about tourism. To explain professional phrases and explanations for visitors by English, most of staff have to prepare themselves, learn from the other veterans or some documents from the agencies. If knowledge of a person who working at a hotel or a tourist agency is not good enough, he cannot make his customers happy and as a result, the product that his company sold does not have good quality. The customers will not use the service again and he has no job, his company has no profit. We have to understand that working for tourism industry is "an opportunity to make a profit by supplying the goods and services that the tourist market demands" (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009a).

Besides, training courses and books are not up to standard. Except some prestigious universities like Ho Chi Minh City University of Economics, the output standards of other schools are also very different and need

to take into consideration. Large bookstores in the Vietnam have a great variety of language books, but to find a special book, especially English or Japanese materials for tour guides to practice is not easy. If there are, then books are written about very simple conversations that are not enough for the depth of knowledge that a professional tour guide must have. Guide books like "Lonely Planet" are normally only available in foreign countries and not all tour guides can easily own it.

According to the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, there are currently around 20,000 international tourist card holders, while the number of tourists is about 10 million in 2018. The training and improvement of the quality of tour guides are always a matter of concern. The system of universities, colleges and vocational training tourism in Vietnam today is quite diverse. However, training programs at schools still do not pay much attention to the practical skills that are necessary for tour guides, especially tour guides contact with foreign tourists such as English speaking tourists or Japanese tourists(Chilembwe & Mweiwa, 2014).

And one more thing rather important is the motivation of raising the level of tour guides is not high. Although students and the guides who are working in tourism show the desire to improve their knowledge but it is not ever easy. Working everyday is the main reason that they have no enough time to take a related courses. Moreover, when tour guides own a certificate, it is sure that their income will be increased(Chilembwe & Mweiwa, 2014).

DISCUSSION

By completing the questionnaires, the table below was done by both professional tour guides and students who are taking tourist courses in Ho Chi Minh City. The questionnaire is divided into three parts. The first part consisting of 2 questions relates to the attractions of famous places in Vietnam.

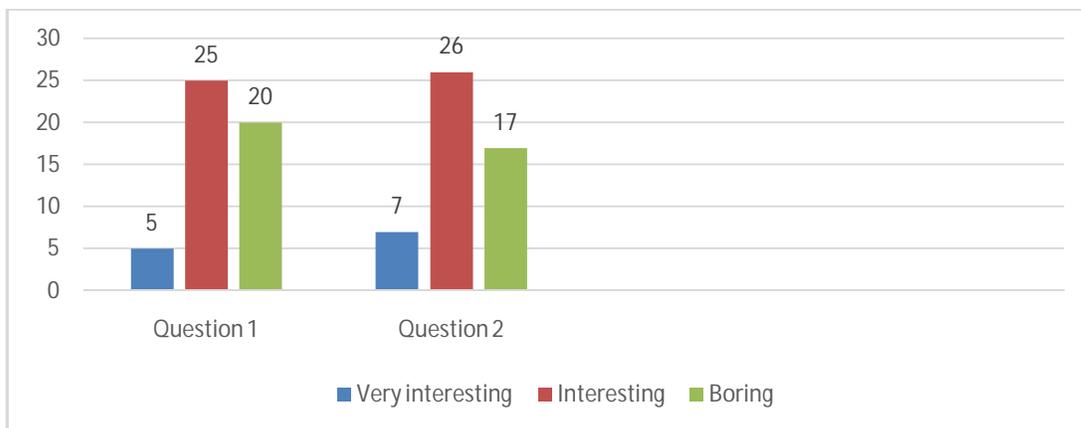


Fig 1: The attractions and services in Vietnam

The results show that most of the tour guides and students think that the tourist products are interesting. However, with the first question: "What do you think about attractions in Vietnam?", there are 20 people chose the answer "boring", that is, they may not come back to those destinations. In the questions 2: "What do you think about the services during your last trip?", the respondents continuously show their neutral feeling to the tourist products. There are 33 people show their interest about the service, while 17 people still feel unsatisfied about the related service (Fig 1).

To diversify tourism products, the role of tour guides is also very important. The table below shows the motivation for their work as well as their efforts to improve their knowledge.



Fig 2: Quality of tour guides in Vietnam

In the second figure, many respondents are not confident enough to choose the option "very good" or "good" in the question 1: "How do you evaluate your foreign language skills?" and in question 2: "How do you evaluate your general knowledge capacity?". That means their language ability is still limited and need to be sharpened. The touristservice mentioned in question 3: "How do you evaluate your customer service?" shows that most of people working in this area are aware of the importance of serving travelers. As a result, if tourists evaluate a service as a good one, they may use that again and may recommend it to other people (Fig 2).

The remaining of the data survey, twelve people took participation in the face-to-face interview. Majority of the respondents were more interested about the new services; the entertainment areas must have high quality equipment. All of the respondents said that the show in the recreation areas need to change frequently, avoid the boring feeling. The products should be diverse, avoid the similarity between the provinces and travel agencies. According to (Khuong & Nguyen, 2017), entertainment in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam is still lack of various activities "such as climbing, bungee jumping, ice rink, artificial grass slide" and that is one reason why it does not "attract many foreign tourists". When travelers go to different places in Mekong delta, they can enjoy the variety, not the same traditional opera show in every province. When asked about the desire for the upcoming tour: "What do you most want for the tour upcoming tour?" Respondents said that the tourist site must have "must-see" things, combined with performances or cultural activities which have appropriate fun.

