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Tourism development in Champasak Province (Lao People's Democratic Republic) and prospects for association with Vietnam's Provinces

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ABSTRACT

Champasak is a southern province of Laos, bordering Thailand and Cambodia with an area of 15,415 km² and a population of nearly 622,400 people. Champasak province has rich tourism resources, including the oldest temple complex in Laos, which was recognized by UNESCO as a World Cultural Heritage in 2001. This is a condition for Champasak to develop diverse types of tourism, following the strategy of developing tourism to become a key economic sector. This study analyzes the tourism potential of Champasak province and the prospect of linking tourism development with localities in Vietnam, including the Mekong Delta region.

TÓM TẮT

Champasak là một tỉnh phía Nam của Lào, giáp Thái Lan và Campuchia với diện tích 15.415 km² và dân số gần 622.400 người. Tỉnh Champasak có tài nguyên du lịch phong phú, trong đó có quần thể chùa cổ nhất ở Lào được UNESCO công nhận là Di sản văn hóa thế giới vào năm 2001. Đây là điều kiện để Champasak phát triển đa dạng các loại hình du lịch theo chiến lược phát triển du lịch trở thành ngành kinh tế mũi nhọn. Nghiên cứu này phân tích các tiềm năng du lịch của tỉnh Champasak và triển vọng liên kết phát triển du lịch với các địa phương ở Việt Nam, trong đó có vùng Đồng bằng sông Cửu Long.

1. INTRODUCTION

In modern society, tourism has become an indispensable need in social and cultural life. Tourism is considered one of the most important economic sectors because of the great socio-economic benefits it brings. Many countries, including Laos, have considered tourism development an important strategy to develop the country and integrate into the world economy. As an important economic sector of Champasak province, tourism has developed strongly and achieved many great achievements in many aspects: the hotel and restaurant system has gradually increased in scale, transporting tourists. Rapidly increasing in quantity, innovating in quality, tourism infrastructure has developed strongly, especially transportation, post and telecommunications, electricity and water. Thanks to that, the number of domestic and international tourists in Champasak province increased significantly in both quantity and proportion. Every year, the province's tourism industry has made an important contribution to economic growth, creating jobs and improving people's lives.

Besides the results achieved, the development of Champasak tourism in recent times has not been commensurate with the province's great potential. Up to now, many potentials have not been well exploited to develop this important economic sector. Therefore, the proportion of tourism revenue compared to other economic sectors in Champasak province is still low. Tourism has not become a key economic sector as the Provincial Party Congress has repeatedly set out [1].

So that Champasak province's tourism contributes more to the socio-economic cause,

becoming a key economic sector. The 6th Congress of the Champasak Provincial Party Committee clearly pointed out "Continue to modernize facilities, diversify types, improve the quality of tourism products, strive to increase tourism revenue." Annual tourism increases by 16 - 18%, making tourism a key economic sector of the province. In current conditions, with the trend of international economic integration, economic and cultural exchanges have increased sharply, and the demand for tourism has increased rapidly. Therefore, the urgent problem raises the need to strongly develop tourism to become a key economic sector in Champasak province, it is necessary to find appropriate measures, mobilize capital, train and retrain the tourism workforce, expand new attractive tourist areas, spots, and routes, renovate and upgrade accommodation facilities and food services, entertainment areas, develop modern tourism infrastructure. Therefore, finding solutions to develop tourism is a pressing issue, and at the same time an issue of fundamental long-term significance to the economy of Champasak province [2].

