Marketing Cultural Heritage to Promote Tourism Growth in Peripheral Areas of Vietnam for Sustainable Economics Development

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Abstract

Staying at the strategic place in the South East Asia, Vietnam is a high-populated, low middle-income developing country. Although it has recently attained some recognized achievements in social and economic development, and international integration, the country is facing big opportunities and challenges of improving its competitive ability and business environment. The Government’s development strategy towards 2025 has considered the tourism industry as one of the most powerful competitive abilities of Vietnam. Being at the central of the South East Asia and the Asia-Pacific area, Vietnam got a long and beautiful coastal line from North to South, with many attractive, local specialities. Many nature beauty spots have been globally recognized by UNESCO not only for their unique attraction but also their historical and cultural value. Besides the natural and physical cultural heritage (Ha Long Bay, Sa Pa, Phong Nha – Ke Bang National Park, Cam Ranh Bay, Son Doong cave, Mekong Delta, the Complex of Hue monuments, Hoi An ancient town, etc), Vietnam is also proud of its intangible cultural heritage like: Nha Nhac – Vietnamese court music, Ca Tru singing, worship of Hung King, or the space of Gong culture in the Central Highland, etc. However, the tourism services in Vietnam are not high appreciated in compare with its neighbours. To attract tourists come from other international markets with high incomes and demand, Vietnamese tourism businesses and authorities need to understand the customer behaviour, purchasing intention and attitude, and other influencing factors so that the tourism marketer will be able to highlight and enhance the Vietnamese tourism image in the international visitors’ perception, especially in our priceless cultural heritage. Besides, once the local people realize the advantages from doing tourism, they will realize the necessity of retaining the traditional professionals, cultural customs and natural environment for their long-term benefits. It would be the basement for local government to plan the general strategy for sustainable development, especially for rural and mountainous areas.

Thus, the papers are inclusive of 5 parts as below:

1. Introduction of the necessity and targets of the research
2. Impacts of cultural heritage tourism on sustainable economic development
3. The situation of cultural heritage tourism potentials and marketing in some peripheral areas of Vietnam
4. Opportunities and threats of cultural heritage tourism marketing activities in peripheral areas of Vietnam in the following years
5. Conclusion: Some solution proposals to enhance the image of cultural heritage tourism in peripheral areas of Vietnam through marketing activities.

Key Words: cultural heritage, tourism, marketing, sustainable development, peripheral areas, Vietnam.
1. Introduction of the Necessity and Targets of the Research

Tourism is a huge business and becoming one of the fastest growing economic sectors in all over the world. According to the UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization), “the business volume of tourism today equals or even surpasses that of oil exports, food products or automobiles”. In many developing countries, tourism has played an important role of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability. It brings benefits in many other related sectors: construction, transport, telecommunications, agriculture, etc.

Picture 1: The Contribution of Tourism in the World’s Socio-Economy in Recent Years (UNWTO, 2016)

In Vietnam, the Government has soon been aware the importance contribution of this “non-smoke” industry and set tourism as one priority economic sector of the country in the strategic direction up to 2025.

According to the submitted plan from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism on 15 Jul 2016, the target of Vietnam tourism is quite ambitious. It is supposed to attract 14 to 15 million international tourists within the next 5 years, contribute about 9-10% of GDP and reach the growth rate of 14-15% per year, create 3.5 million jobs to the economy. In 2020, Vietnam tourism will be high competitive among the ASEAN community and be an attractive destination in the world.

However, recently, we realize that both local and international customers evaluated the most weakness of Vietnam tourism is service. Despite the advantage of unique nature beauty, diversified ecology and valued historical culture and spots, the tourism services are considered as poor, unattractive or incomprehensive, lacked of control and communication.
This fact has made Vietnam to be less competitive in comparison to other neighbour countries. In 2015, about 29 million international tourists visited Thailand while less than one third of that came to Vietnam (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism). The visitors were mainly Chinese who were large in number but low in consumption.

