



HAI PHONG TOURISM – THE CURRENT SITUATION AND ISSUES

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Abstract:

Tourism has been identified by the Party and State to develop into a spearhead economic sector of the country. Hai Phong city converges favorable conditions for tourism development such as diverse tourism resources, and relatively synchronous infrastructure. During the integration period, Hai Phong tourism has achieved many remarkable results, but not commensurate with the potential and advantages of the city. From the practice of developing tourism business activities in the city in recent years, the view and orientation of developing tourism to become a spearhead economic sector, one of the three pillars of socio-economic development of the city are posing problems for Hai Phong's tourism to solve.

Keywords: tourism; Hai Phong; current situation; development

1. Potential and advantages for the development of Hai Phong tourism

Hai Phong is a coastal city in the downstream of Thai Binh river system in the Red River Delta; The North and Northeast border Quang Ninh province, the Northwest borders Hai Duong province, the Southwest borders Thai Binh province, and the East borders the East Sea. Hai Phong has a coastline of about 125km with many large estuaries such as Bach Dang, Van Uc, Cam, Thai Binh, and Lach Tray. Hai Phong has a plain terrain mixed with low hills, which is a unique and favorable terrain for tourism development.

Hai Phong is famous for Cat Ba tourist area, which owns many beautiful beaches off the coast of Lan Ha Bay, one of the most beautiful bays in the world because of the hilly landscape rising from the sea - a typical flooded karst terrain, creating a landscape that is both majestic and charming painting, attracting tourists. Cat Ba also owns the World Biosphere Reserve with the core zone of Cat Ba National Park with the typical endemic species of the white-headed langur. The World Biosphere Reserve of Cat Ba and Lan Ha Bay is a special tourist resource area being jointly submitted by Hai Phong city with Quang Ninh province to UNESCO for recognition of the expanded Ha Long - Cat

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Ba world natural heritage area for the criteria of biodiversity, typical topography for geomorphological evolution, the outstanding aesthetic value of karst terrain. Cat Ba also has a source of Xuan Dam hot spring, which has the effect of enhancing health for people, suitable for the type of resort tourism.

Do Son peninsula is like a tipping point of a mountain range running to the sea from the mainland, has a sandstone structure with the highest peak reaching 125 m, the length of the sea protrusion is 5 km in the direction of Northwest - Southeast. The landscape of Do Son is like a "green lizard" located on the coast of Hai Phong, with a blend of hills, mountains and coast, creating a charming, poetic and famous landscape with three zones: Zone I, Zone II, Zone III. Do Son's beaches are gentle, flat, seawater flow does not create vortex, safe for tourists to swim. Do Son is about 20km from Hai Phong city center, train station and Cat Bi international airport, about 10km from Hanoi - Hai Phong - Quang Ninh highway intersection, with Quang Ninh - Hai Phong - Thai Binh - Nam Dinh - Ninh Binh coastal road passing through, so tourists in Hai Phong, in the region and in the country easily access Do Son tourist area.

Tien Lang hot spring tourist area is 20km from the city center, suitable for weekend resort tourism and attracts many tourists in the area.

Hai Phong city was formed on the ancient land, with a long-standing socio-cultural background, the city currently has 436 ranked relics, including special national-level relics such as Trang Trinh Nguyen Binh Khiem Relic Site, Bach Dang Giang relic site, City Opera House, Flower shop, Tuong Long Tower, Statue of General Le Chan... Especially, Hai Phong keeps the vestiges of battles on Bach Dang river associated with the nation's history of fighting foreign invaders in Thuy Nguyen district, typically Cao Quy pile yard in Lien Khe commune.

Many traditional festivals such as Do Son buffalo fighting festival, Cat Ba fishing village festival, Cat Ba fishing village festival, the festival commemorating the death of cultural celebrity Trang Trinh Nguyen Binh Khiem, Transparent swearing festival, Hai Phong Red Phoenix Flower Festival, the traditional festival of General Le Chan... as well as many types of folklore arts such as water puppetry, shallow puppetry, and Dum singing are typical cultural tourism resources that contribute to creating a unique feature for the culture of Hai Phong. These unique festivals have created a strong attraction for tourists and have contributed to the specificity of cultural tourism products in Hai Phong.

