
Lao Cai's Potentials of Green Tourism Development from the Perspective of Domestic Tourists

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Abstract

The aims of the research was to understand Lao Cai's Potentials of green tourism development from the perspective of domestic tourists. The respondent of this survey were domestic visitors who visted Lao Cai province. The study used quatitative research methods and secondary document collection methods to research the potential and status of green tourism development in Lao Cai province. In reality, although Lao Cai is a province with quite a lot of nature resource and cultural heritages, the exploitation of its value to serve green tourism development has not achieved the highest efficiency. Therefore, the article proposed a number of solutions to improve the efficiency of exploiting the value of nature resource in green tourism development in Lao Cai province

Keywords: green tourism, tourism development, tourism potentials

1. Introduction

Vietnam's tourism is an industry which was hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, the number of international visitors decreased by 80%, total revenue from tourists decreased by 59% over the same period. In 2021, the number of international visitors decreased by nearly 96%, the source of revenue decreased deeply. (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2023)

From March 2022, Vietnam completely reopened tourism activities, welcoming international visitors earlier than many countries in the region. The tourism market had gradually recovered, especially domestic tourism has recovered strongly. However, the number of international tourists to Vietnam in 2022 had not been as expected, only reaching about 42% of the plan. (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2023)

For domestic tourists, although the government used stimulus measures such as "Vietnamese people travel to Vietnam", the number of domestic tourists was not positive due to the influence of Covid. It can be clearly seen in Table 1 below

The number of tourists from 2018 to 2019 had a slight growth from 80 million visitors to 85 million visitors. However, due to the impact of the epidemic, the number of tourists decreased to 56 million people in 2020 and 40 million people in 2021. In 2021 we also saw a change in the structure of the visitor group for the first time. First, we realized that the number of guests who went during the day and did not stay overnight was more than the number of guests who stayed overnight. In 2022, tourism industry had gradually recovered with the number of domestic tourists reaching 101.3 million people.

Table 1. Number of Domestic Tourists in 5 years

Unit: thousand turns

Criteria	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Visitors in 1 day not overnight	41,400	41,500	27,000	21,000	34,600
Guests staying overnight at accomodation	38,600	43,500	28,700	19,000	66,700
Total number of visitors	80,000	85,000	56,000	40,000	101,300

(Source: Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2023)

Vietnam has been looking for trends and solutions to boost tourism growth after a difficult period. Green tourism can be seen as a useful solution for the tourism industry to recover after the covid pandemic. In recent years, national-scale tourism activities have also emphasized sustainable green tourism development, such as the National Tourism Year 2022 taking place in Quang Nam with the theme "Quang Nam Province - Green tourism destination", which organized many activities towards sustainable green tourism. The National Tourism Year 2023, hosted by Binh Thuan province which has used the theme "Binh Thuan - Green convergence", towards green products, clean energy, creating a friendly and safe environment for health.

Bricker, K. (2017) showed that the International Ecotourism Association (TIES) defined green tourism as responsible tourism to natural areas, preserving the environment; sustain the lives of local people and related to education.

“Developing green tourism is the key to responsible tourism development, ensuring sustainable tourism. In the context of climate change taking place on a global scale, in recent years, green tourism has been developing rapidly in many countries around the world, including Vietnam.” recognized by Le Quynh Chi (2022)

For the tourism sector on Decision No. 882/QĐ-TTg on the National Action Plan on Green Growth for the 2021-2030 period, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism showed two groups of tasks: "Improving institutions and policies to manage tourism development towards green and sustainable growth " and prioritized the development of tourism types in the direction of green growth (ecotourism, community based tourism, agricultural and rural tourism, sea and island resort tourism associated with economic development). blue sea economy... (Prime Minister, 2022)

Lao Cai Provincial People's Committee (2022) decided that the strategic framework for tourism development in Lao Cai province to 2030, with a vision to 2050 included many contents which was expected to contribute to the sustainable development of tourism in Lao Cai; bringing Lao Cai to become the leading "green" and "smart" adventure sport and nature tourism destination in Vietnam and the region associated with the traditional cultural identity of the ethnic groups, the place where visitors would have the best different and authentic experience with special emotions on every journey.

From that vision, Lao Cai also prioritized specific products (high-class accommodation and resorts; extreme sports; culture - community; ecology; agriculture associated with OCOP, MICE, etc.) shopping associated with border economy, flower tourism), which paid attention to exploit the domestic market and attracting the markets of Northeast Asia, ASEAN...

