



Green transition in tourism for sustainable development

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Tourism has emerged as a vital sector in Vietnam's economy, projected to contribute over 6.4 percent to the GDP by 2024, thanks greatly to Vietnam's natural beauty and cultural heritage that attract millions of visitors annually. As we confront challenges like biodiversity loss and climate change, a shift towards sustainability is imperative. Green transition in tourism not only benefits the environment and supports biodiversity conservation but also uplifts communities that are reliant on tourism and fosters economic growth.

Green transition in tourism for Vietnam should embrace the following endeavors of i) green planning; ii) effective destination management; iii) plastic-free and low-carbon tourism; and iv) sustainable nature-based tourism.

GREEN PLANNING

As we kickstart our journey towards a greener future, it's crucial to begin our conversation with "green" planning. In other words, national planning needs to lead the way towards green tourism

development, in particular, in low-impact tourism infrastructure development that ensures efficient solid waste and wastewater management, among others. This is especially important in places like marine protected areas and national parks, where sensitivity to environmental impact is paramount.

EFFECTIVE AND INCLUSIVE DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

In Viet Nam, there's a significant opportunity for enhancing tourism destination management. In our view, destination management is a process that should be led by the local authorities, in very close collaboration with the private sector and communities, with their voice and views heard and reflected in tourism management measures.

By implementing effective destination management practices, we can introduce



▲ *Green transition in tourism*



important regulations like bans on plastics and address other tourism-related issues in a comprehensive and inclusive manner, ultimately improving the overall tourist experience. Moreover, this approach allows us to identify and leverage the unique natural and cultural assets of each locality, fostering the development of distinctive tourism offerings.

PLASTIC-FREE AND LOW-CARBON TOURISM

In our commitment to a greener future, we need to embark on a journey towards a plastic-free environment and low carbon tourism. Various regions in Vietnam are already “greening” tourism. For instance, Hoi An and Co To islands are actively reducing single-use plastics, showcasing a commitment to environmental stewardship.

Through initiatives like “Reducing plastic waste in tourism in Viet Nam” project that is implemented by the Viet Nam Tourism Association (VITA) and UNDP, we have undertaken the important task of disincentivizing and monitoring plastic waste produced from tourism.

The project focuses on empowering tourism enterprises to go plastic-free, with the development of clear criteria for recognition of such entities, the introduction of a mobile app for waste management and monitoring, and the implementation of a robust action plan to curtail plastic waste in the sector.

In addition, green transport holds great potential for advancing green tourism. Encouraging green transport in tourism will provide an additional flexible and eco-friendly means of transportation for tourists visiting the destinations. This initiative will contribute to improving the local air quality and aligning the tourism sector with the government’s commitment to achieving net zero emissions.

SUSTAINABLE NATURE-BASED TOURISM

Viet Nam embraces an extensive cluster of terrestrial and marine protected areas which are key resources for the development of nature-based tourism where indigenous cultures, biodiversity conservation, and rural economic growth meet.

However, implementing NBT in a sustainable manner will require meticulous planning and thoughtful consideration. This involves assessing the potential impacts on the fragile ecosystems within these protected areas, ensuring that any tourism activities align with conservation goals, and actively involving local communities in decision-making processes to promote both environmental preservation and socio-economic development.

Through the “Promoting wildlife conservation and responsible nature-based tourism in Viet Nam” project, UNDP and Vietnamese partners (MONRE, MOCST, Quang Binh and Ninh Thuan provinces) are actively working to bring this vision to life. Our efforts have focused on leveraging private investment via public-private partnerships, evaluating tourism sites’ readiness to welcome visitors, fostering community involvement, establishing fair benefit-sharing arrangements, and promoting a shift in societal attitudes towards sustainable nature-based tourism.

UNDP stands ready to support the Ministry of Culture, Sports & Tourism, Vietnam Tourism Association, and other stakeholders in transforming Vietnam into a competitive and responsible tourism destination. A green transition in tourism not only poses as one of the major driving forces for economic growth but also safeguards Viet Nam’s precious natural resources for generations to come ■

The global ocean - Earth’s seas, including the Arctic, Atlantic, Indian, Pacific, and southern oceans - provide more than half of the oxygen we breathe, and providing food and livelihoods for billions of people worldwide. It is also home to many magical wildlife species, from tiny plankton to the largest creature that has ever existed - the blue whale. The extraordinary diversity of ocean life and the services they provide to humans are of great value.

THE IMPORTANCE AND CURRENT STATUS OF THE OCEANS

The ocean accounts for more than 70% of the Earth’s surface, playing an important role in the socio-economic development of humanity. It is estimated that the goods and services the ocean provides – from fishing to tourism and coastal protection – are worth at least \$2.5 trillion each year; two-thirds of global marine product depends on a healthy ocean; 30% of human CO₂ emissions are absorbed by the ocean; 500 million people depend on coastal resources for food; 90% of the world’s seafood comes from small-scale fisheries.

Yet the ocean has undergone significant changes over the past century. The world has lost half of its coral reefs and mangrove forests. And humans have pushed many important fish stocks to the point of decline, threatening people’s livelihoods and food security, while harming other species