
SOLUTIONS TO ATTRACT INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS TO THANH HOA PROVINCE, VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

Thanh Hoa province in Vietnam has many potentials and strengths in tourism development with many types of tourism to meet the diverse needs of tourists. With its available strengths over the years, Thanh Hoa tourism has achieved remarkable achievements. However, visitors to Thanh Hoa are mainly domestic tourists, the number of international tourists is still very limited. In order to attract more and more international visitors to Thanh Hoa, it is necessary to have synchronous and feasible solutions. Within the scope of this article, we will propose some specific solutions in attracting international tourists to Thanh Hoa

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Tourism plays an increasingly large role in the economy of each locality and country. Tourism is an industry that has great impacts on the economy of each locality and country. In particular, the profits from international tourists contribute to GDP growth, income for local people, foreign currency source for the locality to improve the balance of payments and promote the image of the country and local to friends all over the world. Not only that, tourism also creates job opportunities, increases incomes, reduces urbanization, is an opportunity to expand cultural exchanges, improve people's knowledge, develop human factors, and ensure national defense and social order and safety.

Thanh Hoa province, Vietnam has many potentials and advantages in tourism development with many different types of tourism to meet the diverse needs of tourists. In order to exploit its available strengths, in recent years, Thanh Hoa tourism has built long-term and short-term programs and plans in tourism development that focus on investment activities in tourism development. As a result, in recent years, Thanh Hoa tourism has become an attractive destination for tourists and annual revenue has increased. Although the number of visitors to Thanh Hoa has increased steadily over the years, the main tourist market is still domestic tourists, and international tourists coming to Thanh Hoa are still very few, not commensurate with the potential and strengths of the province. Although Thanh Hoa province has had active activities to attract international tourists, Thanh Hoa has not really become an attractive destination in comparison with other localities with potentials and strengths similarity.

The problem for Thanh Hoa tourism today is what to do and how to attract tourists in general and international tourists in particular to Thanh Hoa. Within the scope of this article, we will discuss the reasons and limitations in attracting international tourists to Thanh Hoa. On that basis, some solutions will be proposed to improve the efficiency of attracting international

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tourists to Thanh Hoa, and Thanh Hoa will become an attractive destination not only for domestic tourists but also for international tourists.

2.0 CURRENT STATUS OF ACTIVITIES TO ATTRACT INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS TO THANH HOA

Thanh Hoa province is considered as a land of talented people, where the relics of many kings and many heroic heroes of the country were discovered. Not only that, Thanh Hoa is also a land with many potentials and strengths when it has all the mountains, plains, coastal areas and sea areas with many unique landscapes, historical and cultural relics. This place is also the land of 7 ethnic communities living together with many customs and cultural traditions that have both the common points of Vietnamese culture and the unique features of each ethnic community here. All above have made Thanh Hoa an attractive destination and attract many tourists who want to learn and explore.

In order to effectively exploit its potentials and strengths in tourism development, build Thanh Hoa into an attractive destination for tourists in general and international tourists in particular, in recent years, Thanh Hoa tourism industry has had many active activities to attract tourists to Thanh Hoa. Those efforts have achieved certain results in attracting tourists to Thanh Hoa. According to statistics of Thanh Hoa Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism, in the period of 2016 - 2020, Thanh Hoa province is estimated to welcome 42.58 million visitors, twice as much as the total number of visitors in the 2011-2015 period, the average growth rate is very high reaching 15.2%/year. Revenue from tourism in the period 2016-2020 reached VND 59,946 billion, 3.6 times higher than the period 2011-2015, the average growth rate reached 31.7% per year. These remarkable numbers are the success of Thanh Hoa tourism industry in recent years, especially in attracting international tourists, Thanh Hoa tourism industry has achieved initial success when it comes to attracting international tourists. International tourists come to Thanh Hoa more and more and become an attractive destination for tourists

According to statistics of Thanh Hoa Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism, if in 2010 the number of international visitors to Thanh Hoa tourism only reached 34,980 arrivals, by 2015 the number had increased to 127,000 visitors. In 2019, there were 300,450 visitors. In 2020, due to the heavy impact of the Covid-19 epidemic, the number of international visitors to Thanh Hoa decreased sharply. And the main tourist markets are: Thailand, Laos, China, Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and some European countries in which tourists have British, French, Canadian citizenship nearby tends to increase. Revenue from attracting international tourists reached USD 26,800 (in 2015), USD 39,600 (in 2016) and USD 90,680 (in 2019). The average expenditure per international visitor to Thanh Hoa is 225.1 USD ⁽³⁾.

