

SOLUTIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM PRODUCTS IN THE NORTH CENTRAL OF VIETNAM

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Based on the criteria for the development of tourism product scale and infrastructure; improving the quality of tourism products in proportion to the price policy; marketing and promoting products of tourism businesses; providing tourism products to customers, the paper analyzed the current situation of tourism product development of tourism businesses in the North Central of Vietnam. Since then, some solutions were proposed to develop tourism products of tourism businesses in the North Central of Vietnam in the coming time.

Key words: The North Central of Vietnam; tourism; the development of tourism products; tourism business.

1. Introduction

Attracting 3.7 million international visitors, 13.5 million domestic tourists and achieving a total revenue of 3.25 billion USD are the main targets of tourism development in the North Central by 2030. The whole region strives to turn tourism into a spearhead economic sector and a key tourism development center of the country [3]. Thus, tourism businesses in the North Central need to promote diverse, rich and unique tourism products so

that tourism business activities could be commensurate with the potential. T In particular, tourism businesses need to have a strategy to develop tourism products in the current period and a vision in the future to ensure sustainable development, protect the environment and promote unique values of tourism. In addition, tourism businesses pay attention to develop a system of quality products and services with high added value in the hope of meeting the needs of domestic and international tourists. At the same time, the outstanding strengths and uniqueness of natural and human tourism resources need to be promoted to develop specific tourism products with own brands and diversify the local tourism product system.

In the period of 2020 - 2021, Covid epidemic had a great impact on the tourism industry. As a result, reviews on tourism activity were inaccurate. The paper only analyzes and evaluates the current situation of tourism product development of tourism businesses in the North Central of Vietnam in the period 2015 - 2019, thereby proposing solutions to promote the development of tourism products.

2. A research overview

There were many different studies on the development of tourism products of tourism businesses as follows:

Mikhail Sinitsyn (2015) stated that developing business products is the methods and actions used to take new products to the market or modify existing products to create new business activities.

UNWTO & ETC (2011) argued that the nature of business product development is a process consisting of many different stages, from generating ideas to delivering products to customers. Product development is a part of a complex system of comprehensive processes in businesses. At the same time, product development is an ongoing process in businesses that includes both market research and marketing. Product development is important for businesses to maintain the market competitiveness. Some businesses may focus on adapting existing products while others may create innovations. However, both of these types of product development require specific research investments to ensure the effectiveness of product development [9].

Nguyen Anh Tuan (2010) believed that tourism product development is the process of diversifying tourism products, improving quality and creating specificity in products, enhancing competitiveness and building brands of tourism products in the tourism market [1].

Porter M.E. (1990) and David Fred R., David (2016) jointly argued that the nature of tourism product development is a process in which the values of tourist destinations are utilized to the maximum by businesses to meet the needs of domestic tourists, international tourists and local people. Tourism product development must be determined based on the business's understanding of the tourism market, tourist trends and tastes. This is a continuous process from analyzing the business environment of tourism products to summarizing and adjusting tourism product development strategies [5], [8].

Có thể thấy, các nghiên cứu trên đều có những ưu điểm và hạn chế nhất định, có nghiên cứu chỉ tập trung vào phát triển sản phẩm của doanh nghiệp nói chung, có nghiên cứu chỉ tập trung vào các quan niệm về phát triển sản phẩm. Một số ít nghiên cứu về phát triển sản phẩm du lịch của doanh nghiệp nhưng cũng chỉ dừng lại ở việc nghiên cứu về vai trò của phát triển sản phẩm du lịch đối với doanh nghiệp du lịch và phát triển sản phẩm phải phù hợp với thị hiếu của khách hàng mà chưa có nghiên cứu đầy đủ về phát triển sản phẩm du lịch của doanh nghiệp du lịch vùng Bắc Trung Bộ.

Accordingly, there exist advantages and limitations in the above studies. Some only presented the development of tourism products in general. Some paid attention to the concepts of tourism product development. There has not been a complete study on the development of tourism product in the North Central so far.

