

Sustainable Tourism Development for the Southern Central Vietnam: The Necessity for the Region's Economic Development

MA. TRAN MAI UOC

Banking University, HCMC

& PHD. CUNG THI TUYET MAI

Vietnam National University, HCMC

With the favourable natural conditions and long-established historical traditions and unique culture the Southern Central Vietnam (SCV) has potential for sustainable tourism development. Tourism is considered as a synthetic economic value that yields high profits but also makes huge impacts upon social development such as creating jobs for locals, helping reduce poverty, building the image of the nation, contributing to socio-economic development and political security stability as well as environment protection. Therefore, the development of sustainable tourism is of great significance to the socio-economic development of the SCV, especially in the context of the global integration.

Keywords: SCV, sustainable tourism development, environment protection, socio-economic development.

1. Introduction

The SCV consists of eight provinces including Đà Nẵng, Quảng Nam, Quảng Ngãi, Bình Định, Phú Yên, Khánh Hòa, Ninh Thuận, Bình Thuận. With the area of 4.4 million ha and the population of 8.78 million, which makes up 10.21% of the total population of the country, the region has the favourable geological conditions for the socio-economic development. The region is neighbouring with the Northern Central region to the north and with the Highland and Cambodia to the west and north-west respectively. Its eastern side is the Southern China Sea and the southern border line is very close to Hochiminh

City and the SCV focal economic triangle. The region is also the gateway to the Highland and to the Trans-Asia Highway connecting to the international seaways. Danang International airport, one of the largest international airports in Vietnam, is located in the region alongside with several domestic airports like Phú Cát (Bình Định), Nha Trang, Cam Ranh (Khánh Hòa)... There are also thousands of kilometers of road and railway in this area. In terms of seaway, the SCV has many important sea ports like Đà Nẵng, Tiên Sa, Liên Chiểu (Đà Nẵng), Kỳ Hà (Quảng Nam)... working as the sea port complex that supports the development of the regional economy and acts

as the strategic seaways arterial connecting the region to the world. The region also hosts a number of Open Economic Zones namely Chu Lai (Quảng Nam), Dung Quất (Quảng Ngãi), Nhơn Hội (Bình Định) with quality infrastructure.

Apart from the strength in maritime economic activities¹, natural mineral deposits², workforce³, the SCV also has

¹The aqua-production of the SCV makes up nearly 20% of that of the country. The total area for aqua-culture is 60,000 ha scattered in all three types of water salt water, fresh water and brackish water.

²Rich in heavy metal deposits, white sand, marble, mineral water, gold, kaolin, titanium, and oil and gas offshore.

³The labour force structure of the SCV has been transforming to industrial. The

advantages and potential in tourism thanks to the beautiful beaches such as Quy Nhon, Ninh Chữ, Sa Huỳnh, and hot springs. There are also many rocky islands offshore and nice bays like Dung Quất, Đại Lãnh, Vãn Phong. This area holds many relics of ancient towns namely Trà Bàn and Cham towers. Đà Nẵng-Quảng Nam area is well connected with the Sa Huỳnh civilization whose architecture is still present in My Son, Tra Kieu. Beautiful sceneries like Bà Nà, Ngũ Hành Sơn (Five Element Mountain), Cù Lao Chàm (Cham Is), Hải Vân pass are famous attractions in this area.

SCV also possesses a lot of different types of traditional festivals, customs, beliefs, music, folk-dance, etc. which represent the uniqueness, richness and diversity of the folklore heritage of the region including nha guol, the invaluable culture heritage from Quảng Nam; the traditional craft villages in Phú Yên; Hạ ethnic group in Khanh Hoa; Brahmin in the Chăm Ahiêr community in Ninh Thuận. These cultural values

percentage of the labour force in agriculture, industry and construction, and service are 47%, 23% and 30% respectively while this percentage of the country are 52%, 19% and 29% respectively. The number of people with diploma certificate is 146,405 (2.28%), colleges is 95,971 (1.5%) and bachelor is 243,815 (3.8%). The rate between the labour force and the population in 2010 is 61%. It is predicted that this rate will increase to about 63% in 2015 but might decrease to 61.5% in 2020. The number of vocational students in the eight provinces of the SCV has notably been increased every year. The number of universities and colleges in the region is slightly higher than the national average ranking the third behind the Red River Delta and the Southern Region with 45 universities and colleges making up 11.7% nation wide.

are advantages for the region in socio-economic development and international integration.

