

Developing the model of experience tourism, eco-tourism and leisure tourism in the context of the COVID - 19 epidemics in Vietnam (Case study in Son Hao village, Quan Lan island commune, Van Don, Quang Ninh)

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Abstract

It seems that the Covid-19 pandemic will still be a dilemma, the development of the global economy in general, Vietnam's economy, in particular, continues to be seriously affected, including the tourism industry. In Vietnam, in the socio-economic development strategy, tourism has always been affirmed as a key industry, bringing great benefits to the

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country's GDP growth. With the characteristics of the industry, tourism is always understood to be associated with the organization process of tours, routes, destinations and service systems, activities that still require the exchange and direct contact of people with people and people with the ecological environment. As a result, the COVID-19 pandemic for more than a year has left the industry's operations paralyzed, with many businesses, travel companies going bankrupt, restaurants, hotels and accompanying tourism services also shut down. What is the solution for the development of the industry in the current challenging circumstances if the epidemic is still prolonged, even if the epidemic is still prolonged? Even what its recovery will be like when the epidemic is soon under control. With the above question, our article, from a case study in Son Hao village, Quan Lan Island, Van Don district, Quang Ninh province, wishes to come up with a model of developing experience tourism, eco-tourism combined with leisure tourism to be able to overcome the difficulties of the industry in the current context.

Keywords: travel experience; eco-tourism; leisure tourism; COVID-19 pandemic; Son Hao village, Quan Lan Island.

Problem statement

For many countries in the world in general, Vietnam in particular, it can be affirmed that tourism is always focused on development investment owing to its superiority over other industries and economic sectors. Vietnam is a country with rich and diverse resources to develop various types of tourism services. Over the years, the tourism industry has achieved some encouraging and proud achievements. However, in addition to what has been done, Vietnam's tourism industry still has many shortcomings, from brand promotion, building digital databases, communication methods to the process of organizing, managing and exploiting resources. In particular, the exploitation of tourism development resources in Vietnam in the past twenty years (from about 2000 to the present) has left a consequence that cannot overcome easily: it is the transformation of cultural values and social life, especially the overwhelming human impact on the ecological environment. The COVID-19 pandemic has become a global disaster when it has come to Vietnam. Therefore, above all, to prevent the epidemic and find ways to co-live (import and research vaccination production) has become the top concern of the Government from central to local levels. That is of course a right of a democratic society, where human health is a top priority. On the contrary, the COVID-19 pandemic is an unexpected occasion for us to look back on the downsides of social life development in general and the tourism industry in particular. This slowdown is understood as facing negativity honestly to reach out to the crucial things and re-establish a more suitable growth model. In other words, it is time to re-establish a sustainable, resource-based tourism development model, not the exploitation. This can be understood as the principle of the ball when the amount of steam being pumped in and discharged must ensure sufficient balance that makes it elastic to be used on the pitch.

The world and Vietnam specifically are planning and developing quite a lot of different types of tourism. However, understanding and applying the right model to a specific tourism location in terms of sustainable ecological development is not always appropriate and may not be achieved with the desired results in all places. That is why we wish to share our view on how to build and exploit natural and human resources to apply the model of developing experience tourism, eco-tourism combined with leisure traveling based on the case studies in Son Hao village, Quan Nhan island, Van Don island district, Quang Ninh province. This is a model that we expect to be able to put into operation in the direction of co-living with the Covid-19 epidemic if its situation remains complex.

Research and discussion

Some theoretical issues

Three theories need to be clarified in this article: experience tourism theory, eco-tourism theory and leisure tourism theory.

Definition of experience travel

Experience travel is a different form of travel than the traditional way. If traditional tourism is merely the process of moving guests to a new place with scenic spots, natural or humanity conditions that are suitable for the needs of visitors, to stay in motels or hotels; to eat, enjoy food at the restaurant ... with the quality required, experience tourism may still be such activities but will be added more activities prioritizing learning, discovering new things that guests have not previously had in their lives. Thus, experience tourism is the process of visitors arriving at a certain tourist destination and being immersed in the daily life of the locals. Guest can choose to accommodate at hotels or the locals' families (Homestay service) to have an experience of their daily routines.