The other problem of Vietnam tourism is mainly based on nature beauty and the advantage of the long coastal line, so that the tourism is developed mostly in the big cities and coastal provinces whilst other mountainous and peripheral areas were under noticed of tourists due to lack of attractive tourism products and services and difficulty to access.

**Picture 2: Main Tourism Parts in Vietnam (VNAT)**

According to the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, Vietnam tourism is divided into 7 main parts:

+ Mountainous area and midland in the North
+ The Red River Delta and North-East coastal provinces
+ North Central Vietnam
+ South Central Vietnam
+ Central Highland
+ South-East Vietnam
+ South-West Vietnam

However, the socio-economic developments in these parts are not equal. The mountainous and peripheral areas are where the ethnic communities mainly live are under-developed. The habitants live mainly on traditional agriculture and nature exploiting with low productivity and income. Vietnam has 54 ethnic communities but almost the minority ones live in the mountainous and rural areas (especially in the Northwest, Central and Highland) so that these areas are diversified in culture and traditional customs. These areas are also famous for the natural and cultural heritages (both tangible and intangible) which are attractive to
international tourists. To develop tourism in these areas, this would be an important asset to create new products which are richer and more memorable experience. Integrating it successfully, however, requires carefully blending cultural heritage into tourism business in a meaningful way.

Thus, this paper mainly focuses in:

1. The relationship between cultural heritage tourism and sustainable economic development.
2. Discuss the marketing factors that influencing the tourists’ awareness and purchase intention; how cultural heritage experience impacts on international tourists’ satisfaction and faithfulness.
3. Some cases study in peripheral areas in Vietnam in doing cultural heritage tourism. Develop a cultural heritage tourism model framework in Vietnam to improve the living condition of local people, prevent the nature resources from over-exploitation, and enhance the image of Vietnam tourism.

2. Impacts of Cultural Heritage Tourism on Sustainable Economic Development

Global tourists have changed their behavior from relaxation to self-discovery that is reflected in the explosion of niche market designations within the tourism industry. The more widely known include adventure tourism, culinary tourism, religious tourism, ecotourism, sustainable tourism, and educational tourism. Among these products, cultural heritage tourism is one of the fastest growing in the industry today.

Cultural heritage is the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations. Cultural heritage includes tangible culture (such as buildings, monuments, landscapes, books, works of art, and artefacts), intangible culture (such as folklore, traditions, language, and knowledge), and natural heritage (including culturally significant landscapes, and biodiversity).

Cultural heritage tourism refers to tourism where arts, culture and heritage form a key attraction for visitors, and the focus of their activities. The definition of cultural heritage tourism is “traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes historic, cultural and natural resources.” (Cultural Heritage Tourism, 2005).

Studies show visitors who are interested in cultural and heritage tourism tend to have money and are more willing to spend it. This supports a trend toward the less-vigorous, experiential kinds of activities. Additionally, cultural heritage tourism creates benefits for operators and host communities, beyond simple profits, that improve quality of life for all.
A 2009 study conducted for the US National Trust for Historic Preservation found that nearly 80% of all leisure travellers take part in a cultural heritage activity. It also revealed that cultural heritage tourists spend an average of $994 per trip, compared to $611 for the “general” traveller – almost 50% more. Cultural heritage travellers also travel more often than generalists, taking about five trips per year compared to four by general travellers. The study suggests there are 36 million “dedicated” Americans expecting to take cultural and heritage tourism trips every year. The bottom line for operators is a large pool of keen potential customers willing to pay for high-quality, authentic experiences.

Tourists to a foreign community are searching for authentic experiences that allow them to understand and become familiar with the people, places and events that make the community different from all others. Tourism places and activities that reflect a community’s heritage give the visitor an experience surpassing any theme park or replica.

Promoting the historic places that make a community different from others creates unique tourism products that attract visitors and help establish a sense of place for residents. A community heritage planning program can provide a range of benefits to tourism business owners and operators. Being formally recognized as a historic place by the local government is like being awarded a “certificate of authenticity” which makes that community unique.

