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INFLUENCED FACTORS FOR ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT AT PHONG DIEN DISTRICT, CAN THO CITY, VIETNAM

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Abstract. The aim of this study is to analyze factors which are influencing the development of ecotourism at Phong Dien district, Can Tho city, Vietnam, by Explorer Factor Analysis method. The questionnaires were distributed to a total of 168 local ecotourism business owners, domestic tourists, and foreign visitors at eco-destinations in statistical analyses. The research revealed that there were seven factors that influenced ecotourism development at Phong Dien district namely: staff factors with six variables (tour guide/staff take care of guests carefully, tour guide/staff were equipped with foreign languages and communication skills, tour guide/staff noticed guests concerns, tour guide/staff understood guests needs, tour guide/staff were equipped with professional knowledge, the behavior of tour guide/staff at souvenirs shops was polite and honest); tangible factors with four variable (stayed destination systems, mean of transportation in the orchard such as carriages, bicycles, boats, diversity souvenir products; and costume guides/staff); assurance elements with three variables (ensure food safety, appropriate prices, and security conditions); trust factors included three variables (clear information on the destinations, having books, leaflets of the destinations, and advertising services); local specialty factors with two ingredients (natural beautiful sights, traditional dishes); facility and infrastructure factors consisted of two items (convenience of transport system, modern communications system); provided factors with two variables (willingness of the guide/staff to serve visitors, cooperation of eco-destinations in order to avoid overlapping in tourism products). Thanks to the finding of study, the result will benefit local authorities, management, tourist agencies, ecotourism business owners and local people with real data analysis. This paper also proposes some solutions to increase quality of ecotourism and encourage more and more tourists to Phong Dien district, Can Tho city, Vietnam.

INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism is one of crucial sectors for sustainable tourism development for local communities and it is estimated that ecotourism generated 12 billion in total of 55 billion from foreign tourism in developing countries (Lindberg, 1991). Ecotourism is not only a kind of tourism that does not compromise natural resources, but also conserves wild animals and plants. Ecotourists take the trip with the purpose of studying or exploring nature (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996; Joshi, 2011). Ecological tourism is focused in developed countries such as Europe, USA, Canada and Australia. Among the developing countries, ecotourism was conducted in Nepal, Kenya, some areas in China, Thailand, Malaysia and Central America. As for Vietnam, the ecotourism is at start-up stage in terms of organization, management and resource utilization. One of the potential areas with the ability to develop ecotourism in Vietnam is Mekong Delta area because this land is a meeting place full of natural conditions, cultural and social advantages to attract tourists. Can Tho city is one of the natural provinces in favor of diverse resources and various orchards among 13

provinces in the Mekong Delta area. Phong Dien is a notable district where the largest orchards in Can Tho city are located.

There were a variety of perspectives of factors affecting ecotourism that were indicated in previous studies. Pizman and Millman (1993) stated that sympathy is one of the important factors for ecotourism development in which staff take care of guests carefully, understand guests' demands, and have willingness to serve. Moreover, it is worth noting that food services, transportation, advertising, public relations and social media marketing are main factors of ecotourism (Perreault & McCarthy, 2002; Mill & Morrison, 2002). It is found out that advertisement of nature attraction, identification, infrastructure and financial supports are elements of tourism development (Jewell et al., 2004). As regards to Dieke (2005), some factors such as visitor demands, marketing, and financial support influenced ecotourism development. According to Islam (2015), there is a wide range of factors which are affecting tourism in Bangladesh where infrastructure development, endangered na-

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ture, visitors' trespass, waste disposal, visitors behavior, water transportation so on should be paid more attention (Luangsa-Art, 2016).