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used to write this topic is qualitative, based on secondary data such as: Documents of the Champasak Provincial Party Congress, Champasak Provincial Planning and Investment Committee (2023), Development Strategy Champasak Tourism Development in 2011 - 2020, 2020 - 2025 and the Department of Statistics of Champasak province provided, interviewed the Board of Directors in the tourism industry of Champasak province, and discussed a group of tourism management experts in the province Champasak. The results collected above

are analyzed to serve the research topic.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Assess the potential for tourism development in Champasak province

3.1.1 Advantage natural conditions

Champasak is the cradle of rice and freshwater fish, with an area of 1,135,000 hectares favorable for tourism development. The area is generally relatively flat, with mountain ranges jutting out into the river, creating pools and favorable conditions. Favorable conditions for the development of waterway transportation and fisheries. The area along the Me Kong River is home to many tiger parrot beaches and large mudflats that are favorable for aquaculture development, creating a source of specialty food for residents and tourists. When talking about Champasak, it is impossible not to mention the beauty of its rivers and lakes. The Me Kong River seems to run across the city, on both sides of the river there are many relics that tourists can visit if traveling by river. Champasak has 4,000 islands and lagoons, typically Khon Waterfall (Khon PhaPheng) with many legends, many historical and cultural relics, and many famous temples and pagodas associated with the period of building and defending the country ethnic groups such as: Vat Phu Temple (World Culture Hotel). Vat Phu Temple is associated with sacred legends, is a center that has become familiar to people since ancient times, and has the potential to become a major tourist service center in Southeast Asia.

3.1.2 Infrastructure advantages for tourism development

Along with paying attention to investing in facilities for the tourism industry, building a number of tourist areas, attractions, and accommodation establishments, investment and

socio-economic development of the province, especially in Infrastructure and urban beautification, including infrastructure, serving people's livelihood and tourism, have created conditions to promote the continuous development of Champasak tourism. There are many projects of foreign investors in the process of building a tourist area ("Jewel of the MeKong river") of Champasak province by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Funding, project to build Khon Pha Pheng entertainment area (KhonePhapheng Paradise Casino Resort),...

3.1.3 Advantage humanistic tourism resources

Champasak province is a province rich in humanistic identity, with many historical and cultural relics of typical value. Champasak is also a gateway to economic and cultural exchanges between central and southern Laos. In terms of tourism, Champasak is very convenient. Champasak is both a tourist destination attracting tourists from neighboring regions such as Thailand and Cambodia, as well as a market bringing tourists to relic sites in the Northern and Northern provinces central region. Areas affecting tourism resources (natural and humanistic) include three surrounding areas that impact Champasak tourism:

Firstly, Champasak province is located between two areas with economic growth, abundant labor resources, and conditions to attract large tourists. Besides, the strength of Champasak province is that it is a province with a large natural area and a very favorable geographical location: there are many rivers, deltas, and convenient transportation; National Highway No. 13 runs from North to South, in addition there is an international airport (international border gate) and waterway.

Secondly, Champasak is located in the southern key area, a dynamic development area. This location has a great influence in the process of redistributing production and division of labor.

3.1.4 Many cultural and historical relics

Currently in Champasak there are 244 relics ranked by the state, including 139 landscapes, 43 historical relics and 62 cultural relics, of which only 58 relics have been exploited as tourist destinations. Area accounts for about 24%, the remaining 76% is natural tourism resources that have only just been listed and have not been exploited yet due to the lack of infrastructure as well as technical infrastructure, the number of tourist attractions. The above area is distributed into 4 areas.

3.2 Positive impacts of tourism on socio-economic growth in Champasak Province

3.2.1 The number of tourists coming to Champasak Province increased

According to statistical data from 2016 to 2018, the number of visitors to Champasak has continuously increased. In 2016, the number of tourists was 535,413 people, domestic tourists were 276,885 visitors accounting for 51.71% and international tourists were 258,528 visitors accounting for 48.29%. By 2018, the number of tourists was 587,258 people. Domestic tourism is 296,452 visitors, accounting for 50.48% and international tourists are 290,806 visitors, accounting for 49.52%. In the period 2019 - 2021, the Covid-19 epidemic has had a huge impact on industries. The economy in general, and the tourism industry in particular, have no tourists, only a few foreign investors and experts. At the end of 2020, there were 17,332 tourists coming to Champasak, including domestic tourists. 17,807 people, international tourists are 245 people

(investors and experts), for 2021 there are 24,683 tourists, domestic tourists are 24,083 people and international tourists are 245 people making 14.18% of planning; The 2022 period continues to implement the Cambodia - Laos - Vietnam (CLV) tourism development plan, attracting 191,908 tourists, including 78,204 domestic tourists and 77,359 international tourists. Implemented 96% of the plan. In 2023, it will attract 264,604 tourists, including 20,849 domestic tourists and 184,285 international tourists, an increase of 16% compared to the plan.

