

Educating Student about Protecting Environment in Tien Giang Province of Mekong Delta by Linking Tourism Development with Real Activities

Vo Hoang Ca¹, Nguyen Tan Danh²

¹ Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

²FPT University, Vietnam

¹ca.vh0121@oude.edu.vn

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Abstract : Tien Giang is located in the area of Mekong River, the gateway to the southwestern region, blessed with many beautiful landscapes and valuable historical and cultural relics. Tien Giang is currently an attractive area for marine tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism, and spiritual tourism. Over the past years, Tien Giang tourism has had a strong development, making a positive contribution to the province's economy and society. However, in order for Tien Giang tourism to develop sustainably, one of the top concerns today is environmental protection. Environment plays a decisive role in the orientation of sustainable tourism development. The article analyses the results of recent research and results of the paper confirms that we need to have some practical solutions and the paper also mentions the important role of functional industries, they need to implement many synchronous solutions to protect the environment, contributing to creating landscape, improve regional climate and work towards a green and sustainable tourism. In particular, the propaganda and education measures to raise people's awareness of environmental protection need more attention.

1. Introduction

Located at the gateway of the southwestern region, Tien Giang province has a coastline of 32km, a network of rivers, interlaced canals, diverse ecosystems, many landscapes and historical relics and lifestyle [1]. The traditional cultural activities of the residents of the Southern River region have created conditions for tourism businesses to invest in exploiting and building up rich tourism products. Tien Giang river eco-tours include some activities such as visiting the garden of Thoi Son islet, Vinh Trang pagoda, scenic spots and historical and cultural sites, Dong Hoa Hiep ancient house, Cai Be floating market, etc. always welcome a large number of domestic and international tourists [2].

Not so far from Can Tho City and Ho Chi Minh City - the economic center of the country; this is an important fulcrum for tourism development in Tien Giang. Over the past years, the model of socialization in tourism activities of Tien Giang has been effective, the mobilization of people to join tourism has created an upper hand compared to the Mekong Delta provinces nowadays [3]. These methods have been used by other provinces to become a competitive competitor of tourism in the province. In particular, the two localities, Dong Thap and Long An province, which are bordering Tien Giang, both have natural conditions for tourism development, with potential ecotourism [1]. These localities will be the choice of tourists when they decide to travel, thus affecting the efficiency of tourism business of Tien Giang. Therefore, how to attract tourists to Tien Giang day As much as possible and attracting them to stay for longer, it is a very necessary job of Tien Giang tourism to exploit the tourism potential of the locality to bring high socio-economic efficiency. The research on tourism development solutions in Tien Giang province is a necessary requirement.

2. Current situation of environmental pollution in Tien Giang province

People living along the Mekong River in Tien Giang province of Vietnam are very concerned because this river is increasingly polluted. The most serious problem is when industrial zones are built along the river [4]. Some companies discharge wastewater and untreated waste into the river because of their profit. With the indiscriminate discharge on the Mekong River, the fishing villages on the river face disease.

In fact, the environmental pollution caused by enterprises such as noise, dust, odor, etc. is easy to detect, but for discharging wastewater into rivers, it is complicated and difficult to handle [3]. Because most businesses have installed underground sewers below the water level, there are many plants and grass around the riverbank, making it difficult to detect violations. Not only businesses but many people still have the perception that the river is a common place, not only one person, therefore, they just throw waste into the river (Fig.1).



Fig.1. The status of water pollution in Mekong delta

According to the annual monitoring results of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment of Tien Giang-Ben Tre province, the water source of the Mekong River is seriously polluted, especially the area near the city center and near industrial zones. In particular, something such as oil, iron, microorganisms, etc. exceeded the environmental standards [5]. If there is no solution to this problem, it will be even worse and harm human health [3]. And one of those influences is the tourism sector. The tourism industry is significantly affected when the environment is not fresh, when the environment is polluted. The current situation of water pollution on Mekong River from the discharge in industrial zones and some people living along the river is alarming the environment.

3. Results and discussion

The general objective of the topic is to analyze and evaluate the current status of tourism business activities and tourism services of tourism businesses in Tien Giang province in recent years. To clearly see the current tourism status of Tien Giang, the article has used systematized methods, statistics, combined with comparison, synthesis, analysis to assess the current status of tourism business and tourism services in the province in the past.