The culture of the region is the mixture of the culture from the highland, the coastal areas and the minority groups creating the sub-regional culture that features the typical characteristics of the SCV. Located in the middle of the country this region is the cultural link between the North and the South. Vietnames, Chinese, Chăm, Khomer and ethnic communities who have been living here for years are the authors of the region's rich culture today.

2. Content

Culture tourism is the development trend in many countries in the context of economic, social and cultural integration nowadays. Culture plays an important and decisive role in tourism. However, it is not always easy to make culture a tourism product. Culture itself contains cultural history, revolutionary history, and the cultural achievements of the nation as well as the local communities while the cultural products are the cultural values designed and promoted for tourism.

Making full use of the tourism potential in each of the province in the Region is an important economic strategy that would bring in socio-economic benefits for themselves and, therefore, help building the platform for the region's sustainable development.

Da Nang, with its geological and heritage advantage, has a huge potential growth in tourism. Featured by a series of beautiful beaches like Nam Ô, Xuân Thiều, Thanh Bình, Tiên Sa, Sơn Trà,

Mỹ Khê, Bắc Mỹ An, Non Nước, along with Ngũ Hành Sơn (Five Element Mountain), Champa Sculpture Museum, Điện Hải Palace, K20 remnant, Iphanho cemetery, Long Thủ pagoda, Hải Châu temple, Bà Nà – Suối Mỏ resort, Sơn Trà peninsula Đà Nẵng has become a popular destination for both domestic and international tourists. With the comprehensive investment in infrastructure Đà Nẵng has been considered by many specialist as an example of green-clean-beautiful urban in Vietnam. This helps increase attraction to the beach city. Danang beaches have recently been awarded as one of the six most charming beaches in the world by Forbes, the leading American magazine. The achievement can be great motivation for Danang to continue its effective promotion and make its beautiful beaches the attraction to the domestic and international tourists which in turn helps develop the “non-smoke” industry in the political and economic centre of the SCV.

Quang Nam is also a province with lots of advantages for the development of sustainable tourism. This area has a long established cultural tradition and a glorious history in the wars against the invaders. The typical tourist destinations include Núi Thành historical site, Kỳ Anh tunnels, Hồ Chí Minh trail, Chu Lai base, military centres like Trà My, Hòn Tầu, Cù Lao Chàm (Hội An)... Especially, Quảng Nam has Hội An old town and Mỹ Sơn holy land the two sites inscribed by UNESCO in the list of World Heritage.

Known as the “the country of sugar cane and sugar”, Quảng

Ngãi is located in the Central Focal Economic Zone and along the East-West economic corridor. The sufficient road network, Bờ Y international borderline and a rich cultural tradition are the strong points for tourism development in Quảng Ngãi. With over hundred kilometers of coastal line, deep-water seaport of Dung Quất, Sa Kỳ port, and many well-known tourism facilities like Mỹ Khê (Sơn Tịnh), Sa Huỳnh (Đức Phổ), Vạn Tường Ecology park (Bình Sơn), Lý Sơn island (Lý Sơn district), Thiên Đường, VINA-UNIVERSAL studio (Đức Phổ) Quang Ngai is drawing the attention of the investors and tourists. Further up to the highland areas there are Đấng Thủy Trâm tourism complex (Ba Tơ - Đức Phổ), Cà Đam - Hồ Nước Trong ecology complex (Trà Bồng, Tây Trà), Thác Trắng (Minh Long), Cà Đú (Trà Bồng), Nghĩa Thuận (Tư Nghĩa) and Thạch Trụ (Mộ Đức) hot springs. There are also some historical and cultural heritage sites such as Sơn Mỹ, Ba Gia, Vạn Tường, Sa Huỳnh, Ốc Eo. Quảng Ngãi offers some of the renown scenery namely Thiên Ân - Sông Trà, Cổ Lũy Cô Thôn, Mơ stream. This is also the area with many villages producing handicraft like mat weaving, brass casting, forging and textile weaving of the H're, Kor, K'dong ethnic groups. There are annual festivals which represent the culture of the coastal areas like cau ngu festival, boat race, ...