Phong Dien district is located at strategic position where the vast rivers and gardens are converged. It takes about 14 km from Can Tho city where tourists can easily access both road way and water way. Besides, Phong Dien has a convenient location which is the middle of Cai Rang and Phong Dien floating market. It is also proposed in master plans of Can Tho

government as eco - districts, development and the green lung of the city until 2020. It means that they focus on developing orchards specialties combined with tourism services as well as maintaining eco-environment for sustainable tourism. In the development strategy from now to 2015, Phong Dien develops the agricultural sectors that determine diverse kinds of specialty fruits, particularly focusing on Ha Chau shrubbery linked to eco-tourism development.

TABLE 1
The number of tourists visited Can Tho city and Phong Dien district from 2009-2013

Year	Can Tho		Phong Dien		%	
	International	Domestic	International	Domestic	International	Domestic
2009	150.300	573.228	20.165	30.835	13,42	53,18
2010	163.835	716.417	21.700	328.300	13,25	45,83
2011	170.325	802.125	27.594	410.406	16,20	51,16
2012	190.116	984.707	29.299	428.501	15,41	43,52
2013	211.357	1.040.268	31.901	458.889	15,09	44,11

Source: Department of Culture, Sport, Tourism in Can Tho City and Commerce, Tourism Promotion center of Phong Dien district, year 2013

According to the above table, domestic and international arrivals to Phong Dien district accounted for a high proportion from 2009 to 2013. Especially domestic tourists occupied 50 percent of the total number of visitors to Can Tho City in the period 2009-2011, in excess of 50% of the total tourists to Can Tho. This proved that Phong Dien tourism industry plays an important position in Can Tho city. This study analyzes factors which are affecting the development of ecotourism in Phong Dien. This research also provides practical evidences for local authorities, state authorities of tourism, and travel agency to improve the high quality factors of ecotourism development in Phong Dien district, as well as for attracting tourists and increasing return of travelers. This paper's outcome reached three objectives: (i) to clarify attractive elements and real situation of ecotourism at Phong Dien; (ii) to determine factors affecting ecotourism development at Phong Dien district; (iii) to suggest recommendations in order to improve tourism quality and attract more travelers visiting Phong Dien district.

METHODOLOGY

First-hand data were collected by surveyed questionnaires from managers, tour operators, eco-destination owners, and domestic and foreign tourists who were interviewed from August, 2014 to October, 2014. To be representative and inclusive of the research results, the research team conducted interviews with local tourists living in the Mekong Delta, outside the Mekong Delta region and international visitors. In fact, the authors collected 168 samples. However, there were only 160 qualified questionnaires after scanning. Besides, the team also interviewed 10 managers who controlled ecotourism destinations at Phong Dien district. This research used non-probability sampling method, namely convenience sampling. The research used SPSS software (Statistic Package Social Science version 20) to analyze data by Frequency, Percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation, Bivariate Correlate Analysis, Scale Reliability Analysis and Exploratory Factor Analysis.

TABLE 2
Sample size

Classification	Quantity	Percentage (%)
Tourists lived in the Mekong Delta	94	55.29
Guests from outside the Mekong Delta	53	31.18
International tourists	13	7.65
The owners of ecotourism destinations	10	5.88
Total	170	100.00

Source: Result from surveyed questionnaires

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sample Size

TABLE 3

Tourist characteristics

Criteria	Detail	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	77	48,1
	Male	83	51,9
	Total	160	100
Area	At Mekong Delta	94	58,8
	Outside Mekong Delta	53	33,1
	International	13	8,1
	Total	160	100
Year old	Under 35	120	75
	From 36-55	31	19,4
	Under 55	9	5,6
	Total	160	100
Marriage status	Single	81	50,6
	Married	77	48,1
	Others	2	1,2
	Total	160	100
Education background	Under High School	27	16,9
	Intermediate / College	36	22,5
	University	82	51,2
	Post graduate	8	5,0
	Others	6	3,8
	Total	160	100
Career	Students	9	5,6
	State officers	42	26,2
	Workers or employees	55	34,4
	Business men	20	12,5
	Khác	34	21,2
	Total	160	100
Income (VND)	< 5 million VND	50	31,2
	From 5-10 million	47	29,4
	>10 million	14	8,8
	Total	160	100

