

Actual Situation and Solutions to Improve The Quality of Human Resources in Community-Based Tourism in Thanh Hoa Province, Vietnam

Le Thanh Ha

The Thanh Hoa University of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Vietnam

Corresponding author: Le Thanh Ha

Ph. D in Linguistics, Thanh Hoa University of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Vietnam

Tel.: +84915201177; E-mail address: lethanhha@dvttdt.edu.vn

Abstract

Thanh Hoa is a location with great potential for tourism development, particularly in Vietnam's cultural history. In the past, cognizant of the potential and benefits of tourism, Thanh Hoa province set the objective of developing tourism to become a spearhead economic sector to create a driving force for socio-economic development and to gradually make the province one of the localities in the country with the most developed tourism sector. In addition to the accomplishments, community-based tourism in Thanh Hoa still has numerous challenges and constraints regarding planning, infrastructure, facilities, and product diversification. Training and development of tourism's human resources is a challenge that must be addressed in both the short and long term. This paper analyzes the current status of developing human resources in community-based tourism, offering specific solutions to boost human resources in community-based tourism in Thanh Hoa province in the coming years.

Keywords: Human resources, Quality, Community-based tourism, Tourism human resources, Thanh Hoa

1. Introduction

Tourism human resources are considered one of the most important and decisive factors for the tourism development of any country. Accordingly, the quality of tourism human resources plays a vital role in determining the success of units, organizations, or the tourism sector. The bulk of tourist professionals has direct contact with clients. Therefore, the quality of workers depends not only on their qualifications and skills but also on their work ethic. Therefore, development and improvement of the quality of tourism human resources are activities aimed at

increasing both the quantity and scale of human resources, enhancing the quality, and rationalizing the workforce structure that currently works in and will work in the tourism sector. In reality, the development and improvement of the quality of tourism human resources remain a challenging issue for localities, organizations, tourism managers, etc. Due to the current state of tourism, human resources are characterized by their low quality, insufficient quantity, and unreasonable structure. Faced with this situation, numerous tourism localities and regions have prioritized formulating policies to develop tourism human resources. They have determined that the development and improvement of the quality of tourism human resources is a tool to attract tourists, thereby enhancing its competitive position.

Thanh Hoa is regarded as a province with abundant and diverse natural resources and distinctive and alluring natural scenery. Thanh Hoa's strategic geographical location and rich cultural past have resulted in many tangible and intangible cultural heritages. With about 1535 historical and cultural relics and picturesque locations, there are clusters of relics of significant historical significance and artistic and architectural worth in Vietnam. Especially, Thanh Hoa has 11 mountainous districts, with an area of more than 8,000km², accounting for three-quarters of the area of the whole province. It possesses rich and diverse natural resources with forests, lakes, mountains, caves, waterfalls, and many landscapes and beautiful spots. This is also an area with potential and strengths in unique ethnic minority culture associated with traditional festivals, creating favorable conditions for community-based tourism development.

Although the improvement of the quality of human resources in community-based tourism has received attention in the past, and the province has focused its budget and organized many training courses on community-based tourism in key tourist areas, when implementing these training courses, the lecturers involved in teaching rely on their strengths to build teaching contents, rather than basing teaching on the training background and needs of the employees. Most of the workforce involved in community-based tourism in Thanh Hoa comes from a low beginning foundation, consisting primarily of farmers in hilly, rural, and coastal areas. Hence, their professional experience and tourism-related knowledge are still relevant and

quite restricted. The human resources in community-based tourism in Thanh Hoa cannot match the expectations of tourists, even though they have learned through a few short training courses and experiential learning. This is due to the development trend and the growing demand for human resources. Consequently, this research analyzes the current state of human resources in Thanh Hoa province and suggests solutions to improve the quality of human resources in community-based tourism in Thanh Hoa province during the current period.