The international tourist to Thanh Hoa mainly focuses on discovery destinations and community tourism (homestays) in some mountainous and highland districts. In which, Ba Thuoc district is the leading locality in the province in terms of attracting international tourists. According to the statistics of the Cultural Department of Ba Thuoc district, the number of international visitors to Ba Thuoc in recent years has been constantly increasing: in the period from 2015 to 2017, the district received more than 47 thousand visitors, of which

³ Results of the tourist expense survey in 2018 at Thanh Hoa province (Thanh Hoa Department of Statistics)

more than 15 thousand turns of international visitors, total revenue from tourism activities reached nearly VND 50 billion. The number of visitors to Ba Thuoc district is increasing, whereby the district received 38,050 arrivals in 2018 (international visitors were 5864 arrivals, domestic visitors were 16,501 turns), revenue reached 41 billion. Only in the first 9 months of 2019, Ba Thuoc district welcomed nearly 36,000 visitors, up 20% over the same period, of which 9,239 were international visitors. Up to 78% of tourists rate Thanh Hoa as an attractive tourist destination and one of the criteria affecting tourists' choice of Thanh Hoa destination, which has left many good impressions on them.

However, with the potentials and strengths that Thanh Hoa has, these successes are still quite modest, especially in terms of international tourists when the proportion of international tourists coming to Thanh Hoa in recent years Last year was still very low, out of 42.58 million visitors to Thanh Hoa in the 2016-2020 period, international arrivals only reached 1,274,250 arrivals, accounting for 0.3% of arrivals and revenue was nearly 268.4 million USD⁽⁴⁾. On the other hand, according to the latest statistics of Thanh Hoa Department of Statistics and Thanh Hoa Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism, the number of international visitors returning to Thanh Hoa for the second time accounted for 19% and the number of visitors from the third time onwards of 9.5%, the length of stay of guests is still low (2.7 days/pax), the spending of guests is mainly on travel, room rental and food, accounting for 62.7% and spending on visits. sightseeing, entertainment and shopping accounted for 19.8%⁽⁵⁾.

From the above data, it can be seen that, although it is considered an attractive destination, Thanh Hoa tourism has not really exploited its potential and strengths in attracting international tourists. The reasons given as follows:

- The state management in tourism activities is not really effective. The ability to forecast and adapt to changes in demand and market trends of Thanh Hoa tourism is not high, there is no solution to attract high-class tourists, capable of long-stay capacity and high spending. The management of tourist destinations is not really sustainable; promotional activities are limited in scale and professionalism; tourism human resources are limited in quantity and quality, inspection and quality control and activities have not been implemented closely and regularly; The work of statistics, forecasting and operation orientation of the industry is not really methodical and professional
- The tourism product system is still monotonous, there are not many products for tourists to choose and use. Currently, most of international tourists come to Thanh Hoa because of the attraction of the tourist destinations not for tourism products and services.
- The marketing and promotion of tourism is still small, technology application is slow, and the effectiveness is not high compared to the requirements set out. The brand and image of Thanh Hoa tourism are not really prominent, especially in the communication and promotion of foreign markets. This is clearly shown when tourists are asked for information to decide where to choose Thanh Hoa as a destination, up to 52% of tourists said it was through the introduction of friends and relatives, 16% through books and newspapers, journal.

⁴ Report on the implementation of the Tourism Development Program in the 2016-2020 period; main goals, tasks and solutions for the period of 2021 - 2025

⁵ Results of the tourist expense survey in 2018 at Thanh Hoa province (Thanh Hoa Department of Statistics)

3.0 PROPOSING SOME SOLUTIONS TO ATTRACT INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS TO THANH HOA PROVINCE

In view of the results achieved in the past time, along with the limitations in tourist attraction activities, we would like to propose the following solutions:

Firstly, Innovating and improving the efficiency of state management on tourism: To further improve the role of state management in tourism development in the direction of building and perfecting mechanisms, policies and law to create an open business environment to attract competition among businesses of all economic sectors.

Promulgating documents on management of tourism activities such as: regulatory documents, regulations on management of tourist zones and spots; management of tourism services. Organizing the inspection and supervision of officials performing the tasks of state management of tourism at all levels. Organizing a hotline to be the focal point to receive and match up to promptly solves problems and difficulties to protect the interests of tourists in key tourist areas.

Second, Building a technical infrastructure system to meet the needs of tourism development: Thanh Hoa is a developing province, investing in building an infrastructure system to serve society in general and for Tourism in particular is extremely important. Currently, the province's infrastructure system such as roads, airways, railways and waterways has made remarkable breakthroughs. However, to ensure tourism activities, especially activities to attract international tourists, it is necessary to invest in technical infrastructure to develop community tourism, including roads to the village, traffic internal, guest house, parking lot, toilet area, garbage dump, electricity and water system at Ma Hao Waterfall tourist area, Pu Luong, Pu Hu tourist area...; Invest in infrastructure to develop craft village tourism as roads to craft villages, internal roads, reception areas, product display houses - production processes, public toilets, parking lots, system waste treatment system, wastewater, electricity and water systems.

Focus on developing air traffic to create favorable conditions for international tourists when coming to Thanh Hoa such as investing and upgrading Tho Xuan airport into an international airport, opening more direct flights from Thanh Hoa to key tourist markets at home and abroad.

