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## Opportunities and challenges of tourism employees in impacts of climate change - solutions for the South tourism industry

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### ABSTRACT

Climate change and greenhouse gas emissions are significantly affecting all aspects of production, consumption, and human life on a global scale. As a result, the labor market is also being greatly impacted, presenting both opportunities and challenges for workers in general and the tourism industry specifically. Through document analysis, this article highlighted the challenges and opportunities facing the labor market in Vietnam's tourism industry, and suggested actions that workers and policymakers can take to adapt to this trend. Based on our research and discussions, we also offered solutions for the workforce to promote sustainable tourism development in the Southern region.

### TÓM TẮT

Biến đổi khí hậu và phát thải nhà kính đang tác động mạnh đến toàn cầu trên tất cả các lĩnh vực sản xuất, tiêu dùng và đời sống con người. Do đó, nó đã và đang tác động mạnh đến thị trường lao động, đặt ra các cơ hội cũng như thách thức cho lực lượng lao động nói chung và lao động trong ngành du lịch nói riêng. Bằng phương pháp phân tích tài liệu, tham luận này chỉ ra các thách thức và cơ hội cho thị trường lao động trong ngành du lịch Việt Nam từ đó cũng cho thấy người lao động và các nhà hoạch định chính sách cần làm gì để chủ động đón nhận xu hướng này. Từ kết quả nghiên cứu và thảo luận, tham luận của chúng tôi cũng đề xuất các giải pháp cho lực lượng lao động trong định hướng phát triển du lịch bền vững vùng Nam Bộ.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In the face of fluctuations in the global climate, the ILO and IDB (2020) believe that in order to build a better future, countries need to implement a comprehensive green recovery, especially in the post-COVID-19 context. 19-19, if we don't act now, workers and businesses will face even more hardship in the face of the climate crisis. No economy can fail to act on the effects of climate change as it will likely affect the global population even if the population is uneven and no economy will grow without it affected [1].

In addition, researcher Wel TUC (2021) also believes that the labor market will have the following important changes: (1) The Net Zero goal driven by digital transformation will create many new highly effective jobs in many different sectors of the economy, but focusing on automation and digitization (data analysis, information technology, digital transformation, software, artificial intelligence); (2) in organic agriculture; in the work related to adaptation measures to protect and restore ecosystems and biodiversity; building infrastructure and green (public) buildings to adapt to climate impacts...; In addition to the impacts of climate change, the health crisis after the COVID-19 pandemic also further affirms that human resources are an indispensable component in any business unit. To develop sustainable tourism, businesses need to identify human resources as the core factor, in deciding the success of the business. Newly qualified human resources can help an organization stand out in today's fiercely competitive travel market. However, besides climate change, in recent years the tourism industry has been heavily affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has paralyzed global

tourism in general and Vietnam's tourism in particular. According to the report of the World Tourism Organization (UN WTO), in 2020, World tourism experienced the biggest crisis in history due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of international tourists decreased by 73.9% compared to 2019 and it is forecasted that it will take 2 - 4 years to recover return. Over the past 60 years, Vietnam's tourism industry has experienced many crises due to epidemics, natural disasters, and economic recession, but has never suffered such heavy damage as the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The main impact of climate and epidemics causes human resources in the tourism industry to lose their jobs or switch to other occupations to match the actual situation. Thus, before the current impacts of climate, epidemics, the tourism industry needs to quickly recover and one of the immediate difficulties is the shortage of human resources, especially highly qualified human resources.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODS**

To conduct this study, we first selected a qualitative research method based on secondary data on environmental issues, epidemics, and legal documents on State policies to clarify the problem posed. In addition, we used the expert method to conduct interviews with experts of the Department of Tourism, senior managers in the field of human resources in the tourism sector and business organizations that employ workers in tourism to determine the current status of human resources in this field. At the same time, to get objective opinions, we use the survey method to conduct a survey of employees working at businesses in the field of tourism, hotels/resorts in the southern region. From the survey results, we use statistical,

analytical and synthesis methods to show the general situation of human resources of the tourism industry today.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1 Opportunities and challenges of climate change for the workforce at large**

Climate change along with the impact of the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic both challenges and creates many opportunities for workers:

First of all, climate change requires countries to move to net zero emissions. This is believed to be able to overcome both economic and social disadvantages caused by facilitating new job creation, thereby addressing inequality and promoting inclusive growth. The international commitments under the Sustainable Green Economy Goals help provide the framework for building a future of better, fairer work and a healthy living and working environment. When countries have adequate measures designed to secure jobs, ensuring that those who lose their jobs as a result of the transition are protected and supported, these plans both help stave off the climate emergency and boost growth, tackle inequality and move towards sustainable development [7].