2. Research overview

The issue of human resources, development, and improvement of the quality of human resources, and human resource development policies in general and the tourism sector, in particular, has been of interest, studied, and referenced by numerous researchers in countries across the globe in scientific articles, textbooks, topics, and projects such as Baum Tom et al. (2016), referring to the relationship between labor quality and work performance in sustainable tourism. According to the author, sustainable human resource management actions can be implemented to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations and raise awareness of labor and employment concerns in the tourism industry (Baum, 1994). Mayaka Melphon and John S. Akama (2007) demonstrated that Kenya's tourism sector was highly established and had become a popular destination for international tourists, mainly European and North American visitors (Mayaka & Akama, 2007).

Ardahaey Fateme Tohidy (2012) showed that the trend of developing the tourism sector to expand training and empower human resources to participate in this sector had been clearly expressed in the past decades, especially in the developed countries. Research results show that today's organizations worldwide tend to empower employees to promote efficiency and work accountability and improve work systems (Tohidy Ardahaey & Nabiloo, 2012).

Baum Tom (2015), in the research "Human resources in tourism: Still waiting for change?", "Skills and training for the hospitality sector: a review of issues" showed that skills issues were necessary for the hospitality and tourism sector workforce. The author pointed out the role of skills and skills development through training activities.

The training was the fastest way for countries to improve the quality of the workforce in general and the force in the tourism sector in particular (Baum, 2002).

Nguyen Ngoc Quan and Nguyen Van Diem (2012) analyzed and described "Human resource training and development" Vietnam. The author mentioned on-the-job training and off-the-job training, which involved numerous distinct training methods. Finally, the authors gave a sequence of building a training/ human resource development program with 7 specific steps presented clearly (N. Q. Nguyen & Nguyen, 2012). Tran Son Hai (2012) proposed a system of synchronous solutions to develop tourism human resources in the survey area, as well as specific recommendations for parties involved in the development of tourism human resources in the region, including the Ministry of Education and Training, the General Directorate of Vocational Training, the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, and the People's Committees of provinces (Tran, 2011).

Nguyen Ba Ngoc (2013) pointed out the problems posed with the training of tourism human resources in Vietnam today, including strengthening state management, training plans must closely follow the guidelines, programs, planning, and strategies for human resource development in tourism and tourism development of Vietnam up to 2030. In particular, the article gave an innovative perspective and changed the perception of all levels, sectors, and the whole society about the position and role of tourism human resource training to meet and follow social needs (B. N. Nguyen, 2013). Similarly, Dang Van Phan and Nguyen Minh Hieu (2015) proposed four groups of solutions to train human resources to meet the tourism potential of Binh Thuan province, including solutions for attracting and utilizing domestic and international skilled tourism human resources (specifically, improving the working environment, building a suitable remuneration regime from time to time, and calculating the use of intra-regional and inter-regional tourism human resources) (Dang & Nguyen, 2015).

Thus, from the review of research, it is shown that the knowledge and skills of local people on shows that the knowledge and skills of local people in tourism also play an essential role in affecting the development of local human resources.

Summary of indicators for assessing tourism knowledge and skills of local people in tourism development found in previous research are essential suggestions for analysis to determine the knowledge and skills of people in tourism in the research area.

3. Research methods

3.1. Methods of sampling and data collection

The research team chose multiple-stage non-probability cluster sampling. The number of survey samples was selected at random from the list, considering all of the topic's research requirements. In the research, we used a 5-level nominal scale with a scale of (1. Poor, 2. Weak, 3. Average, 4. Fair, and 5. Good) to evaluate and verify information from quantitative data.

For qualitative information, the researchers used public and non-public methods to describe objects and check hypotheses and information from other approaches to clarify and supplement data collected by the author during his research.