The concept of ecotourism:

Ecotourism resort combines is a form of tourism that relies heavily on nature, natural conditions as well as the social environment of the destination. In Vietnam, 1999, within the framework of the national strategy workshop on eco-tourism development, it was defined: "Eco-tourism is a form of natural tourism with a high level of ecological and environmental education that has a positive impact on environmental and cultural protection while ensuring financial benefits to the local community and contributing to conservation efforts" (Luong, P.T 2015). In 2000, author Le Huy Ba also introduced the concept of eco-tourism "... is a type of tourism that takes specific, natural ecosystems as objects to serve tourists who love nature, travel, enjoy the landscape or study ecosystems. It is also a close and harmonious combination of tourism economic development with the introduction of the beautiful scenery of the country as well as education to propagate and protect, develop the environment and natural resources sustainably" (Ba, L.H & Binh, T.V & Long, V.D 2000). The 2005 Tourism Law gives a fairly brief definition of eco-tourism as follows: "Eco-tourism is a form of nature-based tourism, associated with local cultural identity with community participation for sustainable development". According to the regulations on management of eco-tourism activities in national parks and nature reserves, issued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in 2007, eco-tourism is understood as "... nature-based tourism, associated with local cultural identity with the participation of local communities for sustainable development" (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development 2007). According to The International Ecotourism society, ecotourism is a form that is responsible for natural areas that are places to preserve the environment and improve the welfare of local people ...

Therefore, a destination that can develop eco-tourism requires both natural and social conditions that are suitable for the beneficiary needs of guests. Although it is still widely understood as education of respectful manners, lifestyle and joint actions for the environment, eco-tourism will become very monotonous and it is unlikely to guarantee the return of visitors if the destination only has natural elements. Therefore, the humane and social resources at the destination also contribute to the exploitation and development of more effective eco-tourism.

Definition of leisure travel:

Resort travel; leisure travel is a type of tourism that combines visiting and relaxing. This type of tourism aims to help guests recover their health, regain a refreshing spirit after

tired working days, stresses that occur in daily life. Unlike some types of tourism such as visiting tourism, landscape, cultural – spiritual tourism, or eco-tourism ... leisure tourism is quite simple because the needs of guests are only a destination with a good climate and fresh air; harmonious environment and nature, with a sufficient system of hospitality services. The destination of resort tourism may not need to be far from where guests live, and in particular, if leisure tourism does well, random or periodic guest returns will be quite high. However, in Vietnam, the type of resort tourism was born later than the two types of tourism above and it is still in the development stage.

By clarifying the three types of tourism, experience tourism, eco-tourism and leisure tourism, it can be affirmed that, in terms of human-to-human contact (which is still considered as the main source of the COVID-19 epidemic), it is clear that its level has been limited to a minimum. Excluding eco-tourism, the remaining two types of experience tourism and leisure tourism are closely tied to the couple form of two people (lovers or spouses) or (more) the form of a 3 or 3+n pair in the organization of a family (or 2 to 3 families linked together). Moreover, there is one thing in common of the destination in all three types of tourism that needs to be mentioned here, which is the natural environment and natural conditions are very important. Especially, these are priority destinations when they are unspoiled, not yet put into mass exploitation. Therefore, these destinations will have a smaller concentration of visitors and the population there is also less than other destinations.

The current demand for enjoying experience tourism, eco-tourism and leisure tourism services

As the society and living conditions of people grow, the demand for tourism accordingly is also increasing. Vietnam is on the verge of urbanization at a high speed, causing the loss of many rural areas, many villages become urban... People's lifestyles change, the way of educating the younger generation, the habits of many parts of the population also change. People gradually move and stick with modern technology and equipment, making them no longer accustomed or seeking to traditional culture in general, denying connection with rural or mountainous areas in particular. By the Millennials and especially the 10x generation, even if they are born and raised in the countryside, their parents (who begin to have good fortune) will find ways to "protect" them so that they are the least exposed to the countryside. After a process of living and creating for the next generation, parents began to notice that their children became naïve when they walked out into the street, lazy and emotionless with their lives. That is when education especially in the city system is more interested in equipped basic knowledge in general or life skills in particular for students. In fact, adaptability, defense or more broadly, the survival skills for the young generation of Vietnam are much lower than those of their peers in many developed countries in the world ... It will be difficult for the child to imagine all the work that needs to be done to survive the day and it will be even harder to practice all those jobs for children if not pushing them into practice. This fact makes the need for experience travel in family-scale to grow.