Preserving cultural heritage appears to be a key factor in economic policies supporting tourism development. It is a widely accepted fact that preservation of cultural heritage is important and it is also used as a tool for tourism product differentiation (Cuccia & Cellini, 2007). Cultural tourists as cited by Hughes (2002) are seen as “typically well educated, affluent and broadly travelled, (and) they generally represent a highly desirable type of upscale visitor”. It is generally agreed that cultural tourists spend substantially more than general tourists do. Cultural tourists are expecting different experiences from their vacations and these expectations are becoming more important day by day. During these experiences tourist can interact with three kinds of cultural attributes; the physical (e.g. built heritage), the general (the daily life of the host community) and the specific cultural activities of the host community (e.g. rituals and festivals).

In Vietnam, tourism has been considered as a priority industry as its high potential and contribution to the economy (5% GDP in recent years). However, over 20 years of tourism development, Vietnam tourism products were mainly focused on nature exploitation, lacked of development strategy direction and investment. Vietnam tourism position is far below some other neighbors (Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines,…). In 2015, about 29 million international tourists visited Thailand while less than one third of that came to Vietnam (about 7,943,000 guests) (Source: Vietnam National Administration of Tourism). The visitors were mainly Chinese who were large in number but low in consumption.
The image of tourism was damaged in both international and domestic visitors’ awareness due to low service quality, unskilled management, inconvenient infrastructure, and price gouging. Almost tourism investment plans (especially in luxury hotels and resorts building) are in big cities or prolong the coastal line.

Therefore, while tourism has been fast developed in big cities and coastal provinces, other mountainous and peripheral areas (North-west area, mountainous Central Vietnam, Highland,…) are still under-developed. Even though these areas have potentials in tourism, such as their diversified nature ecology, unique nature beauty, traditional culture and customs of the minority ethnic communities,… which tourists are eager to explore.

Vietnam has more than 40,000 culture heritages and nature beauty spots which more than 3000 of them have been considered as National Heritage. Some of them have been globally recognized by UNESCO not only for their unique attraction but also their historical and cultural values, such as: Ha Long Bay, Sa Pa, Phong Nha – Ke Bang National Park, Cam Ranh Bay, Son Doong cave, Mekong Delta, the Complex of Hue monuments, Hoi An ancient town, etc. Besides the natural and manmade cultural heritage, Vietnam is also proud of its intangible cultural heritage like: Nha Nhac – Vietnamese court music, Ca Tru singing, worship of Hung King, or the space of Gong culture in the Central Highland, etc.
Table 1 - UNESCO World Heritage in Vietnam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of UNESCO World Heritage in Vietnam</th>
<th>Year of recognition</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Image</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural Heritage</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Ha Long Bay</td>
<td>1994 &amp; 2000</td>
<td>Quang Ninh (North-East area)</td>
<td><img src="image1.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
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<td>3. Dong Van Karst Plateau Geopark</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Ha Giang (North mountainous area)</td>
<td><img src="image3.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
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<td><strong>Cultural Heritage</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Tangible cultural heritage</strong></td>
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<td>Complex of Hue Monument</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Hue (Central Vietnam)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Hoi An Ancient Town</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Quang Nam (South Central Vietnam)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>My Son Sanctuary</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Quang Nam (South Central Vietnam)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Central sector of Imperial Citadel of Thang Long – Ha Noi</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Hanoi (North-East area)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Citadel of the Ho Dynasty</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Thanh Hoa</td>
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<td>Intangible Cultural Heritage</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>The space of gong culture (2005)</td>
<td>Highland</td>
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<td>Event Description</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Quan Ho Bac Ninh folk songs</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Bac Ninh (North – East area)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Giong Festival</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>North Vietnam</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Xoan Singing</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>North Vietnam</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Hung Kings Worship</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Phu Tho, North Vietnam</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Art of Don ca tai tu music and song</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>South Vietnam</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Tugging rituals and games</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
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<td>Documentary Heritage</td>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>Buddhist Sutra Woodblocks at Vinh Nghiem Pagoda</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Bac Giang (North Vietnam)</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Woodblocks of Nguyen Dynasty</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
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www.globalbizresearch.org
4. Imperial records of Nguyen Dynasty 2014