Based on published research results, the content of tourism product development of tourism businesses is determined as follows:

- *Developing the scale of tourism products and infrastructure* is performed in the following contents :

+ Tourism revenue: reflects the total amount of money earned as a result of the business activities of tourism businesses who serve the needs of tourists during a given period (including both domestic and foreign tourists)

+ Tourism business development: is shown in the growth rate of tourism business, the number and scale of tourism businesses and the classification by service industry group.

- *Improve the quality of tourism products in accordance with the price policy*, includes:

+ Improving the labor quality: Labor is an important and indispensable factor in the process of developing tourism products. The development of tourism human resources is reflected in the number, structure, qualifications and behavioral skills of the workforce in tourism businesses.

+ Strengthening tourism facilities and techniques: All physical means are created by tourism businesses to exploit tourism potentials. This is a favorable condition to exploit and set up tourism products to satisfy tourists' needs. In order to achieve sustainable development, tourism products must be produced from a good system of technical facilities..

+ Promoting the application of tourism science and technology: Contributes to the modernization of tourism facilities and techniques in order to create new and attractive tourism products to meet the increasing demands of tourists.

- *Marketing and promoting tourism products*

Marketing and promoting tourism products includes marketing and advertising activities in the hope of introducing tourism products to tourists and satisfying tourists' needs. Basically, this is the application of marketing strategies in tourism to satisfy tourists's needs

in a certain development period, towards the stable and sustainable development of tourism products. Marketing is a way to ensure that tourism businesses will introduce tourism types, products and trends before competitors. That requires the involvement of all employees in the tourism business. Among them, the marketing department plays a key role. [10].

- Providing tourists with tourism products

Providing tourists with tourism products includes some basic contents such as diversifying products, improving service quality, managing service quality, adjusting methods of supplying tourism services..... In order to improve the quality of the supply of tourism products to tourists, tourism businesses need to create a synchronization in the construction of tourism infrastructure. As a result, improving the tour network and tourist sites and routes, promoting brands, expanding new markets and potential markets, regularly renewing service quality... also need to be paid more attention.[4].

Improving the quality of tourism products and services and creating business's brand is one of the important part of providing tourists with tourism products.

- Managing customer relationship and relevant organs

Managing customer relationships is a method to provide tourism businesses with a systematic and effective way to get on with customers, thereby providing customers with better services and establishing lasting relationships with customers. Customer relationship management plays an extremely important role in developing new tourism products. Therefore, this activity is used by businesses to achieve more practical benefits. [6].

Relevant organs are individuals or organizations that have influence on tourism businesses. They are influenced by business activities, and may directly or indirectly determine the core values of tourism businesses.

3. Approaches and methodology

In the paper, two research methods are used to conduct the research objectives, namely::

Document collection and analysis: Secondary data were collected from textbooks, scientific researches at all levels, relevant scientific reports and articles at the National Library and some domestic and foreign websites. Besides, the current legal documents in Vietnam related to tourism and tourism product development of tourism businesses were collected and analyzed in the paper. Statistical data were also collected from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO); General Statistics Office of Vietnam; Department of Statistics of the North Central provinces; Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism; Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of the North Central provinces....

Qualitative interview was conducted to collect opinions from tourism experts, some state managers in tourism and some business leaders in the North Central. This is a qualitative research technique, whereby interviewees are asked to express their feelings and evaluations on a specific issue. The expert interviews were quite successful. The author collected a lot of

useful information related to the current situation of tourism product development of tourism businesses in the North Central. At the end of this activity, the author conducted 25 interviews with experts and leaders of tourism businesses.

4. Research results

From a tourism perspective, the North Central is the tourism center linking tourism regions. The North Central Coast is also one of the Northern economic growth quadrangle, consisting of four provinces Hanoi - Hai Phong - Quang Ninh - Thanh Hoa, adjacent to the sea estuary running to the East Sea, to countries in the region and the world.

Therefore, the development of regional tourism has special significance for the development of tourism in Vietnam. As a result, the region's annual tourism GDP grew quite steadily at VND 17,226 billion in 2019, contributing 3.24% to GDP. Meanwhile, that only reached about 12.5 trillion dong in 2015, added 3.75% to GDP. Tourism GDP growth came from the steady increase of tourists to the North Central provinces in recent years..