3.1 Analysis of the current status of Tien Giang tourism

Generally, in the first 11 months of 2019, tourists to Tien Giang were 1,847.5 thousand arrivals, reaching 88% of the plan, up 5.8% over the same period; in which international visitors are 591.1 thousand arrivals, reaching 70.4% of the plan, up 1.8% over the same period. Total revenue from accommodation services, catering services, travel services and other services reached VND 11,681 billion, up 8.1% over the same period. By commodity groups, revenue from accommodation and catering services was VND 5,944 billion, accounting for 50.9%, up 7.8%; travel and tourism 105 billion, up 14.8% and services 5,632 billion, up 8.4% over the same period.

However, the rapid and strong development of tourism in recent years has put great pressure on the natural environment, especially the major tourist destinations of the province [4]. Along with the increase in the number of tourists, wastes from tourism activities are increasing rapidly, especially in key tourism development areas; biodiversity and landscape in many areas were seriously damaged [5]. According to a number of tourism experts, Tien Giang is a province with a lot of potentials for tourism development, but that potential should be exploited properly to avoid the risk of tourism environment pollution.

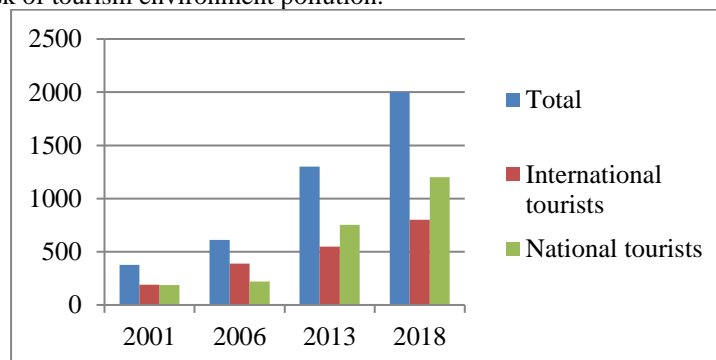


Fig.2. Number of tourists to Tien Giang for the period 2001-2018 (Unit: million people)

Particularly in 2018, Tien Giang Tourism industry welcomed over 2 million tourists, including 800,000 international tourists. Revenue from tourism businesses reached over 1,000 billion VND, up 26% over the same period, making an important contribution to the province's GDP and contributing to promoting the development of other economic sectors (Fig.2).

This is also the year Tien Giang tourism industry has many positive changes, creating many exciting activities for development, contributing to improving the spiritual life of the people and bringing efficiency to the community of workers in tourism economy [1].

Looking at the number of visitors coming to Tien Giang also shows a steady increase over the years. If in 2013 Tien Giang received only about 1.3 million visitors, including more than 547,000 international visitors, by 2018 it welcomed about 2 million visitors. Of course, the annual increase in the number of tourists will lead to an increase in the revenue of the tourism industry.

This is partly due to the fact that the Tourism industry has concentrated all resources on developing travel activities, researching specific strengths, exploiting landmarks, cultural and historical relics, boldly opening more new tours, link with travel business units inside and outside the province to create a source of tourists [6].

According to statistics for the years from 1996 to 2005, the countries with a high average annual proportion of tourists to Tien Giang are as follows: Japan is the highest with the rate of 34.84%; followed by France with the rate of 29.31%; Korea ranked third with the rate of 7.59%; countries with arrivals from 1,000 to 4,000 people accounting for 21.15% include the US, Germany, Taiwan, UK, Hong Kong and Australia; The remaining 7.11% belongs to other countries.

By 2006, the number of international visitors increased significantly, the leading rate was still Japanese visitors with 140,954 arrivals, accounting for 36.24%; Korea 44,534 turns, accounting for 11.45%; France 39,322 turns, accounting for 10.11%; He has 36,560 turns, accounting for 9.41%. The rest accounted for from 15,000 to 20,000 visitors, including Taiwan, Australia, America, Germany, etc.

Currently, visitors come to Tien Giang with the main purpose of sightseeing and tourism. The majority of international visitors to Tien Giang are brought by travel companies and Ho Chi Minh City travel agencies under the contracted program [4]. Therefore, visitors to Tien Giang do not have enough time to explore, shop and stay overnight in Tien Giang, so it has a great impact on business performance of Tien Giang tourism.

