

Develop Tourism Linkage Models Associated with Biosphere Reserve Conservation

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ABSTRACT

Connecting to develop tourism together with conserve biosphere reserves is one of the solutions for sustainable tourism development. Vietnam has plenty of biosphere reserves that have been recognized by UNESCO as the world's biosphere reserves. Therefore, developing tourism in association with the conservation of biosphere reserves is an optimal strategy for Vietnam's tourism industry. It is necessary to develop tourism linkage models with biosphere reserve conservation. The developed models may help promote the value of biosphere reserves while sustainably conserving them.

KEYWORDS: linkage model, biosphere reserve, tourism

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1. INTRODUCTION:

Vietnam owns huge potentials for tourism development. The diverse ecosystem of forest and sea together with colorful cultures have created a great attraction for visitors, especially foreign tourists. In recent years, Vietnam's tourism industry has made remarkable progress, contributing significantly to the overall development of the country. According to the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, the number of international visitors to Vietnam in 2019 reached 18 million, an increase of 16.2% over the same period last year. The total revenue from tourists in 2019 reached 726,000 billion VND. However, the problem for the sustainable development of the tourism industry is environmental protection and natural resource conservation issues. Vietnam has many famous natural landscapes such as Ha Long Bay, Phong Nha caves, Nha Trang beaches; national parks such as Ba Vi (Hanoi), Bach Ma (Thua Thien Hue), and Cat Tien (Dong Nai); especially biosphere reserves with unique and diverse systems of flora and fauna. From 2000 until now, nine biosphere reserves have been recognized by UNESCO. These biosphere reserves include Can Gio Mangrove, Cat Ba Island, Cat Tien National Park, Kien Giang, Red River Delta, Western Nghe An, Mui Ca Mau, Dong Nai, and Lang Biang. The biosphere reserves have made a significant contribution to tourism development and brought a large source of foreign exchange earnings to the country. Besides, in terms of environmental aspects, biosphere reserves also play an ecological balance role that is preserving rare animals and plants. However, the exploitation of biosphere reserves for tourism and natural resource conservation needs to be further discussed. Many countries around the world have successfully built tourism linkage models with the conservation of biosphere reserves. Learning

experiences from these countries is necessary for Vietnam on the tourism development and environmental protection process, especially in association with biosphere reserve conservation.

2. TOURISM LINKAGE MODELS COMBINING WITH BIOSPHERE RESERVE CONSERVATION

Vietnam has a lot of potentials for tourism development in line with the biosphere reserve conservation. In addition to the function of nature conservation, biosphere reserves contribute to developing the economy, culture, tourism, and supporting scientific researches. The biosphere reserves in Vietnam that have been internationally recognized in recent years, become a prerequisite for the development of tourism and economy. Besides, biosphere reserves which are developed towards sustainability can offer residents a better livelihood. However, the tourism development issue at biosphere reserves in Vietnam has not been fully promoted due to many limitations. The tourism products in biosphere reserves do not attract tourists. Base on experiences in the tourism development associated with the biosphere reserve conservation of some countries (such as Rio Platano of Honduras, Jiuzhaigou of China), some suggestions are implied below.

Firstly, the government should issue policies attracting investments to develop tourism at biosphere reserves. At the same time, there should be policies to support localities and tourism businesses in investing and completing the tourism infrastructure system. It can be done through the construction of physical, transport, and information

infrastructures. Also, the conservation of cultural diversity and environmental protection should be taken into consideration. However, the state budget is restricted, so to effectively develop the infrastructure, the government should focus on public-private partnerships (PPPs). With the strength of capital and creativity in administration, investors can easily connect with the government, who holds the leading management role, to improve infrastructure systems (including natural resources and environment). Preferential policies for investors with appropriate terms of tax or interest rate are conditions to promote public-private partnerships (PPPs).

Secondly, biosphere reserves are mentioned only in nearby areas while rarely promoted on social media. As a result, public awareness of biosphere reserves is still low. Therefore, central and local authorities should take measures to raise public awareness about biosphere reserves. The mass media is a helpful tool to convey the messages so that people understand the importance of biosphere reserves and know how to preserve their values. The information that should be provided for the community includes the living environment, nature conservation activities, environmental protection, tourism development measures, sustainable development of agriculture, forestry, and fishery. Local authorities may create favorable conditions for people to effectively use natural resources and participate in tourism activities in biosphere reserves. The harmonious combination between biodiversity conservation and the benefits of the community can help develop biosphere reserves and enhance the living standards of the local people.

Thirdly, apply advanced technologies both domestically and internationally in the exploitation of tourism resources at biosphere reserves. This aims to maximize the potentials and competitive advantages of each biosphere reserve. Also, tourism administrators should take advantage of intangible

cultural values and biodiversity to build a specific tourism model for every area. All solutions should be in the direction of sustainable development. Moreover, there should be various forms of tourism such as sea tourism, mountain tourism, ecotourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, etc. Each type of tourism should follow a unique model to create products that meet the diverse needs of travelers. In the tourism development associated with biosphere reserve conservation, it is necessary to harmoniously combine local cultures with the demands of international visitors to bring the highest satisfaction.

Fourthly, the performance of biosphere reserves in terms of management, conservation, and tourism development significantly depends on the quality of human resources. The direct human resources involved in the process of biosphere reserve management and development need the dedication, vision, and a deep understanding of conservation activities. Most importantly, they need the capacity to learn about biosphere reserves and local socio-economic development. Therefore, human resources training programs with appropriate structure and quality needs to be paid attention to meet the demands of tourism development in biosphere reserves. The training programs should include both knowledge and professional skills. Especially, tour guides have to deeply understand principles and perspectives in preserving historical sites, cultural values, and customs associated with local identities to improve the service quality at biosphere reserves.