Vietnam

(Source: Vietnam National Administration of Tourism)

Picture 3 – Place of UNESCO World Heritage in Vietnam

Vietnam heritages are mostly in 11 cities and provinces in the Red River Delta (about 70% of all National Heritages). Among these destinations, Trang An Landscape Complex, Ha Long Bay, Complex of Hue Monument, Hoi An Ancient Town and Phong Nha – Ke Bang National Park got the highest number of tourists in 2015 (Department of Cultural Heritage, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism). In contrast, the quantity of visitors to other parts of...
Vietnam (North – West, Central Highland, mountainous areas, rural areas,…) made up a very little percentage despite their high tourism potentials and the government’s development strategy.

Reasons for this situation are the hardness to access these areas due to difficult and modest traffic system, low service quality and insufficient skilled tourism people. Thus, to develop tourism in these areas, first it is in need to base on the local community beside the support from government in infrastructure upgrading and marketing campaigns to enhance the tourism potentials and image of these under-developed tourism areas in international tourists’ mind. Through community-based tourism model, we can create new and competitive tourism products by exploiting the cultural heritages of the local habitants (tradition, customs, food, festival, folk songs and story, dance,…). The implication of a community-based cultural heritage tourism model to these areas will create more jobs, improve their income and living condition through education and culture exchange. Cultural heritage tourism will not only help in economy growth, but also change the attitude and awareness of local people and tourists towards culture prevention and development sustainability.

3. The Situation of Cultural Heritage Tourism Potentials and Marketing in Some Peripheral Areas of Vietnam

This paper focuses on the cultural heritage tourism situation in some mountainous and rural areas in the North and North Central of Vietnam as the high density of cultural heritages and nature beauty spots in these areas but little number of tourists. Based on these actual cases study, we can identify the facing problems and opportunities for tourism development and propose a necessary model and specific tourism products for other peripheral areas in Vietnam.


Bac Kan is a high mountainous province with complicated geographic region, under-developed infrastructure and economy. The area is 4,859.4 km² and inclusive of about more than 330 thousand people. The ethnic communities are Kinh, Tay, Dao and H’Mong.

Bac Kan has high potential in tourism due to its nature resources, beauty and rich ethnic culture heritages:
Ba Be Lake is an attractive nature beauty spot which was recognized as a National Cultural and Historical Heritage in 1996. It was defined as an important World Ramsar region by UNESCO in 2011.

Ba Be Lake is famous for its beauty – one of the 20 most beautiful lakes in the world. A Spring Festival is held here every year in the Lunar January.

Cho Don ATK historical monument: where Ho Chi Minh and other senior leaders of Vietnam Communist Party lived during the war of resistance against the French colonialists.

Other famous nature beauty spots: Puong cave, Hua Ma cave, Fairy cave, Na Phoong cave, Ba Cua cave, Son Duong cave, Kim Hy national park.

The Ba Be National Park is one of Bac Kan’s most attractive destinations to tourists. However, tourists came here spontaneously without proper supervision, and the minor ethnic communities here live simply on agriculture and fishing with limited skills. Especially, the attitude to keep the eco-system of the National Park and the knowledge about doing tourism are so little. The Ba Be citizens here are all ethnic minority people (the Tày people have been living here for more than 2000 years; Dao, Mông, Nùng people has been settle down for hundred years) who are living in the core of the National Park and rely simply on agriculture and fishing with full of obstacles and difficult of access. They have over-exploited and damaged the nature resources and broken the National Park’s regulation.