In the period 2002 - 2006, the number of domestic tourists increased but very slowly, the average growth rate was only 3.46%, very low compared to the period 1997 - 2001. The above fact shows that Tien Giang tourism has not had any Proper investment, inadequate management and administration, lack of strategy, unattractive monotonous tourism products, and insufficient and weak tourism services are not attractive enough to retain tourists [7].

3.2 Some weaknesses need to be overcome

However, in addition to the achievements, there are many shortcomings that the tourism industry needs to try to overcome.

Firstly, tourism products are monotonous, overlapping with the western region, construction and development of tourism products have not been fully exploited and not commensurate with the local tourism potentials [8].

Second, the tourism industry's activities are unprofessional and inconsistent. The workforce serving the tourism industry is very large, but the majority has not yet received professional training, so they cannot meet the development needs of the industry [3]. Professional qualifications and foreign languages are still low, so the quality of serving luxury domestic and international tourists has not met the requirements, not making an impression on tourists [9].

Third, the application of Marketing in tourism is still very limited, so it has not built Tien Giang tourism image in the hearts of tourists. Promotion and marketing of tourism are less interested in investment by businesses, with too little investment funding. Promotion activities only stop at participating in the domestic tourism festival exhibition. The tourism events of the same nature as tourism festivals in provinces with strong tourism have not been organized yet [2].

Fourth, accommodation facilities serving tourists have not met the requirements of the tourism industry [5]. The number of newly built hotels has increased in recent years, but the majority cannot meet the demand for international visitors.

3. The relationship between tourism development and environmental protection

The total number of tourists in the province in the period 2016 - 2019 up to now has reached 95.45% of the set target by 2020, an average increase of 8% / year; The whole province currently has 333 accommodation establishments, 71 business travel agencies, 30 tourist resorts and spots; From 2016 up to now, the province has received more than 17 investment projects for tourism development; the promotion and promotion of tourism through the application of information technology has been promoted [10]. Localities have made great efforts to renovate, upgrade and invest in building more tourist sites and spots; investment and embellishment of historical - cultural relic areas associated with tourism development; to focus on exploiting the strengths of ecotourism, gardens of water, cultural tourism - historical relics, contributing to increasing tourists to Tien Giang. In addition, localities have also boldly linked and cooperated for regional development to jointly exploit and supplement products of each other's characteristics between provinces and cities in the Mekong Delta and key economic regions of southern area [6].

There are environmental protection programs taking place in many places in Vietnam. Not only young Vietnamese participate in this activity, but also foreign tourists and children with their parents engaged in activities such as cleaning the streets, canals and rivers [4]. Many young people have gathered a sense of environmental protection for themselves and this will be the first step for each individual's environmental awareness change in Vietnam, changing habits for the better, starting small actions in everyday life such as putting garbage in the right place, learning how to keep their places green. etc. Especially, with the future generations of the country, they need to aim for a healthier and more sustainable living environment (Fig.3).



Fig.3. Activities to protect the environment of local people

Currently, at the tourist site of the province, there are trash bins, home-stay households keep trash and have auxiliary works, wastewater treatment system, domestic waste, etc. Especially, most of the delegations, when arriving at the destination, they all have a sense of general hygiene, there is no indiscriminate littering. In addition, many delegations coming here also directly join the local people to build roads and plant trees. However, plastic waste remains a hot issue [7]. This is most evident in the high season when the number of tourists coming to tourist destinations is crowded [4]. Facing this fact, the tourism industry is building a strategy, coordinating with the locality to solve the problem of balancing tourism development with ensuring a sustainable environment.

Promoting investment in tourism development is one of the top priorities of many localities in the province that have advantages in tourism resources. However, if tourism activities are developed too quickly but lack of synchronous planning, it will affect people's lives, indigenous culture, disrupt the natural landscape, and threaten tourism development in the future [5]. Determining the environment plays a decisive role in orienting tourism development in a sustainable direction, over the past years, Tien Giang has directed localities and functional sectors to orient tourism planning in association with environmental protection, contributing to landscape, improving regional climate and towards a green and sustainable tourism [9].

4. Some solutions to develop tourism of Tien Giang province

The first is the strategic solutions. We need to diversify and improve the quality of tourism products and services. We can develop weekend tourism products; In addition, we need to replicate the type of homestay tourism in many tourist areas and destinations in the province. The design of the ecotourism program associated with historical - cultural sites and traditional craft villages, and building a cultural - historical tour program on the Mekong River should also be focused. And one important thing, we also need to develop many entertainment services to serve the tourism industry [2].