The green economy also reduces social costs by reducing costs in a number of priority areas for development such as a number of key technology sectors (renewable energy or electric vehicles cost less than industries that use electricity, fossil fuel-based technology); renewable power sources are often cheaper than fossil fuel energy and this is a good condition for electrification in rural, remote and isolated areas, better serving the poor and disadvantaged groups; More efficient public transport through the use of renewable energy can help improve

productivity, reduce noise and accidents, and reduce the impact of air pollution on public health [7].

The Government and the Climate Change Commission also recognize that there is a greener and fairer future when the process takes care of workers' futures and livelihoods. The transition to low carbon is based on social dialogue between workers and unions, between employers and governments. Workers' opportunities are also expanded by increasing training to ensure employment for all workers affected by global warming or policy changes.

In addition to the above opportunities, the workforce faces the following challenges:

Countries, especially developing countries, face a shortage of specialists for new industries and new technologies. In addition, the education system currently does not provide enough university graduates to meet the green (low or no carbon) economy, especially those trained in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) [4]. The lack of both technical and core skills that drive worker migration from shrinking to expanding industries remains a cause of problems for employers. This can also be a risk for Vietnam in general and Vietnam's tourism industry in particular - a developing country and the education system is not really advanced, especially vocational education. Today's workforce transformation is fast or slow not only due to climate impacts but also due to digital transformation requirements and the direct impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Government organizations and businesses face many challenges due to the impact of climate, epidemics on all industries, fields, and budgets for their activities, so labor is a difficult

problem for them. This is the common opinion of many reports from many different organizations. Shifts in sectors that are vulnerable to certain sectors that are already vulnerable to the effects of climate change or the COVID-19 pandemic must now meet green economic goals that can increase wealth yes or no, issues of protection against shocks for workers facing climate change and job transition. The ILO (2018) warns that a number of diseases can reduce the workforce, especially extreme heat that will cause 2% of working hours globally to be lost by 2030 [6]. The ILO (2020) study on Latin America and the Caribbean has shown that more than 80% of new jobs created by the decarbonization program will be in male-dominated sectors. Going green can also pose gender equality challenges in the employment sector. According to ILO and IDB (2020), more than 80% of new jobs created by Net Zero target will be in male-dominated sectors, women will not benefit from new job creation unless addressing gender inequality in the profession [1].

### **3.2 The current situation of human resources in Vietnam's tourism industry**

#### *3.2.1 Shortage of manpower*

In 2019, the whole country had over 2.5 million employees, of which 750,000 were direct workers, 45% were trained in tourism, 35% were trained in other specialties and 20% were untrained. In 2020, businesses in turn have to cut staff from 70% to 80%. By 2021, the number of employees still working full-time will account for only 25% compared to 2020, employees who quit their jobs and terminate labor contracts will account for about 30%, temporary workers about 35%, and current employees' job about 10%. The Covid-19

pandemic has had a strong impact on 2.5 million workers in the tourism industry with 800,000 direct workers, of which the subjects who have lost their jobs, the heaviest are tour guides, staff, etc. working at tourist accommodation establishments, tourists, attractions, tour operators, transportation, cruise ships, other tourism businesses [3].

The impact of natural disasters and especially the impact of the Covid-19 epidemic forced tourism businesses to cut staff, or the workforce had to switch to other industries and occupations to make a living after tourism. There is a shortage of human resources to resume operations due to the stable job change workers, and there is no need to return to the tourism industry. On the other hand, experts in human resource management at enterprises assessed that human resources are still afraid and cautious about risks after the COVID-19 epidemic or other climate developments such as floods and droughts ...

Although the tourism industry has reopened to welcome visitors, the recovery rate of tourism human resources has not kept pace with the recovery of the industry. The rapidly increasing number of visitors poses a challenge to the tourism industry because of a shortage of human resources. Especially when reopening, businesses seriously lack resources for maintenance, technical operation housekeeping staff, tour guides, etc. According to the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, up to December by 2022, more than 90% of tourist accommodation establishments have been operating normally with more than 34,000 establishments and 70,000 rooms, but the number of employees in tourist accommodation establishments employs more than 30,000

people, including many people have not been properly trained [5].