Hai Phong is famous for its seafood cuisine. Hai Phong's cuisine has its own flavor, with simple processing but still makes a lot of impressions on tourists. The specialities of Hai Phong can be mentioned as Red Noodle Soup with Crab, fish noodles, spicy bread, seafood burnt rice, spicy snails, crab spring rolls, Stomatopoda hot pot, ... Besides, the personality of Hai Phong people is also very friendly, enthusiastic, bringing the temperament of the people in the coastal area - where the interference of many cultures has created the typical traditional culture of Hai Phong.

Hai Phong is focused on investing in developing infrastructure that is quite synchronous with waterways, including a seaport system located in the position of transit traffic at sea, connecting with many countries around the world with large tonnage ships, especially at Lach Huyen deep-water port. The river transport network is exploited to

transport goods and passengers to varying degrees; Air routes including Cat Bi international airport with flights to China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Thailand... connecting with most famous destinations of domestic tourism such as Nha Trang, Phu Quoc, Da Lat, Can Tho, Vinh, Buon Ma Thuot, Pleiku, Ho Chi Minh City; railway connecting Hai Phong - Hanoi - Lao Cai - Kunming; roads with arterial roads connecting with provinces such as national highway 5, national highway 10, national highway 37, Hanoi - Hai Phong - Quang Ninh highway; Tan Vu - Lach Huyen route connecting with Cat Ba island road, the coastal road connecting Quang Ninh - Hai Phong - Thai Binh - Nam Dinh - Ninh Binh. These are the outstanding advantages of Hai Phong in developing and connecting various types of tourism, as well as domestic and foreign tourist destinations.

2. Tourism business results in Hai Phong city in the period 2017-2021

2.1 Situation of tourism service businesses in the city

The accommodation businesses, travel businesses and food service businesses of Hai Phong city have improved with positive changes in recent years. The number of accommodation business establishments in Hai Phong city in the period 2017 - 2021 tends to increase year by year. It was an increase of 17 establishments in 2018 compared to 2017, an increase of 45 establishments in 2019 compared to 2018, an increase of 28 establishments in 2020 compared to 2019 and an increase of 3 establishments in 2021 compared to 2020. The number of rooms increased year by year, and the number of rooms increased by 1462, 780 respectively in 2018, 2019. However, in 2020 and 2021, although the number of accommodation establishments increased, the number of accommodation rooms decreased by 1,842 (in 2020) and only increased by 29 in 2021, showing that, although the number of accommodation establishments increases over the years, the growth rate is not stable. The number of luxury accommodation establishments (4-5 stars) is still very modest, there were only 12 4-star and 5-star hotels in the city in 2019, (accounting for only 2.4% of the total number of accommodation establishments). By 2021, there were 17 4-star, 5-star hotels and villas (accounted for only 3.2% of the total number of accommodation establishments), while the total number of 4-star and 5-star hotels in the whole country in 2017 was 386 establishments, there are 484 establishments in 2019, there were 518 and 522 establishments by 2020 and 2021, respectively. Thus, up to now, in Hai Phong city, there are not many high-class tourism services to attract tourists with high affordability.

Travel businesses in Hai Phong city increased from 69 businesses in 2017 to 74 businesses in 2021, in fact, in 2020 the number of travel businesses increased by 6 units compared to 2019. However, by 2021, this number of businesses has decreased to 74. In which, international travel businesses increased sharply from 25 businesses (in 2017) to 37 businesses (in 2021), while, domestic travel businesses decreased from 44 businesses (in 2017) to 37 businesses (in 2021). This shows that the trend of tourism business development in Hai Phong city in this period is in favor of the business of inbound international tourists to (inbound) and outbound tourists to travel abroad in the city

(outbound). Travel businesses in the city are mainly small and medium, there are only a few branches of some large domestic travel agencies such as Viettravel, Saigon Tourist..., limited in quantity and competing capability. In particular, the highest number of international travel businesses in the period 2017 - 2021 is 44 (in 2019), but this declined to 42 in 2020 and 37 in 2021. Meanwhile, the number of international travel businesses nationwide in 2020 and 2021 was 2,519 and 2,111 respectively. In fact, the travel business, especially the international travel business, has not developed commensurate with the potential and advantages of the city.