As the geography conditions and nature resources at each part of the Park are different and independent to each other, the tourism services should be based entirely on the local communities, especially the transportation services, foods, local guide and home-stay services. As the result of this development, there will be more job creation, local agriculture and handicraft products trading.
The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism has recognized 8 National Intangible Cultural Heritages of Bac Kan people. They are: “Dao people’s writing”, “Dao people’s title conferment ceremony”, “Luon SLuong of Tay people”, “Tay people’s writing”, “Tay people’s traditional weaving”, “Ba Be Long Tong Festival”, “Khen art of H’Mong people”, and “Tay people’s title conferment ceremony”. Besides, other intangible cultural heritages are also attractive to tourists like: “Phat Lang ceremony of Red Dao people”, “Qua Tang ceremony of Dao people”, “3-day of age ceremony of Dao San Chi people”,…

Tourists are also interested in the ethnic people’s traditional clothes, folk songs and music (Sli song of Nung people, Senh Co song of San Chay people), folk games and special food. Some of them are fading and lost if the government and people do not have proper solutions to retain it for next generations.

Cultural heritage tourism is not only a unique and attractive new product to promote to tourists, but also helps in increasing more income, upgrading living standard and tourism knowledge for local citizens. During the process of tourism organizing, the Ba Be National Park management authority and the local government will hold some classes to educate the local people the skills and knowledge of tourism services, improve their awareness of nature environment prevention. Through tourism, there will be more culture, society and experience exchange between the local people and tourists.

### 3.2. Ha Giang – the North pole of Vietnam

Ha Giang stays at the furthest North Mountainous area of Vietnam. It possesses many huge mountains and large rivers and springs system which makes extremely attractive, beautiful scenery to customers. Ha Giang is a large and poverty province in Vietnam with 770,000 citizens who are mainly Mong, Tay, Dao, Lo Lo and Viet ethnic people. The ethnic minority communities are illiterate and live mainly based on traditional agriculture and handicraft. The infrastructure and transport systems are not well developed so that tourism services are limited.

However, it is definitely an attractive tourism destination to both international and domestic tourists. Many visitors have been absorbed at Ha Giang beauty: impressive mountains, legendary Dong Van Karst Plateau Geopark, wavy roads, terraced fields, primeval forest with thousand species of rare plants and animals,…, and interested with the culture and traditions of local people here: Khau Vai love market, Spring Festival, sanctum temples and pagodas,…
Although Ha Giang has many attractive potentials of tourism but the result was not as high as expected. The number of tourists came to Ha Giang in 2015 was about 770,000 (145,789 international tourists and about 620,000 domestic tourists), revenue from tourism was approximately 708 billion VND, which was far below in comparison to its neighbor Lao Cai. In 2015, Lao Cai (another mountainous province at the west of Ha Giang) attracted more than 2 million tourists, gained 42.2% to 2014 (1.47 million tourists) and got the tourism revenue of 4,675.3 billion VND (according to Vietnam National Administration of Tourism).

With its tourism potentials, Ha Giang can create new tourism products focus in adventure tourism, culinary tourism, religious tourism, ecotourism and cultural heritage tourism based on local community.

(Source: Internet)
As the habitants in Ha Giang are mainly minority ethnic people with specific tradition and customs that attract tourists, it is in need of local guide to teach and instruct them of the living habits and taboo. The number of hotels and accommodation facilities for staying during travel in Ha Giang are not much. Thus, home-stay would be a new tourism service for tourists to explore the authentic experiences of local people’s culture, living and food. Tourists may also be interested in traditional handicraft job like: brocade weaving, bamboo knitting, silver carving, flax clothes weaving and indigo dyeing. These traditional handicrafts are in the danger of lost, so if we can combine them into tourism products, it is not only bring value to tourists’ experience, but also helps local people to retain their traditional jobs and create more income to upgrade their living standard.