Besides this fact, the current ecological environment problem in the world as well as in Vietnam is quite serious. The dark side of tourism development is the change of social life in a negative way and, more specifically, the destruction of the natural environment, or more generally the destruction of the natural ecosystem. Humans are seeking to intervene quite roughly in the operation of the natural world, of nature and its consequences will be extremely unpredictable. It's a fact that no matter how optimistic we are, it's imperative to confront it in a fair way. Therefore, in the recommendations of the world as well as the General Department of Tourism of Vietnam, the direction of tourism exploitation needs to create a balance of the

environment and be also as naturally based, harmonious as possible. That is the reason for the rapid increase in the number of visitors who want to enjoy eco-tourism services.

The faster society and life are, the more the material civilization of the world and of Vietnam develops at such a high level, leading to the greater the consequences of a class of people who are too dependent on machines and techniques. The pressures of lifestyle and urban life also cause many people to be stressed; air pollution in major cities also causes respiratory diseases to increase... The above causes lead to the need to rest to reduce life pressure, reduce the pressure of work on people much more. This is the reason for the increase in the demand for resort travel in Vietnam over the past decade than before.

Tourism development resources in Son Hao village, Quan Lan island

Son Hao is a village of Quan Lan island commune located on Quan Lan Island, an island completely non-adjacent to the mainland of Van Don island district, Quang Ninh province, Vietnam. Located in Bai Tu Long Bay, Quan Lan Island (also known as Canh Cuoc Island, Cao Lo Island) consists of quan Lan and Minh Chau communes. The two communes are about 10km apart, located on the same sandy island with relatively flat terrain, the length of the island is about 20 km narrow, the narrowest place at The Con Trui beach is only about 100m. The distance from quan Nhan commune center to Minh Chau commune is about 12 km.

For a long time, Quan Lang Island has been known for its attractive beaches such as Quan Lang Beach, Son Hao and Minh Chau. Because it is quite far from the mainland, the beaches here are still unspoiled, the sea is clear with the fine white sand stretched by the green darts with a cool and fresh atmosphere. Recently, the exploitation of tourism in Quan Nhan Island has been concentrated mainly in Minh Chau Beach. Minh Chau Beach is inherently attractive to visitors because the waves here are quite quiet and it has clear seawater. Therefore, in Minh Chau, all travel infrastructure, accommodation facilities, resort services, hotel restaurant systems have also been relatively developed although it has not yet responded to the best needs of tourists. Meanwhile, quan Lan's two beaches, Son Hao Beach (Ngoc Beach) and Quan Lan Beach, have an attraction in the other direction. The waves at Son Hao beach are impressively big; the coastal landscape is also eye-catching because of the poetic beauty with green spaces that are suitable for strolling and taking photos. Comparing the beauty of the beach and coordinating the scenery along the beach as well as along the route around the island, we found that the beach in Son Hao village (Ngoc Island) is more charming because of its pristineness and coastal scenery. In Son Hao village, because the population density is still very sparse, nature is more pristine.

Due to its location in Bai Tu Long Bay, Son Hao, as well as the common climate characteristics of Quan Lan, it has a distinctly differentiated climate: hot and humid summers, and cold dry winters. Annual village temperature from 15 °C to 25 °C; precipitation is about 2000mm/year. The tides on the island are around 3.5- 4m per day. Seawater salinity is between 31-34.5 thousand in the dry season and lower in summer. The most appropriate time to travel to Quan Nhan is between March and July every year.

Besides, because it is located in a closed, deep water, less deposited fishery, Van Don area has many seafood products that are abundant in species and quantities such as shrimp, squid, clams, abalone, lobster, sea cucumber. Quan Lan in particular and Van Don are also famous for their rich treasures. Therefore, the supply of seafood to serve tourists in the area of Quan Nhan island commune is completely adequate and the price is also relatively reasonable.

In general, the conditions and resources for tourism development, especially the three types of experience tourism, eco-tourism and leisure tourism can completely be exploited. The remaining problem in Son Hao is that some infrastructure for tourism exploitation as well as the way tourism works here in the immediate period when the COVID-19 epidemic is still causing many activities here to postpone. As well as that, even when the situation is well-controlled, what can be done to ensure the financial benefits for social development while maintaining the stability of natural habitats.