Table 1: Tourism business establishments in Hai Phong city in the period 2017 - 2021

No.	Item	Unit	Year				
			2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
1	Accommodation establishments	Establishment	439	456	501	529	532
2	Accommodation rooms	Room	9.552	11.014	11.794	13.636	13.665
2	Ranked accommodation establishments	Establishment	123	86	70	51	55
2.1	Accommodation rooms	Room	5.017	3.870	3.884	3.958	4.234
2.2	In which: 4-star, 5-star hotels and villas	Establishment	12	11	12	15	17
3	Total travel businesses	Business	69	72	73	79	74
3.1	International travel	Business	25	42	44	42	37
3.2	Domestic travel	Business	44	30	29	37	37

Source: Hai Phong Department of Tourism

2.2 About the number of tourists to Hai Phong

According to statistics of Hai Phong Department of Tourism, in 2018 the city welcomed 7,799,750 tourist arrivals, an increase of 11.6% compared to 2017 (6,707,000 arrivals). In 2019, the whole city welcomed and served about 9,078,210 tourist arrivals, an increase of 16.4% compared to the same period in 2018. In 2020, Hai Phong tourism welcomed and served 7,515,501 tourist arrivals, a decrease of 17.3% compared to the same period of 2019, in which international tourists reached 291,664 arrivals, just equal to 29.2% over the same period in 2019. In 2021, the city welcomed and served nearly 3,706,984 tourist arrivals, a decrease of 50.68% compared to 2020. In the period 2017-2021, tourists to Hai Phong were mainly domestic tourists, on average, the whole period always accounts for over 90% of the total number of tourists to the city, while international tourists coming to the city were still modest, about 7.9% (especially in 2021, accounted for only 1.7% of the total number of tourists). This factor has a significant impact on the revenue of tourism service businesses in Hai Phong city. Basically, the number of tourists coming to Hai Phong tends to increase in the normal state of society, however, compared to the growth rate of tourists in the whole country (over 20%/year in the period 2017 – 2019), Hai Phong's

tourist growth rate is still not commensurate with its potential and advantages. In 2020 and 2021, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the global tourism industry will be affected, including Vietnam's tourism and the city's tourism. The number of tourists decreased, especially international tourists, and many accommodation establishments reduced the capacity of rooms. This is the core reason for the city's tourism service business to grow negative (-) in 2020 and 2021. Besides, the revenue from tourism service business in the city mainly comes from domestic tourists, so the industry's operating revenue is still low, and its contribution to the city's GRDP is still limited, not commensurate with its role as a spearhead economic sector of the city.

Table 2: Number of tourists to Hai Phong in the period 2017 – 2021

Item	Unit	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total tourist arrivals
Total tourist arrivals	Tourist arrival	6.707.000	7.799.750	9.078.210	7.515.501	3.706.984	34.807.445
Domestic tourists	Tourist arrival	5.910.000	6.940.620	8.080.910	7.223.837	3.642.317	31.797.684
Rate of domestic tourists	%	88,1	89,0	89,0	96,1	98,3	92,1
International tourists	LK	797.000	859.130	997.300	291.664	64.667	3.009.761
Rate of international tourists	%	11,9	11	11	3,9	1,7	7,9

Source: Hai Phong Department of Tourism

2.3 About revenue from the tourism service business

Revenue from the tourism business in the city grew continuously in 2017, 2018, 2019. In 2020 and 2021 due to the impact of the Covid-19 epidemic, revenue from tourism decreased significantly, especially in 2021, down 51.5% compared to 2020. Revenue from tourism service activities reached VND 5,768 billion in 2017, VND 7,850 billion in 2019, decreased to VND 6,760 billion in 2020 and only VND 3,188 billion in 2021. In the revenue structure, the main source of revenue is from accommodation and catering activities, specifically, in the years from 2017 to 2021, the ratio of revenue from travel activities/revenue from accommodation activities in the total the revenue of the tourism industry was 30.1%/69.9%; 27.8%/72.2%; 30.8%/69.2%; 11.4%/82.6%; 7.05%/92.95%, respectively. It can be seen that in 2020, due to the impact of the covid-19 epidemic, which directly impacted the travel business, the revenue of the units decreased, accounting for only 11.4%, by 2021, total revenue from tourism business in Hai Phong city was only 7.05%, the lowest in the period 2017-2021.