Third, Training aims to improve the quality of tourism human resources. The quality of tourism services is determined by the quality of human resources. Tourists who come from different countries, different regions have different in travel motivations, requirements, tastes and habits, while tourism activities cannot be a fixed technological line to guide and control. This requires workers in the tourism industry to be trained, equipped with broad knowledge, creativity to be flexible enough, how to deal with each visitor and especially to be fluent in English to communicate with international tourists. Therefore, developing high-quality human resources is a key task in the direction of tourism development in the coming time.

Fourth, building a system of diversified tourism products to meet the needs of tourists. Thanh Hoa, a land with many incentives for natural tourism resources and advantages in humanistic tourism resources. In recent years, Thanh Hoa tourism industry has had solutions

and built many tourism products to meet the diverse daily needs of tourists. In the coming time, in order to attract more and more tourists to Thanh Hoa and the market is more diverse, especially for the international tourist market, we need to diversify more attractive tourism products, meeting the needs of tourists including international tourists:

- Researching markets thoroughly and comprehensively (purposes, psychology, preferences, economic conditions and so on), identifying tourism development trends in the world, in the region, in the country, identifying target markets, key markets with specific characteristics and needs as a basis for building a system of tourism products suitable for each market, with high quality and capability competitiveness to attract tourists and bring high economic efficiency.
- We need to develop and diversify tourism products, promoting the specificity of each place and region in order to exploit strengths and create brands in tourism products.
- Diversifying types and tourism shops to form streets, central markets that mainly focus on serving tourists (specialized markets, weekend markets, and specialized gift markets and so on).
- Diversifying types of souvenir products to serve tourists. Organizing the surveys on the needs and tastes of customers about souvenir products to produce suitable products (organize design contests, sample production, etc.). Souvenir goods can be sampled as symbols of tourism resources, cultural and architectural works, and heritages of Thanh Hoa, Vietnam. The antique products displayed in museums can be used as sample production of souvenir.

Fifth, Strengthening the promotion and marketing in tourism: Strengthening tourism promotion with a focus, targeting the target market, on the basis of being consistent with the orientation of developing tourism brands and products; Innovating methods and contents, diversifying promotional activities in the direction of increasing the application of modern and professional technology, promoting the power of communication and promoting promotion on social networks to successfully build Thanh Hoa tourism brand; Promoting cooperation and association with localities, regions that have established relationships with Thanh Hoa province to develop and promote common destinations; promoting the cooperation with international organizations to exchange experiences, take advantage of technical support, train human resources, attract tourism investment.

Sixth, Building a safe tourism market for international tourists: A country doing business in tourism wants to develop the source of international tourists first to ensure security and order for international tourists. Therefore, first of all, we need to have a security system that ensures the safety of international tourists (in particular) as well as tourists (in general). We need:

- Sightseeing and tourist attractions must have operating regulations, sightseeing rules, installation of signboards; welcoming, guiding visitors attentively, civilized and polite; has a large parking lot suitable for the number of visitors, has a system of infrastructure and customer service facilities that are strictly managed, ensuring quality.

- Organizations and individuals trading in services and goods must post up public prices and sell them at the posted prices; goods must have labels and origin, ensure quality, quantity and weight.
- Reviewing and installing the clear and appropriate traffic signs and signposts to ensure safety, prevent congestion, and create conditions for tourists to access tourist sites and attractions; check, detect and deal with negative phenomena, causing troubles for drivers on traffic routes, causing frustration for residents and tourists.
- Strengthen the management of sidewalks and roadbeds, ensure ventilation and sanitation, and strictly handle organizations and individuals providing services that encroach on sidewalks and roadways, causing unsanitary and orderly actions. Launching a movement of people to behave civilly and wholeheartedly support tourists; launched the movement "Every citizen is a guide, welcoming tourists". Management boards of tourist zones and attractions with large numbers of tourists must arrange staff to guide and assist tourists, ensuring order and civilization; Priority is given to the elderly, people with disabilities, children and people accompanied by children.
- Strictly controlling the fire safety conditions at restaurants and hotels, especially small private restaurants and hotels; swimming pools must be fully equipped with life jackets; Trekking tours must have planning, must have information, instructions and plans to handle emergencies and risks. Regulations travel agencies are not allowed to take guests to tours, routes, tourist attractions that have not been planned and recognized by the competent management agency, especially where there have been unsafe warnings such as landslides, cliffs... Tourist sites and areas need a medical and rescue department to handle emergency situations.

4.0 CONCLUSION

With a system of rich and diverse tourism resources, it can be said that Thanh Hoa province is an attractive destination for tourists from many countries around the world, but the development of Thanh Hoa tourism industry is not worthy. With potential, the number of international tourists to Thanh Hoa is still limited. In order to promote activities to attract international tourists to Thanh Hoa, it is very important to identify the factors that attract international tourists to Thanh Hoa. With the proposed solutions above, it is hoped that in the near future the number of international visitors to Thanh Hoa tourism will increase, exploiting the full potential of Thanh Hoa's strengths and reaching the goal by 2025 to welcome 850,000 international visitors to Thanh Hoa with a revenue of 380,000 USD.

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