Applying the model of experience tourism, eco-tourism and leisure tourism in Son Hao village

In Son Hao, the application of tourism models will be carried out as follows:

Experience tourism: visitors will be arranged to stay with the locals on the island (homestay form), in which priority is given to households whose career is fishing on the island's coast. While staying with households, visitors' contact should be limited, it is best to proceed only to the scope of visitors (family groups or small groups) and with local family members. During the accommodation, under the management and guidance of the homestay owner, guests will be able to bathe at Ngoc Beach, go to buy some necessities for the meals. In particular, night fishing should be most well highlighted (usually from about 23:00 the night before to about 3 a.m. the next day).

Eco-tourism: guests will be arranged to stay with locals on the island (homestay or also at the motel/hotel depending on the needs). Owing to the natural conditions, nature, beaches, as well as the landscape around Son Hao village, is quite pristine, visitors can completely take advantage of the space here to conduct such activities as visiting, learning about the sea, tidal mechanisms and coastal marine creatures in the morning (shrimp, fish, crabs, crabs ...). Guests can also spend time cycling and walking around to immerse themselves in the natural space of the village.

Leisure tourism: guests will be arranged to stay in families on the island (homestay or also at the motel/hotel depending on the needs). During the stay, guests will mainly focus on many activities such as bathing, sunbathing, cycling or walking around the village. In addition, guests can also combine check-in of the beautiful landscape of Son Hao.

Some proposals to enhance the development of tourism models in Son Hao Village

Son Hao village is a sparsely populated village, compared to the Minh Chau, Son Hao still retains more pristine natural resources. This is an advantage to develop the types of tourism that we are referring to in this article. However, in recent years, most tour operators have not paid attention to Son Hao. Visitors who come to Quan Nhan Island will mostly be directed to Minh Chau. Son Hao therefore seems to be still being neglected in the process of exploiting and developing tourism.

Therefore, in order to develop the types of experience tourism, eco-tourism and leisure tourism, in our view, local authorities, as well as households in the village, need to have some of the following solutions:

- Firstly, local authorities need to have a solution to connect with tour operators or through other information channels, promoting and introducing resources as well as types of tourism that can be put into operation.
- Secondly, it is necessary to guide households in the village (especially households with fishing career) to find resources that are used for building accommodation facilities that

provide adequate services to welcome visitors who need to stay in households (homestay form).

- Thirdly, investing in inviting experts with knowledge of tourism and travel service management to Son Hao to be able to conduct a training (encapsulated in 1 day) on steps and methods of welcoming guests, serving guests during their stay. Only by improving the capacity of people in the process of tourism development will the households here have conditions to raise living standards, create jobs and the people themselves still retain their inherent marine profession. Bringing fishing into the service of tourism development is a completely feasible direction in the current context.

Conclusion

Son Hao is a village that is still slow to develop but therefore it is containing many resources that can be put three types of tourism into operation: experience tourism, eco-tourism and leisure tourism. Once these resources have not been exploited, it means that it is still being preserved in the best way. In order to raise awareness, knowledge and capacity to conduct tourism activities for the villagers, it is entirely feasible to mobilize the strength of the majority of local workers in the village into the tourism development process. The urgency now for Son Hao village is the creation of a service towards the tastes and perception of tourists. Households need to quickly prepare accommodations and steps from pick-up and greet, guest management, rescue operations, guidance to take care for tourists during their stay in the village in the highest quality. If the experience tourism activity here can retain visitors for a period of about 2 to 3 days, eco-tourism activities and especially leisure tourism can completely retain visitors even longer, especially households with children of school age (from 3 to 16 years old).

While the Covid-19 epidemic is still very complicated, even if it is relatively well controlled, the current implementation of travel activities should prioritize the coordination, organization and arrangement for guests in the form of small groups (less than 10 people) and close links with the local government to get tourists to the best. The process of picking up guests and serving tourists in the situation of the Covid-19 epidemic should prioritize the first-line prevention measures. Destinations with a sparse population, beaches as well as nature should be options of choice for visitors during the epidemic. By doing so, the tourism industry may still have a chance to maintain, at least, that it may not collapse once the Covid-19 epidemic continues.

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Some pictures of the ecological environment, the beach (Pearl beach) in Son Hao village were
taken by us in the last days of April 2021 and in Summer of 2022