The second is to build brands and create unique products combined with regional linking. We need to build a brand for Tien Giang tourism. This province definitely has its own characteristics when compared to other regions [7]. Therefore, we need to make a product differentiation. In addition, inter-agency coordination and regional linkage should also be considered.

Third is to increase investment activities from all economic sectors in tourism. If tourism is to develop, we need to invest in good tourism infrastructure. The investment in the development of tourism vehicles including the investment in motor boats and rowing boats is necessary, but in the long term and according to the development trend, the tourism industry of Tien Giang also needs to follow market trends. That is, we still preserve the unique characteristics of the region besides approaching the new [3].

The fourth is the training of human resources for tourism. Investing, planning a good team of business managers is one thing we need to do because this team has more or less made a great contribution to tourism. Advanced training and fostering professional skills and foreign languages for service staff should also be paid attention, especially when the number of international visitors coming here is more and more [8]. We can link training institutions to train and retrain local tour guides; training and fostering professional skills for local communities for the sake of sustainable development.

In addition, sustainable solutions are also quite important. Strengthening the state management of tourism business is something that any country should focus on. Tourism businesses need to ensure security and safety in tourism and be responsible, have a plan for the proper exploitation and use of tourism resources, are unable to affect the environment for immediate benefit [1]. And in order for the tourism of the region to be known to many people, we must focus on enhancing tourism promotion and promotion through advertising channels, travel fairs, events, etc. If we have strategies and plans to attract investment capital for the tourism industry, we will surely attract many tourists and succeed.

We need to strengthen environmental management and protection measures to prevent and prevent new sources of pollution; control the source of environmental pollution and degradation from economic development activities affecting the environment in tourist areas and destinations such as construction, industrial development, transportation, aquaculture, production in traditional craft villages, etc. although environmental protection for tourism development is still a challenge in the present period.

We need to define that the environment plays a decisive role in the direction of sustainable tourism development [3]. Therefore, functional sectors need to implement many synchronous solutions to protect the environment, contribute to creating landscapes, improve the regional climate and towards a green and sustainable tourism. In particular, we need to focus on strengthening propaganda and education measures to raise people's awareness of environmental protection. At the same time, we need to organize training and on-the-job training for local officials and people, especially where there are tourist areas and spots. It is essential to coordinate with the mass organizations and the masses at the grassroots to maintain and launch sanitation movements. In addition, we also coordinate with grassroots authorities, businesses operating in the tourism sector, and the Management Board of tourist resorts to develop and issue regulations on the protection of the tourism environment [8].

In addition, we also regularly coordinate with functional agencies to check the compliance with regulations on environmental protection, and handle and overcome consequences of pollution, environmental degradation, and diversified protection of biology due to the impact of tourism activities. In tourist areas and destinations, it is necessary to add propaganda panels about environmental protection, propaganda slogans on environmental protection on ships serving tourists. We also encourage the development of waste treatment service facilities that apply technology to respond to environmental incidents [10]. Along with that, the plan for tourism development must be associated with the plan on socio-economic development, the planning on environmental resources; well implement planning on clean water supply for urban and rural areas, especially key tourist destinations that should be paid attention [4]. With the initiative and awareness of all levels, sectors and people in focusing on the protection of the general environment in the areas, the tourist destination will contribute to bringing Tien Giang tourism closer to domestic and international tourists.

5. Conclusion

Through analysis of the current situation of the tourism industry in Tien Giang in the past time, together with the actual results of discussions from tourists, it is possible to conclude that the tourism industry of Tien Giang over the past time has had significant growth and made many contributions to economic value; create many jobs for the locality. The tourism industry of Tien Giang needs to exploit the potential of the local tourism development resources. With the foundational factors available and the investment focused on some contents of the tourism industry in Tien Giang, such as the entire facilities, the reasonable and attractive tour arrangements, combining the exploitation of new tourism route and diversified tourism product, etc. the tourism industry of Tien Giang will achieve the goal. Tourism development must always attach importance to environmental factors, that development will be sustainable and highly appreciated.

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7. Conflict of interest

No conflict of interest is noted in the paper.

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