Perceived value and satisfaction

Customer perception of perceived value would result in Customer Satisfaction (Sadeh et al., 2012); (Hallowell, 1996). Also, it was believed that perception had a direct influence on the satisfaction of the customer. (Chen and Chen, 2010)

Satisfaction was positively affected by perception (Patterson and Spreng, 1997); (Petrick and Backman, 2002). David et al., (2007) found that Perception of price affects customer satisfaction and loyalty in service industry journals.

According to Vietnam tourism law 2017, "Tourism is the activity of people outside the place their regular residence to satisfy the needs of sightseeing, entertainment and relaxation in a certain period of time Tourism is activities related to the trips of people outside their regular place of residence in no time. for more than 01 consecutive year in order to meet the needs of sightseeing, relaxation, recreation, exploring and exploring tourism resources or in combination with other lawful purposes".

Tourists

Tourists are those who travel or combine with travel, except when attending school or working for income at the destination.

Types of tourists

- Domestic tourists were Vietnamese citizens, foreigners residing in Vietnam traveling within the territory of Vietnam.(Vietnam tourism law, 2017)

- International tourists coming to Vietnam were foreigners, Vietnamese people residing abroad entering Vietnam for tourism.(Vietnam tourism law, 2017)

- Tourists traveling abroad were Vietnamese citizens and foreigners residing in Vietnam traveling abroad.(Vietnam tourism law, 2017)

In term of the study's scope, we focused on domestic tourists.

2. Methods

The article used quatitative research methods and secondary document collection methods to research the potential and status of green tourism development in Lao Cai province.

Survey's respondents were domestic tourists. The survey content to be collected included visitors' assessments of the current status and potential of green tourism development in Lao Cai province, specifically in the following aspects: resources, amenities (physical and technical infrastructure), environment, sustainable management organization, products and services; Visitors' general opinions on the current status in the development of green tourism...

The research used probability sampling (random selection). The minimum sample size was estimated at about 400 samples for domestic tourist. Likert scale is used to rate 5 levels.

3. Results

3.1 Results from secondary data

Natural conditions

- Lao Cai is a mountainous border province, located between the Northeast and Northwest regions, adjacent to 4 provinces and cities: the East borders Ha Giang province, the South borders Yen Bai province, the West borders Lai Chau province and the West borders with Lai Chau province. It borders Yunnan province to the north (China). Since then, Lao Cai has a strategic geo-economic - political position of the Northern Midwest and the whole country.

- Lao Cai has many rivers and streams with a fairly thick density and evenly distributed in the province with over 10,000 large and small rivers and streams, of which two large rivers have the greatest impact on the province's hydrological regime such as the Red River and Chay River

- Lao Cai has a tropical monsoon climate, dominated by complex topographical factors, so the weather changes. The highland areas of the province have an average temperature of 150C-200C such as the highland communes of Sa Pa, Bac Ha, Bat Xat, Muong Khuong (Sapa alone from 140C-160C) is one of the conditions that make the difference, which contributes to attracting tourists

- Lao Cai has diverse forest, plant and mineral resources, large reserves and is representative of the species of the whole country. Lao Cai forest plays a very important role in environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, water regulation, not only for Lao Cai province but also for the Northern Midland and Northern Midland and Red River Delta region. Hoang Lien Son mountain range is considered the largest center of biodiversity in the country with many natural forest ecosystems typical of high and temperate mountains and many precious and rare species of animals and endemic plants.

Tourism sector in Lao Cai

According to the report of Lao Cai Department of Tourism, by the fourth quarter of 2022, Lao Cai had 1,439 accommodation establishments, including: 3 hotels and resorts with 5-star rating;

9 hotels with 4-star rating; 14 hotels with 3 star rating; 66 hotels with 2 star rating; 129 hotels with 1 star rating; 761 unrated accommodation establishments (guesthouses) and 457 (homestays). The province had 35 tourist sites and sites, including one Sa Pa National Tourist Area, two provincial tourist sites (Lao Cai City Tourist Area and Bac Ha Tourist Area), 32 tourist sites (of which Sa Pa town had 13 points, Bac Ha had 4 points, Bat Xat had 6 points, Bao Yen had 2 points, and the city had 2 spots. Lao Cai had 4 points, Muong Khuong had 3 points). In addition, the locality also had about 2,436 standard tourist service establishments to serve tourists (such as catering services, shopping, sports, entertainment, entertainment, health care and other related services).