Bình Định is a coastal province located next to Quảng Ngãi to the North, Gia Lai to the West, Phú Yên to the South and South China Sea to the East. There are so many well-known sceneries here such as

Ghềnh Ráng - Tiên Sa, Thị Nại lake, Phương Mai peninsula, Yến island, Quy Hoà beach in Quy Nhơn City, Hầm Hô in Tây Sơn district, Hòn Một mountain in An Nhơn, Bà mountain - Vọng Phu hill, Hội Vân mineral water, Đạm Thủy lake, Đe Gi sea entrance in Phù Cát district, Trà ô lake, Hang pagoda in Phù Mỹ district. Every single place is different and connects to some legend.

There are eight groups with total number of fourteen old towers eg. Đồi, Bánh Ít, Dương Long, Phú Lộc, Cánh Tiên, Bình Lâm of which Đồi tower is regarded as the most beautiful tower in Champa arts. Apart from Champa architecture, there are also many pagodas reflect the strong presence of Budism in Vietnam like Nhạn Sơn, Thập Tháp, Linh Phong. Another complex of tourist sites are the ones relating to Tay Son dynasty under the king Quang Trung Nguyễn Huệ with Hoàng Đế city, Tây Sơn temple, General Bùi Thị Xuân temple, Quy Nhơn palace, Đá Đen hill, Trường Tàu harbour, Nhạn beach - Tam Tòa mountain. Remains of the national heros like Mai Xuân Thưởng, Tăng Bạt Hổ, Đào Duy Từ, Đào Tấn are kept here. Bình Định is also the origin of many folklore dances as well as Bình Định - Tây Sơn martial arts and many popular festivals from highland to coastal areas, typically Tay Son festival.

Phu Yen has strength in culture thanks to the large number of ethnic residence. However, diverse terrain including mountain, highland, delta, rivers, lakes, bays, and islands makes it an ideal tourist destination. The typical places are: Gành Đá Đĩa, Ô Loan lake, Đá

Bia mountain, Xuân Đài bay, Môn beach – Điện point with the light house, the national heritage like Rô inlets, Nhạn mountain – Đà river. There are a number of nice beaches along 190km coastal line like Bãi Tiên, Bãi Môn, Bãi Xếp, Bãi Nôm, Bãi Bàng, Bãi Từ Nham, Long Thủy. Ecology tourism is suitable to be developed in the province owing to a few parks eg, Krông Trai forest with rich floral and fauna, North Că Pass forest with 706m high Đá Bia mountain, the lake at Hinh river hydro power plant and its surroundings. Hot water springs Phú Sen in Phú Hòa district, Triêm Đức, Trà Ô in Đồng Xuân district are the bonuses suitable for the medical therapies for locals as well as domestic and international tourists. The invisible culture values contributed by both coastal and highland communities like festivals, carnivals are additions to the potential for sustainable development of tourism in Phu Yen.

Khanh Hoa, a coastal province of South Central, the Spratlys are located in the easternmost point of Vietnam, where to get early morning sun country, the north border of Phu Yen province, west of Dak Lak and Lam Copper, on the south by the province. Khanh Hoa province is one of the beautiful coastline of Vietnam. The coastline stretching from the end of Dai Consul Cam Ranh Bay, about 385 km in length by the water's edge with many bays, lagoons, bays, with about 200 islands, small islands and coastal populations of corals Spratly Islands, are blessed with the beautiful bays such as Nha Trang, Cam Ranh, Vạn Phong with many beautiful beaches, charming



scenery. The climate in origin Agarwood is also quite mild, sunny almost all year, the rainy season only lasts about 2 months ... The natural conditions of such nature, Khanh Hoa can develop diverse forms of tourism : resort tourism, hunting tourism, tourist diving, mountain climbing tourism, study tour gallery, tourism conference - workshops, travel pool - sailing, marine tourism is the island.