With the characteristics of the service tourism industry, tourist accommodation establishments attract workers from simple to qualified, whose quality depends on their capacity, attitude, and ability to quickly adapt to the industry's particular profession. In particular, after the COVID-19 epidemic, new requirements for products and services were put in place, especially safety and hygiene factors, healthy products, service personalization, etc. This human resource is a headache for businesses and is a disadvantage for the industry, especially in the field of accommodation and hotel operations, which requires highly specialized and diverse departments. Currently, recruiting human resources working in the tourism industry faces many difficulties, especially those with professional qualifications, foreign languages, and executive management skills, especially senior managers... Therefore, even seasonal workers are in serious shortage.

### *3.2.2 Human resources are not qualified to apply digital technology*

Faced with the impacts of climate change, epidemics, and the development of science and technology in the 4.0 era, tourism human resources also need to approach technology and apply it to many different technology platforms to meet the needs of tourism and meet your work needs. Digital technology helps tourism businesses reduce costs related to human resources, information, and transactions, and standardize working processes, thereby helping businesses improve operational quality and service quality, as well as service quality, such as tourism business performance.

According to the assessment report of the General Department of Tourism, by the end of 2019, 100% of travel businesses and most accommodation businesses have applied the Internet in advertising and business activities; has its own website to promote services and parallel e-commerce for tour booking, booking, online payment. The Department of Tourism in each locality has a website introducing tourist information. However, the results of digital technology applications in tourism are not high, especially for small and medium enterprises. According to the current survey, each large-scale enterprise on average has only 1-2 employees specializing in digital marketing (Digital Marketing) who have university degrees but come from other fields and learn more online marketing tools, few highly qualified personnel; or employees working in sales or sales are also in charge of digital marketing (Digital marketing) or e-commerce (E-commerce) [2].

### *3.2.3 The reality of training human resources for tourism*

According to a report by the Department of Training, General Administration of Tourism, the country currently has nearly 200 tourism training institutions, of which 62 universities have tourism departments, 80 colleges (8 colleges and universities ... vocational colleges), 117 intermediate schools (12 vocational intermediate schools), 2 training companies and 23 centers participating in tourism professional training [9]. With the number of establishments as above, each year the company can only provide about 2,000 workers with university degrees, and 3,000 workers with college degrees, the rest are intermediate vocational schools. This figure

shows that the tourism human resource train every year has not yet met the market demand. In addition, staff with foreign languages, computer skills as well as soft skills, and personal development skills are considered the key to integration, but this is the weakness of young tourism human resources in Vietnam [8].

To train and evaluate human resources in the field of tourism, Vietnam is currently applying the Vietnam Tourism Occupational Standards (VTOS) 2013 version, including 10 occupations divided into 5 levels with 241 capacity units; The ASEAN Common Standards on Tourism Professions (ACCSTP) issued in December 2015 has 6 occupations divided into 3 groups with 242 capacity units; The national occupational standard set has 8 occupations in the tourism group issued by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism in 2017. Thus, the training of tourism human resources has met certain requirements in terms of knowledge, knowledge and skills according to international standards but still not meeting the needs of current industry development.

About the teaching staff of tourism training: In terms of professional qualifications, most of the lecturers have moved from other fields to teach, leading to a lack of deep and comprehensive understanding of theory and the field of tourism, such as tourism such as travel experience, and practical experience. The training programs of some schools are not suitable and do not have a foundation, so they are too inclined to equip vocational skills without focusing on cultivating background knowledge. In contrast, many schools are still heavy on theory, spreading many general subjects, the foundation of the industry has not really been applied in practice, and the time for

professional practice is still limited. Many graduates still do not have a clear career orientation, have not identified their strengths and personal capabilities to match the actual requirements of positions in the industry, and do not understand the process of professional qualifications and expertise in the actual working environment [9].

### **3.3 Forecast of human resources in Vietnam's tourism industry towards sustainable tourism development**

According to the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, the orientation and goal of developing Vietnam's tourism in the next 10 years will be challenging, especially in terms of human resources. Specifically, by 2025, the whole country needs 950,000 to 1,050,000 accommodation rooms, and by 2030, it needs 1,300,000 to 1,450,000 rooms, creating about 5.5 - 6 million jobs, of which about 2 million are needed. Direct jobs, average growth of 12% - 14%/year; strive to welcome at least 35 million international visitors and 120 million domestic tourists, maintain the average growth rate of international visitors from 12% - 14%/year and domestic visitors from 6% - 7%/year. By 2030, about 8.5 million jobs are needed, of which about 3 million are direct jobs, with an average growth rate of 8% - 9%/year; strive to welcome at least 50 million international visitors and 160 million domestic visitors; maintaining an average growth rate of international visitors from 8% - 10%/year and domestic visitors from 5% - 6%/year [9].