Table 1: Survey sample structure

Names of subjects in the survey sample	Number of samples
Managers (Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Department of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs, Office of Culture and Information of 27 districts, towns, and cities)	29
Managers at the Communal People's Committee, Management Board of tourist areas, hamlet and village chiefs, Managers and executives in villages, hamlets, tourist areas, and destinations	100
Owners of community-based tourism service business households	200
Guides leading the way in villages, hamlets, tourist areas, and destinations	50
Total	379

Source: Summarized from survey data in 2021

3.2. Information processing methods

After surveying and collecting 379 sample units, all information obtained from the questionnaire will be summarized, coded, entered, cleaned, and processed through SPSS 22.0 software according to essential variables.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Human resources for tourism development in Thanh Hoa province

4.1.1. Regarding the quantity

According to Report No. 211/BC-BCS dated July 31, 2020, by the Party Civil Affairs Committee of the Provincial People's Committee on the implementation of Decision No. 290-QD/TU dated May 27, 2016, by the Executive Committee of the Provincial Party Committee on promulgating the Thanh Hoa tourism development program for the period 2016-2020 and expected main goals, tasks, and solutions for implementing the tourism development program for the period 2021-2025: In 2016, the province of Thanh Hoa's tourist sector had 20,800 jobs. By 2020, the province will have 40,600 direct employees, a growth of approximately 200 percent compared to 2016 and 1.5 percent more than planned.

Table 2: Qualification structure of tourism human resources in Thanh Hoa province in the period 2016 - 2020

(Unit: person)

Year	Quantity	Degree			
		University or higher	College, intermediate	Vocational training, on-the-job training	Untrained
2016	20,800	1,730	5,480	8,200	5,390
2017	24,300	2,070	6,690	9,550	5,990
2018	28,400	2,500	8,000	11,000	6,900
2019	33,500	3,150	10,200	13,050	7,100
2020	40,600	4,000	12,900	15,400	8,300

(Source: Thanh Hoa Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism)

In 2020, there were 4,000 workers with university or higher degrees, 12,900 workers with college and intermediate degrees, but primarily labor sources with intermediate or higher degrees in developing districts, towns, and cities in lowland and coastal regions, as well as in areas far from the center or not yet developed in the midland and mountainous regions.

4.1.2. Regarding the quality

The tourism sector requires human resources with broad and deep knowledge and high professionalism. In community-based tourism, knowledge, skills, attitudes, behavioral culture, and language culture are fundamentally different from those in other sectors and traditional tourism forms. The specific characteristics of tourism activities are to provide services to customers, which must be implemented through tourism human resources. The quality of human resources directly and decisively affects the quality of tourism products and services.

Improving the quality of tourism human resources, especially human resources for community-based tourism, is essential for tourism development. Therefore, human resources engaged in community-based tourism must meet requirements for capacity and work performance in the tourism sector, including criteria based on professional qualifications, capacity, working abilities, and foreign language proficiency. The quantity and quality of human tourist resources have expanded dramatically. According to the Thanh Hoa Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, the province had approximately 40,600 tourism workers in 2020. The number of trained and retrained workers was 32,200, including 4,000 workers with university or advanced degrees, 12,900 workers with college and intermediate degrees, and 15,400 workers undergoing vocational training and retraining.

In recent years, the Provincial People's Committee has approved and coordinated the implementation of human resource development programs and plans: A project on the development of tourism human resources in Thanh Hoa until 2020, Project on the improvement of the quality of tour guides and narrators in Thanh Hoa province, Project on building a training program to improve the quality of tourism business administration according to the international standard model for the period 2017 - 2020 and English training plan for tourism workers for the period 2019 - 2023, in collaboration with Saigontourist.

However, the number of untrained tourism workers also accounts for many. In 2016, it was 5,390 people, and by 2020, this number was 8,300 people, accounting for a 20% increase. The untrained human resources that lack professional knowledge and have weak skills and foreign language levels affected the quality of tourism services and the image of business establishments in the province.