In order to do so, tourism skill and knowledge should be educated to local people. Instruction of necessary condition of home-stay services (facilities, cleanliness, food,…) is in need. Once they realize that they can gain more income and improve their living through these tourism activities, the local people will soon adapt and teach each other of doing tourism for sustainability. This would be an interesting and competitive tourism product to contribute benefits to the local economy and society.
3.3. Nghe An – The Largest Province in Vietnam with Forest, Mountainous and Coastal Areas and Diversified Culture Heritages

Nghe An stays at the North Central of Vietnam at a strategic place with the area of 16,490 km² and population of more than 3 million people (2014). As the largest province in Vietnam, it has a lot of nature resources and cultural heritages to develop tourism. However, the results and image of Nghe An tourism is not as high as expectation, so that it needs a strategic tourism development plan to enhance the position in customers’ awareness.

The tourism development in Nghe An is not balanced. Recently, most of tourism activities are in the coastal area (Cua Lo beach), Vinh city and the hometown of President Ho Chi Minh’s childhood (Sen village). The other parts (forest and mountainous areas in the West of Nghe An) are still under-developed and lack of investment despite the tourism potentials.

This peripheral area include 11 suburban districts with the area of 1.4 million ha, approx. 84% of the total area of Nghe An. The Pu Mat National Park (which was recognized by UNESCO as the World Biosphere Reserves), Pu Hoat and Pu Hoat National Nature Reserves Parks all stay here. These Parks are still originally wild, primeval with diversified ecology. There are thousands of rare and unique plants and animals which many of them are in the Red Data Book. The topography of this area is special with many caves, mineral hot springs and huge falls made it to be attractive to tourists.

(Source: www.vanhoanghean.com.vn)

(Source: www.globalbizresearch.org)
Besides, the ethnic people live here for many generations; contribute many special culture traditions and customs to enhance the tourism experience of visitors. The local habitants still retain their folk songs, dance, stories and traditional handicraft jobs, special food and clothes, unique architect,… Especially, UNESCO has recognized Vi and Giam folk songs of local Nghe An people to be the World Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2014.

**Picture 12 – Some Cultural Heritages of Nghe An**

(Source: www.vanhoanghean.com.vn)

Therefore, the West Nghe An has a lot of tourism potentials, both in nature and culture side. With 37% of population are minority ethnic people, it is possible to develop the community-based eco-cultural tourism model for this area.

The limitations of doing this type of tourism model here are unskilled local people, insufficient infrastructure and lack of a strategic development direction for the whole area. To build a proper eco-cultural tourism based on local community, it is necessary to educate the local people of nature ecology prevention and customer-minded attitude towards high service quality.

4. **Opportunities and Threats of Cultural Heritage Tourism Marketing Activities in Peripheral Areas of Vietnam in the Following Years**

Staying at the strategic place in the South East Asia, Vietnam has recently attained some recognized achievements in social and economic development, and international integration. However, the country is facing both opportunities and challenges of improving its competitive ability and business environment.
The Government’s development strategy towards 2025 has considered the tourism industry as one of the most powerful competitive abilities of Vietnam. Being at the central of the South East Asia and the Asia-Pacific area, Vietnam got a long and beautiful coastal line from North to South, with many attractive, local specialities. Many nature beauty spots have been globally recognized by UNESCO not only for their unique attraction but also their historical and cultural value.

The Vietnam strategic tourism development direction (towards 2020, with view up to 2030) has defined 3 priorities:

- Priority of new tourism products development:
  - Develop sea tourism products and services: leisure tourism, sports tourism and ocean ecotourism.
  - Develop culture tourism products: cultural heritage tourism, home-stay tourism and community-based tourism with combination of traditional handicraft experience.
  - Develop ecotourism: cave, mountain, agriculture exploration and rural tourism.

- Priority of adventure tourism by cruiser, caravan, MICE tourism, education tourism, treatment tourism, spa tourism, culinary tourism…

- Cooperation in developing area tourism products, specific topic tourism, tourism and economic corridor combination,…

With this directory, Vietnam tourism in the coming years will focus in developing typical new products for each strategic area, due to its competitive advantages and potentials.