3.2.2 Contributing to the economic growth of Champasak Province

On the basis of cooperation, support and mutual help, Champasak province continues to maintain political stability, security and order, social safety, economic, cultural and social infrastructure, defense and security work has been steadily improved, the material and spiritual quality of life of the tribes has gradually improved towards sustainable development, with economic growth in the period 2016 - 2020 averaging 7.18%. For 2021, due to the Covid-19 epidemic in 2019 - 2021, the province's economic growth will average 3.58%/year, GDP per capita will reach 3,050 USD. Of which the agricultural sector accounts for 32.22%; The industrial sector accounts for 20.92%; The service sector accounts for 46.86%. In the period 2022 - 2023, continue to strive to implement the economic plan of average growth of 5.95%, average GDP per capita reaching 3,134 USD/person/year. Of which the agricultural sector accounts for 32.81%; The industrial sector accounts for 24.08%; The service sector accounts for 43.12% [1],[2].

Thus, in recent years, the Champasak tourism

industry has made important contributions to the overall development of the Champasak economy in the context of the domestic economy still facing many difficulties. However, in terms of the contribution structure of the tourism industry in the province's GDP structure, it is not high and not commensurate with the tourism potential and strengths of Champasak. Therefore, in the coming time, Champasak province needs to continue to improve the investment environment to increase the attractiveness of attracting investment in developing the tourism industry to become an important economic sector of the province.

3.2.3 Promote the development of other economic sectors

In the unity of the national economy, the development of one economic sector is a factor that pushes other economic sectors to develop. The development of Champasak tourism has created favorable conditions for the development of a number of other industries such as handicrafts, transportation, post and telecommunications, construction, and aviation. develop. Tourists come to Champasak from many different regions and countries. During their trip, they can buy different types of transportation services, and they can use many different types of telecommunications services to contact people friends and relatives; At the same time, after each trip, they often want to bring back to the place where they live typical items of the place they visited as souvenirs or gifts for their relatives. That is why the development of the industry is important. Tourism will be a factor promoting the development of many other economic sectors. In fact, in Champasak in recent years, thanks to the development of the tourism industry, the post and

telecommunications industry, handicrafts,... have made significant progress. However, on the contrary, the coordination and interaction of economic sectors in the province as well as effective international cooperation in the field of tourism create the Champasak tourism industry to reach the market. domestically and internationally in the development process.

3.2.4 Contribute to promoting the development of culture and society

When tourism develops, the material life of local people is improved, so they have conditions to improve their education, improve their qualifications, and improve their cultural and spiritual life. On the other hand, in places where tourism is developed, the flow of tourists comes from many different regions and countries, so local people have favorable conditions for cultural exchange. And it is the interference between these cultural streams that has contributed to making local social life develop to become more civilized and modern. For example, thanks to the development of the tourism industry, in recent years people's lives have been clearly improved both economically, culturally and socially.

In general, over the past many years, the Champasak tourism industry has achieved important achievements. The number of visitors to Champasak is increasing, tourism revenue and payment to the Provincial budget is increasing. The developed tourism industry has attracted many social workers and contributed to the development of economic sectors. Tourism development planning has made clear progress, focusing on focused, in-depth investment. The organizational system has been gradually improved, the staff has grown in quantity and is gradually improving in quality.

Achieving the above achievements is thanks to the Party's correct innovation policy on developing the service economy in general and tourism in particular; The close direction of the provincial government and the efforts of the Department of Tourism of Champasak province.