According to the report on socio-economic situation of Lao Cai province in December and the whole year of 2022 of the People's Committee of Lao Cai province, overcoming the difficult period due to the impact of the Covid-19 epidemic, Lao Cai tourism has shown strong signs of recovery in 2022. During the Lunar New Year and April 30 - May 1 holiday, September 2 occasion (National Independence Day of Vietnam), the number of tourists of Lao Cai all ranked top in the country. In particular, after the Government allowed all services of tourism to reopen, the Provincial People's Committee continued to effectively implement the Plan No. 254/KH-UBND (dated September 28, 2020) on developing Lao Cai tourism products in the 2021 – 2025 period, with a vision to 2030, met the needs of tourists, attracted high spenders and repeat visitors. With the implementation of many typical tourism products bearing local brands such as: Re-enactment of Sa Pa Love Market; Bac Ha White Plateau Festival in 2022; Festival of Love and Roses in 2022; Sa Pa: Brocade and Flowers in 2022; 08 sports tourism products combining various means of transport such as walking, bicycle, car, canoe, kayak, jogging, horseback riding in Bac Ha; The Northwest Elite Festival with the theme "Connecting green aspirations", a new sports tourism product: "Triathlon 2022" in Bac Ha, etc. had made Lao Cai become a favorite destination for tourists after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The number of visitors to Lao Cai in December was estimated at 440,459 (including 20,412 international visitors, 420,047 domestic visitors), an increase of 49.5% compared to November. Total revenue from tourists was estimated at 1,582 billion VND, up 44.9% month-on-month. Accumulated in 2022, the number of visitors to Lao Cai was estimated at 4,642,000 arrivals, equaling 116% of the year plan, 3.3 times higher than that of the end of 2021; total revenue from tourists was estimated at 16,380 billion dong, equaling 108% of the year plan, 3.7 times higher than that of the stock market in 2021.

3.2 Results from survey

Among 400 respondents, 34 % were male while 66% were female. This reflected the fact that tourists at the study sites were more female than male. Perhaps that was reason why they were also more willing to answer the questionnaire. This study did not limit the age of visitors. However, the respondents were for the most part at the age from 30 to 45 years old with 65.3% of the survey participants.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of observed variables

Items	Mean	N
1. Resources		
R1. High biodiversity	3.41	400
R2. Attractive environmental landscape	3.69	400
R3. Appropriate climatic conditions	4.23	400
R4. The monuments have special value	3.95	400
R5. Unique indigenous culture	4.13	400
R6. Convenient location, convenient access.	3.19	400
2. Amenities (Physical and technical infrastructure)		
A1. Easy traffic	3.62	400
A2. Sustainable and safe electricity and water supply systems	3.68	400
A3. Garbage and waste collection and treatment system suitable to the size of the tourist spot.	3.28	400
A4. Friendly, harmonious tourist service constructions	3.11	400
3. Environment		
E1. Environmental Education	3.01	400
E2. Environmental Protection	3.58	400
4. Sustainable management organization		
SMO1. Adopting policies to support ecotourism development and conservation	3.48	400
SMO2. Planning and managing implementation	3.11	400
SMO3. Having capacity management apparatus according to professional skills	3.28	400
SMO4. The source of development capital is public, transparent and on the right purpose	3.01	400
5. Products and services		
PS1. Sightseeing services	4.27	400
PS2. Camping services	4.21	400
PS3. Resort services	3.08	400
PS4. Conference and seminar services	3.21	400
PS5. Serving guests to learn and research	3.12	400
6. General evaluation		
GE1. This is a province with a lot of potential to develop green tourism	3.61	400
GE2. This is a favorable province to attract investment capital in the field of green tourism	3.71	400
GE3. The development of green tourism here will bring many environmental, economic, cultural and social benefits to the locality	3.51	400

(Source: (A guide to developing eco-tourism in Vietnam); (analyzed by this study)

In terms of natural resources, all the evaluated criteria were above 3 points (meaning the resources at tourist destinations were at an average level or higher). Among the six criteria, two criteria were more highly appreciated by tourists, R3 for Appropriate climatic conditions and R5 for Unique indigenous culture at tourist destinations, which was rated at level 4 by domestic tourists: 4/5 (generally agreed to recognize that the natural, climatic and cultural conditions of the research location were rich, diverse and unique). However, R6 for Convenient location, convenient access, she achieved 3.19 (lower than the rest of the criteria), which proved that tourists do not really appreciate the convenience of location and communication.