Source: Result from surveyed questionnaires

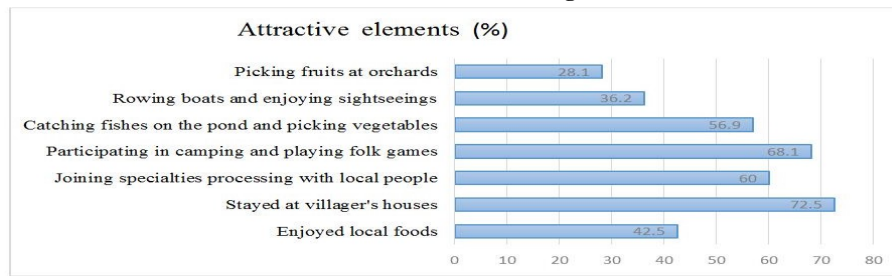
Attractive Factors of Ecotourism at Phong Dien District

There are seven elements of attractive factors to attract visitors to ecotourism at Phong Dien district namely: enjoying local foods, staying at villager's houses, joining specialties processing with local people, participating in camping and playing folk games, catching fish on the pond and picking vegetables, rowing boats and enjoying sightseeing, picking fruits at orchards whereas participating in camping and playing folk games and catching fish on the pond rank first. However, picking fruits at orchards is less attractive for tourists.

Practical Situations of Ecotourism at Phong Dien District

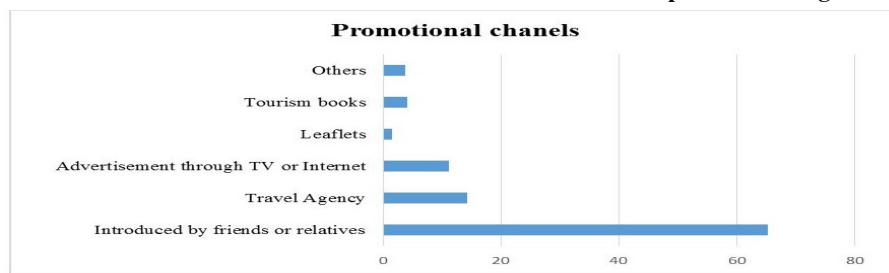
There are many kinds of promotional channels which provide ecotourism information for guests traveling to Phong Dien district. Based on statistic's outcome, introduced by friends and relatives is an extremely important information channel which constitutes 65.3%. However, advertisement through TV and Internet and travel agency have equal contribution of 11% and 14% respectively whereas Tourism Books and leaflets are not cited high in percentage. Word of mouth plays a role in promoting ecotourism at Phong Dien district. Therefore, ecotourism sites should provide good quality of services to ensure tourists' satisfaction.

FIGURE 1
Attractive Factors of Ecotourism at Phong Dien District (%)



Source: Result from analyzed data of surveyed questionnaire

FIGURE 2
The Channels of Promotional Information for Ecotourism Development at Phong Dien (%)



As regards to table 4, visiting, entertaining or relaxing are main purposes of trip for tourists which are cited at 81.1%. In addition,

motorbikes, self-organized tour and friends' company are main choices of respondents.

TABLE 4
Trip characteristics

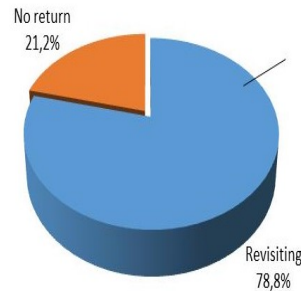
Criteria	Detail	Frequency	Percentage (%)
The purpose of trip	Visiting, entertaining or relaxing	146	81.1
	Researching or studying	2	1.1
	Related job	21	11.7
	Visiting relatives	9	5.0
	Others	2	1.1
Means of Transportation	Motorbikes	67	34.2
	Cars	92	46.9
	Bicycles	5	2.6
	Boats	24	12.2
	Others	8	4.1
Organizational form	Self- organized	131	79.9
	Tour programs	21	12.8
	Ordered tours	11	6.7
	Others	1	0.6
Accompany	Friends	102	44.9
	Lovers	21	9.3
	Families	59	26.0
	Partner / colleague	43	18.9
	Alone	2	0.9