3.3 Objectives and orientation for developing Champasak tourism to become a key economic sector

3.3.1 General objective

Shown in the development orientation of the Champasak City Party Committee. The Resolution of the 9th Congress of the Champasak Provincial Party Committee determined:

The general goal in the coming years of Champasak tourism is: Improve the quality of tourism products and synchronously develop tourism services to become an important sector in the province's economic structure. Diversify types, develop cultural - ecological tourism, traditional tourism, festivals, sports... Combine well between cultural tourism and embellishment of monuments and landscapes, between tourism development and promoting historical and cultural traditions of the South - the Mekong Delta. Promote tourism development, selectively focus on a number of key tourist spots, zones and routes, rich in national identity, highly competitive, improve the quality of human resources and build facilities technology in a modern direction, based on promoting internal strength and taking advantage of external resources to overcome difficulties and challenges, take advantage of opportunities and comparative advantages. Total tourism revenue increases by an average of 11%/year and together with other industries, the GDP of Champasak will

increase by 2.2 - 2.4 times compared to 2021 by 2025, bringing Champasak tourism from now on. By 2030, "becoming an important economic sector of the province".

In the period 2020 - 2025, the main task of this period is to prepare the necessary prerequisites: "...turning Champasak tourism into an important economic sector in the province's economic structure".

- From 2026 - 2030, we will enter a phase of promoting and progressing to basically complete the transformation of Champasak tourism into a key economic sector.

- The specific goals of developing Champasak tourism to become a key economic sector are as follows:

- Building technical infrastructure and technical facilities for the tourism industry and developing Champasak tourism, aiming to celebrate 10 years of tourism - Champasak.

- Striving from 2025 to 2030 to welcome 2.5 - 3 million international tourists and 1 million domestic tourists. To meet the needs of tourists, it is necessary to add 4,000 to 10,000 hotel rooms.

- Strive to achieve a growth rate of 11 - 13%/year.

- Bringing the contribution of tourism to the city's budget to 10%.

- Create more jobs for society, strive to have 5,000 more jobs by 2026 - 2030.

- Continuously expand scale, improve quality, efficiency and synchronously develop all types of tourism, especially focusing on developing international conference and seminar tourism [1].

3.3.2 Orientation

To develop Champasak tourism into a key economic sector, it is necessary to agree on the following directions:

Firstly, turning tourism into a key economic sector towards sustainable development. Growth theory and practice show that in the economy in general and each economic sector in particular, including the tourism industry, high economic growth is not always consistent with sustainable economic development. In the world, there are countries with high and rapid economic growth but are out of balance with other fields and economic sectors. The economy is growing but socio-politics is unstable, the ecological environment is out of balance, especially in tourism activities. To develop sustainable Champasak tourism, it is necessary to thoroughly grasp the following requirements:

- In development, it must achieve high growth rates compared to industries in the service sector.
- Combine exploitation and use with renovation, upgrading and development of tourism resources.
- Must simultaneously aim to achieve economic, social, political, environmental, defense and security goals. In the early years, it is necessary to attach importance to economic goals, but economic goals are ultimately aimed at realizing political, social, and ecological environmental goals.

Second, it is necessary to associate the development of the tourism industry with the overall development of other industries, especially those directly related to tourism activities. The tourism industry is an integrated economic sector composed of a series of related industries. Therefore, the scale and quality of Champasak tourism services depend on almost all economic sectors in the province's national economy. This perspective is related to determining investment policy mechanisms and

assigning, delegating responsibilities, and implementing capital investment policy mechanisms between sectors. It is necessary to consider that investment in construction capital for industries also means investment in tourism in the sense of indirect investment. To improve the effectiveness of investment in tourism through investment in industries, this perspective requires the tourism industry to coordinate well with industries right from the planning, strategy, and planning stages. Invest capital in the construction and use of works related to tourism activities. In particular, focus on coordination and cooperation with industries directly related to tourism activities such as culture, industry, agriculture, infrastructure associated with tourist destinations and tourist areas existing or about to be built.