According to Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, tourists to North Central provinces has achieved a good growth of about 16% per year in which international tourists accounted for about 9% per year and domestic tourists reached up 16.6% per year. By the year 2019, the whole region has welcomed nearly 32 million tourists, of which 90% are domestic tourists. Tourism has become a key economic sector of the North Central, creating jobs for 108,630 workers. Total revenue from tourism in the whole region has reached about VND 30,667 billion by the end of 2017.

*Table 1: Some indicators of tourism activities in the North Central of Vietnam
(in the period 2015 - 2019)*

Criteria	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Tourism GDP (billion VND)	12.562	12.224	14.477	15.508	17.226
Tourism contribution to GDP (%)	3,75	3,46	3,64	3,32	3,24
Total number of tourists	16.456	16.451	23.309	28.070	31.945
International tourists	1.428	1.545	2.088	2.654	3.143
Domestic tourists	15.029	14.906	21.221	25.416	28.802
Total number of tourism businesses	1.210	1.382	1.578	1.845	1.936
Total number of employees in tourism businesses (person)	20.787	22.398	23.437	26.092	26.113
Average revenue of tourism businesses (billion VND)	5.822	6.892	7.267	10.163	9.186

Source: Statistical Yearbook 2019 of the North Central provinces

According to Table 1, there is a continuous increase in the number of businesses in general and tourism businesses in particular. By the end of 2019, there were 1,936 tourism businesses out of a total of 35,566 businesses in the North Central region, accounting for 5.44%. This is considered a decent growth rate that shows there is an increasing demand in tourism and tourist sites are gradually attracting more tourists..

The increase in tourism businesses has led to an increase in employees in tourism businesses. In 2015, there were only about 20.7 thousand people working in tourism businesses that have accounted for 23.4 thousand by 2017. By 2019, it has added nearly 2.7 thousand more employees, accounting for 26.113 people. Compared to employees in tourism businesses in general in the North Central, employees in tourism businesses still accounts for a relatively small proportion, only about 3.3%..

Thus, it can be seen that tourism businesses in the North Central are operating quite actively. That has been reflected in a steady increase in tourism businesses and employees over the years.

4.2. The current situation of tourism product development of tourism businesses in the North Central

4.2.1. The current situation of the scale development of tourism products and infrastructure

The North Central Coast has rich tourism resources with a long coastline and a unique culture. This is an area with an important position for the development of Vietnam's tourism as well as economic and tourism development along the East-West corridor adjacent to the countries in the region. Thanks to these advantages, the scale development of tourism products and infrastructure of tourism businesses in the North Central is quite favorable, achieving many encouraging results. However, there are still some limitations in the development of tourism products and infrastructure of tourism businesses. This is reflected in the tourism revenue of tourism businesses in the North Central. Specifically, according to data from the Statistics Department of the North Central Provinces (2019), the average revenue of tourism businesses in the region fluctuated over the years and decreased slightly in 2019, reaching 9,186 billion VND (revenue) (Average revenue in 2018 is 10,163 billion VND).

There has been a growth in the total number of tourists in the North Central region over the years in the period 2015 - 2019. However, the growth rate is not high and not commensurate with the inherent potential. Domestic tourists are always more than international visitors. In 2019, the former was 28,802; and the latter was only 3,143. This shows that the tourism products of the North Central have not really attracted foreign tourists.

4.2.2. The current situation of improving tourism product quality in relation to the price policy

The improvement of the quality of tourism products in relation to the price policy of tourism businesses in the North Central is still limited and not effective. The number of

untrained employees still accounts for a large number in tourism businesses. In particular, there is still a shortage of professional managers.

These businesses have not really invested in facilities to exploit tourism potentials. That has not satisfied the needs of tourists. In 2015, there were 39,000 hotel rooms, of which 3 - 5 star rooms reached 15%. In 2029, there will be 43,000 rooms, of which 3 - 5 star rooms will reach 17%. This is an important criteria identified in the master plan of tourism development in the North Central to 2020, with a vision to 2030 issued by the Government..