Source: Result from analyzed data of surveyed questionnaires

Looking at figure 2, we can see that some guests decided to go back to the garden spot tourism accounting for 78.8% in the future and 21.2% respondents didn't want to come back again.

The most important reasons for return are fresh air, friendly people, and delicious food. The convenient traffic and hygienic factors will affect the revisiting of tourists.

FIGURE 3
Ability to Return to the Ecological Destinations of Phong Dien District



Source: Result from analyzed data of surveyed questionnaire

Factors Affecting Ecotourism Development at Phong Dien District

The author has conducted scale reliability analysis by the Cronbach's alpha reliability five times test in five groups of 30 variables. The result showed that there are four groups namely trust, assurance, tangible and provide groups which have total variable correlations > 0.3 and Cronbach's alpha coefficient smaller if the variable type Cronbach's alpha coefficients of each group are considered. Thus, after the process of testing the reliability of the scale, this variable "Locals are friendly and hospitable" was removed; only 29 remaining were retained for factor analysis in the next step because these variables had meaning for model.

The next step was that the author used Exploratory Factor Analysis method for 29 variables. This study revealed that seven variables were continually removed because it could not cope with reliable condition: the observed variables > 0.5 . The results of the final analysis have been tested to ensure that credibility of the 22 remaining variables > 0.5 and $0.5 < KMO = 0.842 < 1$. After the discovery factor analysis results, rotated component matrix is presented in Table 5. The results showed that 22 variables were divided into seven new groups as follows:

Factor 1 (F1)

It included 6 items which were related to the process of providing services by human. Therefore, this group was named "Staff" consisting of "tour guide/staff take care of guests carefully, tour guide/staff were equipped with foreign languages and communication skills, tour guide/staff noticed guests' concerns, tour guide/staff understood guests' needs, tour guide/staff were equipped with professional knowledge and the behavior of tour

guide/staff at souvenirs shops was polite and honest". Based on the equation, we can see that "tour guide/staff take care of guests carefully" factor is the most important influence on F1 team.

Factor equation: $F1 = 0.730 + 0.701 FCA DB1 + 0.685 + 0.646 DC2 DC4 + 0.680 + 0.630 DB2 DB3$

Factor F2

There were four elements in tangible factors which were made up of four variables: stayed destination systems, mean of transportation in the orchard such as carriages, bicycles, boats, diversity souvenir products; and costume guides/staff. According to equation below, stayed destination systems variable has strong impact on factor 2.

Factor equation: $F2 = 0.754HH1 + 0.718HH2 + 0.636HH8 + 0.560HH7$

Factor 3

Assurance factor included three variables such as ensure food safety, appropriate prices, and security conditions whereas ensure food safety is the most important element.

Factor equation: $F4 = 0.778 DB5 + 0.762 DB6 + 0.653 DB4$

Factor 4

It consisted of clear information on the destinations, having books and leaflets of the destinations, and advertising services. Having books and leaflets of the destinations has strong influence on Trust factor.

Factor equation: $F4 = 0.723TC3 + 0.689TC1$

Factor 5

It is called local specialty factors with two ingredients; natural beautiful sights, and Traditional dishes. According to equation, the first element has bigger impact than the second variable.

Factor equation: $F5 = 0.756HH11 + 0.704HH10$

Factor 6

Facility and infrastructure factors consisted of two items; convenience of transport system, and modern communications system whereas convenience of transport system is more concerned by

tourists.