Thus, in the face of complicated developments of climate change, epidemics and forecasts of the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, the current status of labor resources and labor supply for tourism is

facing many challenges. To meet the goal of sustainable tourism, the tourism industry in general and tourism in the South, in particular, must have specific and timely solutions to restore and develop human resources to contribute to the development industry in line with trends and respond to the impacts of climate and epidemics.

### **3.4 Human resource solutions for sustainable tourism development in the South region**

Therefore, from the general situation of human resources in tourism development, we propose some solutions to meet human resources for the goal of sustainable tourism development in the South as follows:

On the side of departments: In order to maintain the development of human resources, the southern tourism departments and sectors need to have good remuneration policies to attract experts and workers in the previously transformed tourism field to return to work or recruit new workers.

On the side of tourism businesses: it is necessary to actively connect and coordinate with tourism training institutions such as universities, colleges, and tourism vocational training centers in the southern provinces according to the model of “business incubation industry” to order regular training of qualified human resources or temporary recruitment of student workers for seasonal business.

*Regarding the shortage of laborers capable of applying digital technology:*

Enterprises need to be proactive and strengthen training in new professional knowledge and skills such as knowledge of digital technology and digital transformation in the context of international economic integration. On the other hand, improve soft skills in serving and better customer care.

Tourism training institutions strengthen training cooperation agreements with businesses to ensure job opportunities for students as well as technical support from software companies to improve teaching equipment research in the direction of applying science and technology in teaching such as hotel/resort management software: PMS, CRM, SMILE, ezCloud...; Professional travel management software: TravelMaster, Vtranet, Tour Plus, Savier, QTravel...

*For tourism human resource training institutions:*

Priority should be given to the development and application of specific mechanisms at educational institutions specializing in tourism in the spirit of Official Letter No. 4929/BGD DDT-GD University of the Ministry of Education and Training. Training institutions and related parties review, adjust, and update training programs in line with the actual needs of the labor market, and tourism development trends and meet recruitment requirements of enterprises karma.

Tourism training institutions need to organize more scientific seminars, seminars or exchanges, and dialogue with businesses tourism research experts, and local state management agencies in charge of tourism to absorb ideas and share practical experiences comprehensively and effectively for teaching at the school. Besides the permanent teaching staff, the school needs to coordinate with the teaching force who are business leaders to participate in teaching at the school.

Review and re-plan the team in the direction of training in the right industry, in the right profession, with a strong team of lecturers specializing in tourism. Constantly improving

professional qualifications, and developing the depth of the teaching staff through new training and fostering.

*About solutions to develop tourism products:*

Before the impact of climate change, tourism in the South faced many challenges, the choice of destinations, products, and services as well as the values that tourists expect to receive has a great change in the industry tourism tourist attractions in the Southern region. Therefore, capturing the travel needs of customers requires businesses to innovate in product development. Tourism products are not only sightseeing, exploring, and experiencing but also aiming to improve health such as green tourism, and medical tourism; Services related to therapy, beauty care, and sports activities such as meditation, and yoga at the resorts to reduce life pressure and regenerate energy.

Especially, for the southwestern provinces, it is necessary to encourage businesses to innovate and diversify products and forms of tourism. Supporting businesses to start up tourism businesses, especially in remote and remote areas. Enhancing the role of the community, creating favorable conditions for people to directly participate in business and

benefit from tourism, adopting policies to develop community-based tourism, and promoting the role of professional social organizations related to tourism.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The South in general and the Southwest in particular are the areas most heavily affected by climate change, which is the drought in recent years that has greatly affected the development of river tourism. Climate change and the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 epidemic have posed many challenges for the southern tourism industry in the direction of sustainable tourism development, especially the shortage of human resources both quantity and quality. The restoration and development of human resources for tourism development in the South is one of the urgent issues and challenges facing tourism businesses, especially small and medium enterprises. To do this not only requires relevant departments and agencies, having a good enlightenment mechanism but also needs the cooperation of relevant parties to realize the strategic goal of tourism development in the South, making tourism become a key economic sector, towards sustainable development in regional economic development.

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