One of the biggest challenges of the biosphere reserve conservation and tourism development is closely connecting related parties including the government, scientists, investors, and local communities. It is because every party has essential roles and contributions in this process. The linkage model of tourism development together with biosphere reserve conservation is proposed below.

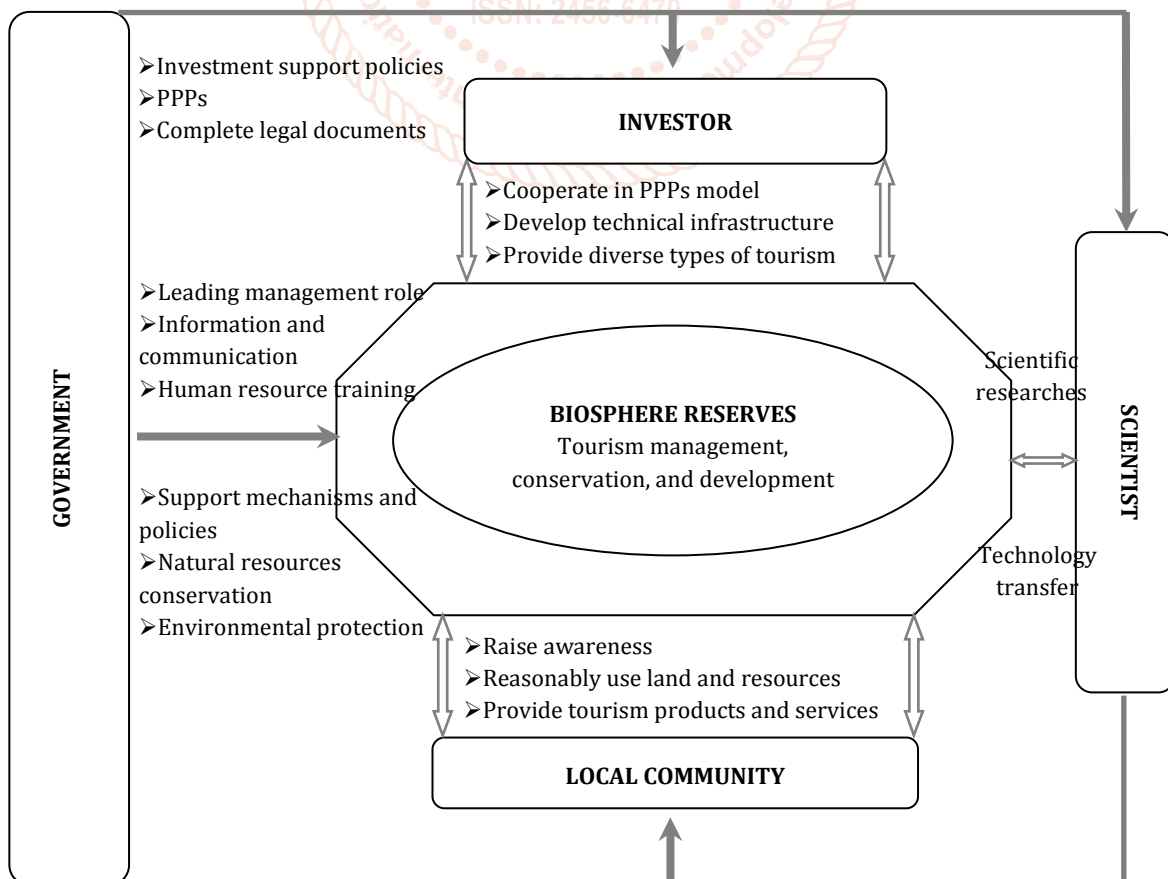


Fig. 1 Tourism development linkage model associated with biosphere reserve conservation

3. THE ROLE OF ELEMENTS IN THE MODEL

The role of the government: The government plays the role of a coordinator setting up support policies and providing favorable conditions for other factors to operate most effectively. This role is reflected in legal policies and mechanisms to attract investments for tourism and economic development. Also, the government widely disseminates information about biosphere reserves to the community and share interests with them in the process of preserving. This may help promote the values of biosphere reserves, especially in terms of tourism and economic development.

The role of scientists: Scientists are responsible for applying advanced technologies in the exploitation of tourism resources associated with resource conservation; moreover, promote typical values as well as biodiversity and cultural diversity in biosphere reserves. The research results on land-use changes, environmental impacts of economic activities, proposing solutions, etc. facilitate managers to make decisions following the conditions of each locality and well prepare for the management stage.

The role of investors: Investors (including tourism agencies, transport companies, telecommunication companies) are the main element to shape and develop tourism types in biosphere reserves. Investors develop and diversify tourism products, ensure tourist safety, improve traffic infrastructure and communication systems. Besides, investors are also essential in cooperating with the authorities to expand technical infrastructure systems through the PPPs model. However, for effective investments, it requires the authorities to offer policies with appropriate and specific terms.

The role of local communities: Need to raise awareness about the importance and benefits of biosphere reserve conservation. The communities should participate in training and coaching programs on sustainable management and resource use in biosphere reserves. Thus, local people have more opportunities to seek jobs, stabilize the income, protect and promote traditional values in the specific natural environment.

4. CONCLUSION

In short, the successful tourism development associated with biosphere reserve conservation needs the cooperation and contribution of the government, scientists, investors, and local communities. The connection among these parties creates a great motivation contributing to promoting the priceless values of Vietnamese biosphere reserves and tourism.

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