Factor equation: $F6 = 0.791HH3 + 0.773HH4$

Factor F7

Responsiveness factors included willingness of the guide/staff to serve visitors, and cooperation of eco-destinations in order to avoid overlapping in tourism products. The willingness of staff has more important influence than cooperation of eco-destinations in order to avoid overlapping in tourism products.

Factor equation = $0.840 DC4 + 0.555 DC3$

TABLE 5
Trip characteristics

Criteria		Factors						
		F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7
TH-DC3	Tour guide/staff noticed guests' concerns	0.730						
TH-DB1	Tour guide/staff were equipped with foreign languages and communication skills	0.701						
TH-DC4	Tour guide/staff take care of guests carefully	0.685						
TH-DC2	Tour guide/staff understood guests' needs	0.680						
TH-DB2	Tour guide/staff were equipped with professional knowledge	0.646						
TH-DB3	The behavior of tour guide/staff at souvenirs shops was polite and honest	0.630						
TH-HH1	Stayed destination systems		0.754					
TH-HH2	Means of transportation in the orchard such as carriages, bicycles, boats.		0.718					
TH-HH8	Diversity souvenir products		0.636					
TH-HH7	The costumes of guides/staff are polite and elegant		0.560					
TH-DB5	Ensuring hygiene and safety at eco-destinations			0.778				
TH-DB6	The price of service is equal in value			0.762				
TH-DB4	Security condition at orchards			0.653				
TH-TC2	Providing clear information about the destinations				0.832			
TH-TC3	Providing books, leaflets and brochures for attractive destinations.				0.723			
TH-TC1	Destination service provided as promised				0.689			
TH-HH11	Having natural beautiful sights					0.756		
TH-HH10	Variety of local traditional dishes					0.704		
TH-HH3	Convenience of transport system						0.791	
TH-HH4	Modern communications system						0.773	
TH-DC4	Willingness of the guide/staff to serve visitors							0.840
TH-DC3	Cooperation of eco-destinations in order to avoid overlapping in tourism products							0.555

0.5 < KMO = 0.842 < 1; Sig. = 0.000; Cumulative = 66.2%

Source: Result from analyzed data of surveyed questionnaires

CONCLUSION AND RECOMEDATIONS

Ecotourism at Phong Dien seems attractive and brings satisfaction to tourists. This study reveals that there are seven factors that influence the development of ecotourism at Phong Dien district. Factor 1 named “staff” is under the strong influence of the variable “tour guide/staff take care of guests carefully”. “The tangible” is factor 2 which is an important variable namely “stayed destination systems”. Assurance element has three variables whereas “ensure food safety” plays crucial role. Trust factors included three variables; clear information on the destinations, having books and leaflets of the destinations, and advertising services, but having books and leaflets of the destinations has strong effect on ecotourism at Phong Dien district. For local specialty factors, natural beautiful sights have stronger effect than traditional dishes. Convenience of transport system is a concerned element of factor six while willingness of the guide/staff to serve visitors is important variable in factor seven. To improve the quality of Phong Dien ecotourism potentials and to increase the return of travelers, the author would like to propose a number of measures as follows:

It is necessary to establish a local guide team that has cultural knowledge of the land and also has professional skills to understand psychology of tourists and make visitors satisfied. In addition, the staff at hotels, restaurants and transportations should be more polite, friendly and hospitable when they behave with tourists.

The accommodations at ecological attractions should be spacious, airy and of rustic nature of the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. Tourism management board rules should not allow local people to build concrete in eco-villages. Although villagers maintain the rustic nature for homestays, owners should be equipped with convenient facilities for tourists such as: air conditioning, hot water supply, internet and cable televisions.

The state authorities should regularly inspect the safety, food hygiene and waste disposal situation at eco-tourism attractions. It is important to provide enough life jackets on the boats when tourists travel by waterway. Another suggestion is that boat stations should be clean and spacious. The tourism authorities need to open training courses on hygiene and safety food process.

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– This article does not have any appendix. –