With the advantage of the system of islands, mountains, bays and beaches make Khanh Hoa has a diverse tourist population, uninterrupted. Many large projects on eco-tourism. leisure, entertainment and recreation for national, international investment in large-scale construction has been put into operation such as Pearl Vietnamese resort 5 star, 5 star hotel Sunrise; outside the zone high-end resort and golf-Bai Tien Rusalka, Song Lo Tourism, Ecotourism Park

Hideaway at Mandara Evaron put into operation soon ... So far there are many projects on the resort beaches -Cam Ranh and Van Van Phong-Ninh. Nha Trang - Khanh Hoa, has long been known as the coastal city with many historical monuments, beautiful scenic places such as Temple Ponagar, Long Son Pagoda, Bao Dai floor, Hon Chong, Hon Yen, Hon Tam , Tri Nguyen Aquarium ... In particular, the Hon Mun marine protected areas with coral reefs and diverse ocean ecosystems and abundant marine reserves is the first and only of Vietnam today. Most recently, in 2003, the club of the world's most beautiful bay of Nha Trang Bay was admitted as the 29th member of this organization, we can say this is no small advantage compared to Khanh Hoa general and Nha Trang in particular "smoking" the local and foreign visitors, and motivate an important prerequisite for

sustainable tourism development in the context of integration.

Resides in the South Central Coast, Ninh Thuan has great potential and advantages of cooperation and tourism development. The province has the terrain harmony plains, mountains and sea, with beautiful landscapes as beaches Ninh Chu and Ca Na, mountain pass spectacular, Vinh Hy Bay ... next are the Cham towers and numerous other historical and cultural wealth of precious objects such as Poklong Garai tower, tower Porome, the Hoa Lai tower ...105km coastline with gentle, clean, with many deep sea, many mountain crashed into the sea creates the bays, beautiful dunes, Ninh Thuan is suitable in the construction of eco-tourism landscape .Besides, Ninh Thuan province bearing the colors of the Cham culture. Cham culture is expressed through writing, ethnic



clothing, architecture, sculpture, painting, the village handicrafts, folklore festivals, monuments and famous Cham Towers all of the Cham cultural heritage. With these conditions and potential, Ninh Thuan province is one of the South Central region has great potential, there are certain advantages for sustainable tourism development.

Binh Thuan mentioned, it is easy to think of the country of the “blue sea, white sand, sun,” with its “paradise resort” stretches alongside the beautiful beach. Binh Thuan is known for its scenic mountains and water beings, and a healthy environment has brought modern wild looks like Mui Ne, Ca Na, Cu Lao Nau, Hon Ba, Doi Duong and Thap Cham Poshanu, Co Thach Pagoda, Chua Ong, Lau Ong Hoang, grave poet Nguyen Thong, Khe Ga Lighthouse, White Lake Also, this place is also famous for Phan Thiet fish sauce, the seafood, Vinh Hao mineral water ... In Binh Thuan province has a system of temples and pagodas, ancient temples, caves, such as Chua Hang, Ta Cu

Pagoda built in 1879, Co Thach Pagoda built in the first half of the nineteenth century, the temple he built in 1770, Thien Hau temple built in 1728, Duc Nghia village, Duc Thang village ... But perhaps more unique is the Cham towers in Binh Thuan Poshanu, a population pyramid is magnificent architecture and unique. The tower was built in the late eighth century to the early ninth century, the population consists of a main tower and two towers side were made to Lord Shiva and Poshanu. Approximately 15m high tower, the base nearly 10 meters long, has a large main door, the inside is more elaborately carved image with lines fantasy style Cham art. Besides, this region also associated with festivals such as the summit meeting me, the festival of the Cham Mbangkate by Brahmanism, Cau Yen festival, Ba Trao rowing, boat racing out of the Cham lively, cheerful, beautiful. We can say that, with the advantage of geographical location, natural conditions as well as natural landscapes ... Binh Thuan has many advantages for developing the

tourism industry with cutting-edge forms of tourism such as tourist resorts, tourism eco-tourism tour, research, tourism fishing, scuba diving, sports marine, hunting, tourism culture festival.