The Vietnamese mountainous and rural areas have high ability to promote the cultural heritage to be their important competitive advantages to improve the tourism image in international and domestic tourists’ awareness. With the combination of nature beauty and unique culture heritage of ethnic communities, these peripheral areas have opportunities to enhance its tourism position, attract more customers and earn more income for the citizens. The local people will realize the need of nature prevention and culture retaining for their next generation. The Government and local authority has responsibility of supporting, infrastructure upgrading, and giving proper instruction to help their citizens for sustainability development.

In the coming years, with the open strategy to improve the investment environment, the achievement of integration and important position in the South East Asia, Vietnam will be an attractive destination in the area, both for business and tourism purpose. As the reason of globalization, more and more international tourists will come to Vietnam and be eager to explore the nature ecology and culture heritages of this country. This opportunity may bring benefits to develop the economy and society through culture exchange.
However, there are also some challenges and problems in tourism development in mountainous and rural areas in Vietnam:

- The mountainous areas have a big weakness that in the raining season, there are floods that may damage the transport systems, be harmful to the tourism activities.
- The infrastructure in there areas is under-developed in comparison to other regions, especially the communication establishment, transport systems and Internet assessment. The living standards in these areas are low, which is a limitation to develop the community-based tourism.
- The tourism people are unskilled and lack in number. The education and vocational training system is insufficient to the demand.
- The minority ethnic communities are the main habitants of these areas. They have their own specific tradition and customs with unfamiliar belief and taboo that may create difficulty while persuading them of doing tourism for economic development.
- The complicated geography condition is another difficulty to build the cooperation among tourism destinations in the areas to combine some cultural heritages and nature beauty spots to be a completed and attractive tour to customers.

These challenges require more study for each specific area in order to develop their own typical and unique competitive tourism products and management model. Cultural heritage tourism is not only a solution for socio-economic development, but also the key to help retaining the precious value from generation to generation.


As mentioned above, preserving cultural heritage is an important factor in economic policies supporting tourism development. To integrate cultural heritage into new tourism products, it is extremely beneficial to conduct research about existing, and potential customers, as well as about competition.

However, there are some difficulties of doing cultural heritage tourism in the mountainous and rural areas of Vietnam that need more actions and supports from Government, local authority, international organizations and tourism operations to overcome in these initial stages.

Firstly, it is in need of building an associated structure among mountainous and peripheral regions/ provinces to develop typical tourism products. Targets of this associated structure are:
Making a positive and effective cooperation among regions/provinces to create typical tourism products for the whole areas, according to the strategic tourism development plan.

Create a forum to communicate, discussion, and building a general plan for unique and specific tourism products, avoid coincisive or similar products.

Share information and potentials among regions/provinces to help each other, especially difficulty regions to develop new tourism products in order to gain the final goal for the whole area.

Secondly, developing cultural heritage tourism in mountainous and peripheral areas should be based on communities. Communities include the ethnic minorities, local government and authority, tourism operations and business, international and local non-government organizations and tourists. Each partner has its own benefit when participates in the cultural heritage community-based tourism model, but they all have the same target of socio-economy sustainable development.

Thirdly, to enhance the image and value of cultural heritage tourism in these areas, it is necessary to plan an effective and professional marketing communication campaign to promote the benefit and advantage of this type of products to tourists in targeted market segments. As the regions/provinces in these mountainous and peripheral areas have a constrained budget, they need to cooperate and seek for supports from each other and outside resources to market new products, tourism brand and enhance the value in the customers’ mind. Social marketing communication is one important channel to reach the target customers, especially the customers with high responsibility and well-literate.

The cultural heritage tourism’s benefits can also be communicated through social news, television reports, tourism programs, real-life experience shows, or movies so that the message can be wide spread to the public.

In conclusion, besides the advantage of the nature resources and beauty, cultural heritage tourism is also a competitive potential of Vietnam to compete with other countries in order to attract more international tourists and enhance the position of Vietnam tourism in the targeted customers’ awareness. It is also a prime solution for poverty reduction of mountainous and other peripheral areas in Vietnam. Through cultural heritage tourism, there will be chances for sustainable socio-economic development and more integration in the country.
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