Regarding amenities (Physical and technical infrastructure), All four criteria were rated as average and satisfied by tourists. While the guest agreed with A1 for Easy traffic (3.62) and A2 for Sustainable and safe electricity and water supply systems (3.68), the remaining two factors that were still confused by customers are A3 for Garbage and waste collection and treatment system suitable to the size of the tourist spot and A4 for Friendly, harmonious tourist service construction

In terms of environment, in general, visitors' evaluation was more rigorous than other criteria. Specifically, in two criteria reflecting the current status of environmental education and environmental protection, both were rated at 3/5. That was the first criterion of environmental education which was rated at the average level (3/5). The second criterion on the environmental protection situation of tourists was rated at 3/5 (specifically, 3.58), which was average.

Regarding the current status of sustainable management organization, all factors were not appreciated except SMO1 for Adopting policies to support ecotourism development and conservation) was agreed by tourists, while other factors were still uncertain. The reason might be that tourists' awareness was still limited about sustainable management

Regarding tourism products and services, according to the evaluation results of domestic tourists, all 5/5 criteria (100%) reflecting on products and services were only average (3/5). The results of visitors' reviews showed that they were satisfied/agreed with PS1 for Sightseeing services; PS2 for Camping services and rated these 2 criteria at 4/5. The remaining were PS3 for Resort services; PS4 for Conference and seminar services; and PS5 for Serving guests to learn and research is rated as average (3/5)

* Overall assessment results of visitors about the potential for green tourism development in Lao Cai province

Along with the assessment of the factors of resources, amenities (physical and technical infrastructure), environment, sustainable management organization, products and services, the study also conducted a survey and assessment of tourists about the potential for green tourism development of Lao Cai province.

The potential for green tourism development was specifically studied by the group through 3 criteria such as GE1 (This is an area with great potential for green tourism development), GE2

(This is a favourable area to attract investment capital. investment in the field of green tourism) and GE3 (The development of green tourism here will bring many environmental economic, cultural and social benefits to the locality). The results showed that almost 100% of the surveyed tourists highly appreciated the potential for green tourism development in Lao Cai province with the average score for all criteria above 3.5 points.

4. Discussion

From the results of the study, the authors have proposed a number of solutions below to contribute to improving the potential of green tourism development in the province:

- Strengthening the state management, assigning qualified staff to advise and manage the tourism economic sector, especially the localities that orient the development of green tourism such as focusing on perfecting institutions, mechanisms, policies and management regulations on tourism development towards green growth; promulgate specific legal documents and guide the implementation of green growth-oriented tourism development at both central and local levels.
- Regarding communication, focus on building information technology infrastructure; forming a local data center system. Developing digital infrastructure to reach the region's advanced level.
- Renovate the training of high-quality tourism human resources of the province in the direction of training to meet competency standards according to titles. Develop detailed state management capacity framework on tourism. Apply the competency framework to assess the current team's capacity and organize pilot training to meet the title standards of a number of core competencies.
- Propagating to raise awareness about environmental protection and green tourism for all stakeholders involved in tourism activities, such as: local government, tourists, local people and tour operators. At the same time, raise the awareness of managers about tourism, businesses and the community about green growth, green economy; green development in the development of physical facilities, tourism techniques, as well as tourism services applying green energy, green transportation, green consumption.
- It is necessary to focus on developing quality products associated with agriculture and new rural areas in the locality, ensuring the development of traditional craft villages, which are unique, diverse and synchronous, with high added value that need to be built. construction, ensuring to meet the needs of visitors; develop green tourism products, respecting natural factors and local culture.

5. Conclusion

Lao Cai has a lot of nature resource and cultural heritages. However, the exploitation of its value to serve green tourism development has not achieved the highest efficiency. Since then, the study recommended a number of solutions to improve the efficiency of exploiting the value of nature resource in green tourism development in Lao Cai province about resources, amenities (physical and technical infrastructure), environment, sustainable management

organization, products and services; Visitors' general opinions on the current status in the development of green tourism...

The research scope of the topic was limited in domestic tourists who came to Lao Cai. The upcoming studies should be researched in both domestic tourists and international tourists.

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