So, the natural conditions, culture, history and potential, the South Central region is considered a potential to develop sustainable tourism, and with time travel in the provinces in This area also has development efforts, achieving a certain number of achievements, contributing to the process of economic restructuring, efforts to reduce poverty for people, security and defense and contribute to the diversification of the tourism product, raise the tourism industry based on efficient exploitation and sustainable advantages of location, resources of the provinces in the region. But in fact the tourism potential of the South Central provinces have not been fully utilized, wasting The weak points of tourism in the SCV can be summarised as: lack of regional alignment – monotonous – spontaneous. Investment has been

put in the tourism facilities already available in the poor manner. The needs and wishes of the tourist have not been addressed. These shortcomings are common in thinking, perception and execution of the tourism practitioners at present and they are contradictory to the principles of the “sustainable development” – the main and necessary goal in the development a modern tourism.

The theory of sustainable development was first born in the 80's and officially discussed at a conference organised by the World's Committee for Environment and Development (WCED), known all over the world as Brundtland in 1987. At the conferences of the global environment RIO-92 and RIO-92+5, the concept of sustainable development was supplemented by the scientists, accordingly “sustainable development is formed in the integration, alternation and compromise between the three related systems which are ecology system, economic system and socio-culture system”. Under this concept, sustainable development is understood as the result of the relation and dependence between the three systems. In another word, sustainable development is the reconciliation and compromise of the relation of the above mentioned systems.

The majority of the experts in tourism believe that sustainable development in tourism can be identified as: “making use of natural environment and cultural values to satisfy the demand of the tourist taking into account of long-term economic benefits while maintaining the environment protection and helping increase

the living standard for locals”. Therefore, sustainable development in tourism is part of sustainable development.

Tourism is considered as a synthetic economic value that yields high economic profits but also makes huge impacts to the social development such as creating jobs for locals, helping reduce poverty, building the image of the nation, contributing to socio-economic development and political security stability as well as environmental protection. Therefore, the sustainable development in tourism is of great significance to the socio-economic development of the SCV, especially in the context of the global integration. A number of solutions are to be suggested for sustainable development for tourism in the SCV:

First, there should be the close coordination between all the provinces in the region so that the experience, information and action plans can be exchanged. The tours should be diversified and unique. Promotion and marketing should be organised in the neighbouring and other countries. Besides, safety for tourism could be achieved via the cooperation of all the provincial governments in the SCV that would help creating the image of a safe and friendly region. Furthermore, typical characteristics about people, history and culture of each province should be promoted within the region, country wide and overseas. Types of tourism products should be diversified making use of the local resources which could be ecology tours, daily trip on the rivers or to the orchards. Over 300 year

old civilization reflects strongly in the culture and history of the region. This should be utilised in designing new products. Tours that are lack of study or copied would not impress the tourists so they should be avoided. In any case, tours have to be competitive. If all of these requirements are addressed properly tourism in the region not only meets the demands of the market but also helps create jobs for local communities and preserve the traditional craft villages.

Second, staff training and service quality should be paid attention to. As we all know, people is the most important element in the production force. In tourism, people influence the effectiveness of the industry and quality of the service provided to the tourists. Therefore, there need to have a plan for staff recruitment and training proving the right skill required in different activities.

Third, more effort should be put in attracting more investment. In order to help tourism become a real “non-smoke industry” investment to the infrastructure should be increased especially to road, waterways to provide easy access to the sites and the better connection between the sites. That way, tourism in the SCV can be a complete and united system. Besides, there is also a need to upgrade the existing facilities and develop new ones such as guest house, hotel, resort and restaurant, etc. Especially, training courses for staff at managing level should be organised so they have better understanding about the environment, resources, method to assess the possible impact on the natural environment made by