The ratio of revenue from tourism business in the total GRDP of Hai Phong city is low and tends to decrease in recent years, (accounted for 4.58% in 2018, accounted for 4.57% in 2019, accounted for 3.54% in 2020, accounted for 1.01% in 2021), while the ratio of revenue of Vietnam's tourism industry contributing to the country's GDP tends to increase (accounted for 7.9% in 2017, accounted for 8.39% in 2018, accounted for 9.2% in

2019, accounted for 3.58% in 2020 and accounted for 1.97% in 2021). One of the reasons affecting revenue from tourism business activities in Hai Phong city in the period 2017-2021 is that in the structure of tourists to the city, domestic tourists accounted for 92.1 %, international tourists only accounted for less than 7.9% of the total number of tourist arrivals. Total revenue from tourism business according to statistics of Hai Phong Department of Tourism is as follows:

Table 3: Tourism revenue in Hai Phong in the period 2017 – 2021 (Unit: VND Billion)

No.	Component	Year				
		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
1	Revenue from travel business	1.736	1.821	2.417	771	225
2	Revenue from accommodation business	4.032	4.879	5.433	5.989	2.963
	Total	5.768	6.700	7.850	6.760	3.188

Source: Hai Phong Department of Tourism.

3. Issues for Hai Phong tourism industry to solve in the coming time

The tourism potential is rich in both natural factors and cultural factors, converging enough infrastructure conditions for tourism business activities in Hai Phong to create a breakthrough. In particular, in the orientation and perspective of the city's socio-economic development to 2030, the tourism industry is identified as a spearhead economic sector, one of the three economic pillars of the city that is setting the issues for Hai Phong tourism industry to pay attention.

- It is necessary to develop a network of tourism businesses strong enough to meet the requirements of providing service products to tourists, with priority given to high-quality and high-value-added tourism service products.
- It is necessary to orient the development of a variety of tourism products in the direction of extending the length of stay and increasing tourists' spending, focusing on attracting tourists with high affordability.
- It is necessary to strengthen domestic travel business activities to attract domestic tourists, while focusing on developing international travel business (inbound), identifying target international tourist markets.
- Tourism service business is a specific business field, because tourism service products are specific products, both demanding high material factors and demanding intangible factors such as: aesthetics, art of the product, spirit, attitude and ability to behave of tourism labors.... Developing tourism human resources for businesses in Hai Phong city has an important meaning in improving supply capacity and promoting commercialization of tourism service products of businesses in the city. Professional tourism human resources will increase the value of tourism labor, improve the quality of tourism service products, increase the added value of products, and enhance the competitiveness and business efficiency of the businesses. Therefore, one of the urgent issues for Hai Phong city is to develop tourism human resources for businesses in the city in a number of aspects:

- Completing mechanisms and policies on investment and development of a network of tourism training institutions to ensure a proactive supply of tourism human resources for businesses, especially giving priority to high-quality tourism training institutions.
- Completing the policy on attracting tourism talents, creating a wave of skilled tourism workers to work in Hai Phong city.
- Improving the quality of tourism training through innovating the content of training programs, changing training methods, and strengthening the connection between schools and businesses.
- Strengthening international cooperation in tourism training, encouraging training institutions in the city to associate with reputable tourism training institutions abroad to organize high-quality training courses, and cooperating in technology transfer, teacher training and student exchange.

In summary, it is necessary to have a great political determination from Hai Phong city in leading, directing and organizing the implementation of a number of issues posed by tourism business activities in Hai Phong city to develop Hai Phong's tourism industry to meet the requirements of its socio-economic development.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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