Third, developing the Champasak tourism industry must be based on a multi-sector economy, in which the state economy plays the leading role and state-owned tourism enterprises play the core role. This viewpoint stems from the need to consistently and long-term implement the Party and State's multi-sector economy policy, and from the need to establish and develop a socialist-oriented market economy. and originates from the need to promote internal resources while exploiting external resources to develop the economy and tourism industry in our country in general and Champasak in particular. Champasak has many potentials and advantages compared to other provinces and cities in the country, allowing Champasak to be able to exploit hidden internal resources, whose reality depends on a correct, open, strong and timely mechanism and policy decisions. This is also true for attracting foreign investment resources for provincial tourism. The process of exploiting and promoting the strength

of economic sectors, without discrimination, but in order to maintain the socialist orientation in the province's tourism economic development, must not stray away from the leading role of the state economy and the core role of state tourism enterprises. By doing so, it contributes to solving the inadequacy of capital from the State budget, creating favorable conditions for making Champasak tourism a key economic sector.

Fourth, attach the roadmap to turn Champasak tourism into a spearhead economic sector with the application of scientific-technical and modern technological achievements and transform the province's economic structure towards industrialization, and modernization. One of the criteria for the tourism industry to become a key economic sector is when it is based on modern physical, technical and technological foundations. However, the tourism economic sector cannot create its own technical facilities if the cause of industrialization and modernization in Lao PDR, including Champasak, cannot develop. If modern science and technology are not applied and the economic structure is not shifted in time and in the right direction in each period. This viewpoint, in essence, is the relationship between technology and economic structure and more broadly, the relationship between productive forces and production relations that in the roadmap to bring Champa tourism Sac becomes a key economic sector that must ensure interconnected development.

Fifth, associate tourism development with the province's position and role in localities nationwide, regionally and internationally. This viewpoint originates from the role and position of Champasak as a province of the southern region, the center of politics, economics, culture and

domestic and international exchange. With that role and position, this viewpoint requires that each step of tourism development and each step in the roadmap to make Champasak tourism become a key economic sector, both in terms of awareness and action must not be separated from the relationship between the two countries. this relationship. From there, giving Champasak tourism a new vision and finding a large tourist space if it knows how to exploit it for development.

Sixth, combine the evaluation of the operational efficiency of the Champasak tourism economic sector with the socio-economic efficiency on the level of the economy. As a highly integrated economic sector, the development of Champasak tourism is influenced by the development of other sectors in the economy. Therefore, evaluating the socio-economic effectiveness of Champasak tourism is not only based on the effectiveness of the tourism industry itself, but also on the national economic level of the province. The above viewpoints exist as an organic system with each other, valuable for perception and action. It requires that in the process of turning Champasak tourism into a key economic sector, we must attach great importance to synchronization [1].

3.4 Orientation implementation solutions

From the above perspectives, to turn Champasak tourism into a key economic sector, it is necessary to focus on the following groups of solutions.

3.4.1 Correct awareness of the position and role of Champasak tourism as a key economic sector

Tourism often generates income for local communities through the provision of services such as accommodation, cuisine, and

entertainment activities. It can help improve income for local people, especially in rural areas.

Tourism often stimulates local economic development by creating jobs, encouraging investment, and promoting local economic sectors such as agriculture, crafts, and trade. Tourism can play an important role in preserving and promoting local cultural and historical values. Visitors learning about local history, traditions and culture can promote pride and preservation of these values.

To meet the needs of tourists, localities often have to improve infrastructure and provide public services such as transportation, security, healthcare, and education. Tourism can create opportunities to expand international relations, both in the economic and cultural fields, through exchanges between tourists and local communities.

3.4.2 Improve the quality of tourism services

Improving the quality of tourism services is understood as all the activities to maintain and bring service quality to a higher level than before, to satisfy the expectations of tourists and society and bring efficiency to customers enterprise. Improving the quality of tourism services is a continuous and multidimensional process, requiring attention to many different aspects of the tourism industry. Here are some ways to improve the quality of tourism services:

Train employees on communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. Provide extensive knowledge of tourist destinations, local culture, and customer needs. Develop unique and creative tourism programs. Create activities and experiences that help visitors understand and enjoy local culture. Make sure that infrastructure, such as transportation, motels, restaurants, is

sufficiently comfortable and modern. Improve and maintain security and safety for visitors. Collect feedback from visitors and use it to improve services. Create effective communication channels so visitors can share opinions and suggestions. Create customer care programs to maintain relationships and create positive impressions. Provide flexible and fast customer service. Promote sustainable tourism activities and environmental protection. Emphasis is placed on educating visitors about their responsibilities towards the local environment. Use technology to improve reservation management, travel information, and the overall travel experience. Leverage mobile apps and websites to provide quick information and services. Engage with local communities to ensure tourism benefits both communities and visitors. Encourage visitors to participate in community activities. Carry out periodic quality control to ensure that travel services meet criteria and standards. Develop and maintain a strong brand, aligned with local values and vision.

The above measures may depend on specific local characteristics and require cooperation between relevant parties, including local authorities, tourism businesses and local communities.

3.4.3 Improve the level of human resources working in tourism in Champasak

Improving the qualifications and capacity of human resources working in tourism is vital to developing tourism in Champasak Province into a key economic sector. It is necessary to have a comprehensive training program, with specific plans for new training and retraining, improving knowledge and professional qualifications of staff currently working in the industry in the following

areas: public, joint venture and private sectors. The main directions of the above program include:

- Investigate and classify the professional qualifications of all employees and workers working in the tourism industry of the entire province.

- Conduct retraining programs (refresher training, in-service training) for workers in the tourism industry in Champasak, at different levels.

- There is a plan to send qualified and capable young officials to developed countries for undergraduate and postgraduate training.

- Strengthen cooperation and exchange of professional experience through work, surveys and participation in conferences and seminars in countries with developed tourism industries.

3.4.4 Innovate management organization and improve capacity of tourism business establishments in the province

To improve tourism work and productivity, tourism training schools need to:

Firstly, increase direct dialogue between businesses and training institutions, through regular discussions, exchanges and exchanges between business managers and training and teaching managers. and specialized students.

Second, strengthen coordination in directing and guiding graduate internships. This is an indispensable relationship because this is an important time for students to apply theory to practice. This is the time to prepare practical knowledge for students when they go to work.

3.5 Solutions to develop tourism in Champasak with other provinces of Vietnam

Vietnam and Laos are two countries

geographically located close to each other, with a common culture and history, which creates favorable conditions for tourism development between these two countries. Below are some opinions and recommendations on developing Vietnam – Laos tourism as follows:

Strengthen cooperation between tourism agencies of both countries to create joint policies and promotions. Develop and promote joint promotional and promotional events to increase image and awareness about tourist destinations. Develop multinational tour packages, helping tourists experience both countries in one trip. Strengthen transportation between the two countries to facilitate the travel of tourists [3],[4]. Invest in the development of national tourist areas, including improving tourism infrastructure and services. Stimulate diversity of tourism experiences by enhancing cultural, historical and environmental activities. Promote sustainable tourism and environmental protection. Tourism activities need to be managed responsibly to minimize negative impacts on the natural environment. Encourage tourism businesses to participate in environmental and social protection activities in local communities. Improve the quality of tourism services by training and developing human resources in the tourism sector. Create joint learning and training programs to improve the knowledge and skills of people working in the tourism industry. Ensure security and safety for tourists by strengthening cooperation between police and security forces of the two countries. Information and security support need to be shared to help tourists feel secure when traveling, go over the border to [4]. Leverage the Internet and online technologies to promote tourism, including general travel

websites and social media campaigns. Use online platforms to provide information and support to travelers both before and after their trip. By implementing these measures, Vietnam and Laos can develop joint tourism in a sustainable way that brings long-term benefits to both countries.

4. CONCLUSION

Along with the tourism development orientation of Champasak Province. With the potential advantages and experience of Vietnam's southern provinces, Lao-Vietnamese tourism companies can continue to learn, exchange, promote and promote tourism development links between these two countries. local information, destination information, tourism products and services and tourism resources that each side has advantages in, to open up tours to promote tourism development between Champasak Province and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam people of Laos and provinces of Vietnam.

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