Solutions

It is necessary to understand the true meaning of tourist products, to make tourism as a type of business in the long run. Seasonal and tourism products should be seriously invested to meet the needs of tourists(Van, 2015).

A. Quality of tour guides

It is necessary to develop specific programs designed to train new tour guides and improve the quality of existing tour guide teams. If the program is not appropriate in terms of content and duration, it should be designed to fit the reality. A curriculum can not be too short for one or two, months and will not be too lengthy to avoid unnecessary waste. It is important to develop an standard when the instructor starts a related program. If the output is low, it can be upgraded to the most reasonable(Hu, 2007).

Focus on learning the the way of explaining in front of tourist with the standard and proper pronunciation. At the same time, tour guides should be equipped with pragmatic terminology. For example, when describing the Reunification Palace, tour guides must know the correct phrases. When explaining about War Remnant Museum, you must choose the ways to explain to avoid the sensitive elements in order not to offend visitors(Chilembwe & Mweiwa, 2014).

Invest in the construction of standard foreign language classes with equipment and teaching aids that are appropriate and effective. Foreign language clubs and talks should also be focused on creating new playgrounds and exchanges between old and new tour guides.

B. Quality of lecturers

Focus on the selection and training of qualified and experienced teachers. They may be veterans who have good leadership skills, experience and good performance. University lecturers or students in foreign countries can also be sources of knowledge that can be used to train tour guides quite effectively.

Bilingual training courses should provide general knowledge and skills so that tour guides can work as inbound and outbound tour guides. Tour guides not only work for foreign languagespeaking tourists but also Vietnamese speaking travelers, that is, they could meet the needs of domestic and foreign tourists. When traveling to a foreign country, the tour guides are not shy when acting as interpreters (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009b).

C. Diversification of hidden tourist products

The form of exchanging student in universities should be considered as a potential product because it needs to be exploited with the advantage of geographic location and potential available. the tourism development strategy. Traveling by motorbike has its great points that make travelers can also get tired of seeing the street through narrow glass doors in the fatigue journey on the cars. The journey on the motorbike can be seen as a worthy journey for tourist who are from developed country want to explore beautiful Vietnam country as a native. When driving a motorbike, students can talk to each other and the language is also enhanced through this activity. Cultural exchanges are also focused and they will understand each other better in order to have good relationships (Thuc & Vietnamese, 2016).

Tourism cannot develop independently but requires the consensus of the whole society, the entry of all sectors. And more importantly, that is the type of tourism in Vietnam is not attractive enough and not really make it attractive for tourists to return. Great attractions like Disneyland theme parks or Hollywood studios need to be invested as soon as possible. If we have interesting performances like Stun show, Parrot show of Thailand or something else much more amazing, at least tourists will have places to visit and have things to see. To develop tourism, it is necessary that "both policy makers and managers are able to understand tourists' motivation for pleasure" (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2009a).

Over the past years, Ministry of Vietnam Culture, Sports and Tourism has organized many national and international cultural and sport events. However, many events attract less tourists. For cultural and sports events to be turned into tourism products, apart from investing in designing programs, advertisement and promotion play a very important role. To make cultural and sports events become tourist products, the advertisement and promotion must be at the forefront. There are advertisement and promotions so that new and good programs are introduced to tourists. When tourists come to the events and that event really becomes a tourist product (Hajdinjak, 2014).

D. Advance tourist services

The management agency should plan for arranging and building service facilities such as guest houses, health care, dining or entertainment services. Strictly manage all kinds of services, service fees for tourists in order not to avoid losing traditional cultural values of the Vietnamese. Develop and diversify tourist products, especially linkages and services, we should create the product more competitive and improve "tourism facilities to meet international standards" (Thuc & Vietnamese, 2016). To promote links with other countries in the region such as Cambodia and Laos to fully exploit the beauty of the country in order to attract tourists from these countries to come to visit Vietnam (Tseng et al., 2011).

Vietnam has long beaches, so it needs to deploy better services. In addition, it is necessary to make use of the coastal lagoons to organize ecological tours and to build more nightlife spots for tourists to stay longer. If operators can deploy these services, visitors to Vietnam will no longer feel boring.

Tourism businesses need to solve that the problem of tourism in Vietnam is the need to diversify the products, avoid boring tourists. We need more high quality tourist products and should "promote the country "image and generate the competitive advantage to compete with other destinations" (Van, 2015). To ensure

the development of tourism in the province in a sustainable way, besides the potential exists, is promoting the product.

CONCLUSION

In order to further diversify tourist products, we gradually improve the quality of tourism services, tour guides, as well as build more interesting places. Related agencies should pay more attention to the language training for students, encourage the tour guides to improve their level, participate in the courses necessary to serve the tourist in the best way. In addition, the tourism industry authorities should take measures to correct and bring Vietnam's tourism to a higher level, more professional, more competitive with other countries. New tourism products are always encouraged, honored and applied in practice to the development of the economy.

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