4.2.3. The current situation of promoting tourism products

To promote tourism products, these businesses carry out marketing and advertising activities to introduce their tourism products to tourists and satisfy their needs. Businesses have built appropriate marketing strategies for tourism products.

However, the promotion given by these businesses is still limited and unprofessional. In general, the scale of marketing activities is still small and its efficiency is not high. Some businesses are irresponsible in providing information to tourists, causing negative impacts on tourism product development.

4.2.4. The current situation of providing tourists with tourism products

In general, the activities of providing tourism products to customers have been focused by tourism businesses in the North Central region, but the efficiency level is still not high. Tourism products are poor and inconsistent. In addition, tourism products of tourism businesses are clearly temporary, such as tourism products in Sam Son, Cua Lo, Thien Cam, In addition, the North Central has been frequently affected by natural disasters such as storms, floods, and landslides which greatly affect the supply of tourism products to tourists.

4.2.5. The current situation of managing customer relationship and relevant organs

Tourism businesses have not yet established a unit to check, evaluate and control the quality of tourism products and services in the process of providing tourism products to tourists. At the same time, the survey activities to collect tourists' opinions on the quality of tourism products and services have not been implemented or implemented inefficiently. These limitations make businesses unable to understand customers and sometimes performed inappropriate tourism product development strategies.

Tourism businesses in the North Central have not paid much attention to the relations with relevant organs. This leads to conflicts of interest among businesses, internal units and other relevant organs. Sometimes it is impossible to harmonize the interests of relevant organs.

5. Discussions

From the analysis of the current situation of tourism product development of tourism businesses in the North Central, the paper proposes some solutions to this issue as follows:

- Tourism businesses must actively understand the trends and consumption needs of tourists and follow Vietnam's tourism development planning to 2020, with a vision to 2030 to effectively exploit tourism's potential to develop more service products.

- Constantly upgrading facilities, gradually professionalizing the tourism laborers in order to improve the quality of tourism products and services, meeting the increasing demands of tourists and increasing competitiveness in the market.

- It is necessary to regularly connect and exchange information with partners to perfect tourism products rightly, satisfying the needs of both parties and customers. Enterprises should also have certain incentives for partners who have long-term cooperation and goodwill to strengthen strong relationships for mutual development.

- Revitalizing the local traditional craft villages, restoring the folk tales, ... and increasing the quality of commercial goods.

- Fully exploiting the potential tourism value to build tourism programs of the North Central to attract tourists.

- Organizing many fairs, exhibitions, conferences and tourism seminars in the province to attract many domestic and foreign businesses. This is a direct way to promote the image of tourism, attracting tourists and investors.

- Having a policy to attract good experts and skifull workers, especially managers and employees, from the regions with a highly developed tourism industry.

- Actively coordinating with mass media agencies, foreign information agencies, Vietnam National Administration of Tourism to promote tourism images in the North Central nationwide, so as not only to attract tourists in country, attracting international tourists but also attracting domestic and foreign investors for the tourism development in the North Central.

- It is necessary to link tourism markets for the perfect tourism products that satisfy the needs of tourists. In order to satisfy the increasing demands of the market, tourism businesses must link tourism activities in the North Central to create strengths in capital, experience, market, reputation, quality and trademark of products and services

6. Conclusion

In order to create tourism products imbued with unique features of the North Central, tourism businesses must seek the best way to develop tourism products which must be attractive and impressive to tourists. Tourism products at tourist sites must be suitable for tourists' demand, natural environment and ensure the quality of tourism services.

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GIẢI PHÁP PHÁT TRIỂN SẢN PHẨM DU LỊCH CỦA CÁC DOANH NGHIỆP DU LỊCH VÙNG BẮC TRUNG BỘ

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Từ khóa: Vùng Bắc Trung Bộ; Du lịch; Phát triển sản phẩm du lịch; Doanh nghiệp du lịch.