4.2. Actual situation of human resources for community-based tourism development in Thanh Hoa province

4.2.1. Actual situation of the capacity of managers in community-based tourist areas, destinations, villages, and hamlets

The research team surveyed 100 managers at the Communal People's Committees and Management Boards of community-based tourist sites, destinations, villages, and hamlets to assess their knowledge, abilities, and professional competence. The findings of the study revealed the following:

Table 3: Evaluation of the quality of community-based tourism implementation of local human resources through their knowledge, skills/ professional competence

No.	Evaluation content	Recognition rate/ Evaluation scale					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
1	Knowledge of community-based tourism	2.0	1.0	46.0	31.0	20.0	100.0
2	Skills in communication, behavior and grasping tourists' psychology	2.0	2.0	31.0	45.0	20.0	100.0
3	Skills in organizing and welcoming tourists	3.0	1.0	31.0	45.0	20.0	100.0
4	Organization of entertainment and art performance activities	2.0	1.0	32.0	45.0	20.0	100.0
5	Development of community-based tourism products	2.0	1.0	45.0	31.0	21.0	100.0
6	Organization and management of community-based tourism activities	2.0	1.0	44.0	33.0	20.0	100.0

(Source: Summarized from research results in 2021)

Through Table 3, the quality of community-based tourism implementation of local human resources as measured by the knowledge, skills, and professional competence of one hundred managers in community-based tourist areas and destinations, the research demonstrates that, in general, the capacity to manage community-based tourism through knowledge, skills, and professional competence is still limited in particular content areas. The bulk, though, was evaluated as average or fair. In addition, there are still weakly assessed knowledge, skills, and professional competence.

The survey results show that the human resources to manage community-based tourism activities come from localities, belonging to two objects: Human resources for management at community areas and sites are officials in charge of culture at the Communal People's Committees. This human resource has been trained in intermediate schools and colleges. A few have university degrees but do not guarantee the right expertise in the tourism sector, although they have been trained through training courses. They are still limited in management, administration, implementation, knowledge about community-based tourism, professional competence, skills, knowledge of community-based tourism, skills in communication, behavior and grasping tourists' psychology, skills in organizing, welcoming tourists, organizing entertainment and art performance activities, developing community-based tourism products, organizing and managing community-based tourism activities, protecting the environment, etc. Foreign language skills affect the quality of tourism services in tourist areas and destinations in the locality.

Human resources for management at tourist areas and destinations are chiefs of community-based tourism villages and hamlets. These human resources for management carry out work based on experience and have been trained and fostered through training courses, but lack management, administration, and implementation expertise. The knowledge, professional competence, and skills: community-based tourism, skills in communication, behavior, and grasping tourists' psychology, skills in organizing, welcoming tourists, organizing entertainment and art performance activities, developing community-based tourism products, organizing and managing community-based tourism activities, protecting the environment, etc., and limited foreign language skills will impact the quality of tourism services. This is the actual situation of human resources for developing community-based tourism in Thanh Hoa province.

4.2.2. Actual situation of the capacity of household owners providing services for community-based tourism

The research results show that the tourism service establishments mainly self-evaluate their capacity to implement community-based tourism at an average and acceptable level, with a low rate of good evaluation. In addition, some self-evaluation establishments have limited knowledge, skills/ professional competence such as skills in communication, behavior and grasping tourists' psychology, guidance and explanation profession, English for community-based tourism explanation, organization of entertainment and art performance activities, and development tourism products.

Table 4: Evaluation of business establishments' capacity to serve community-based tourism through knowledge, skills/ professional competence

No.	Evaluation content	Recognition rate/ Evaluation scale					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
1	Knowledge of community-based tourism	3.5	4.0	70.5	12.0	10.0	100.0
2	Skills in communication, behavior and grasping tourists' psychology	4.0	4.0	70.5	11.5	10.0	100.0
3	Skills in organizing and welcoming tourists	3.5	4.5	70.5	11.5	10.0	100.0
4	Community-based tourism accommodation service profession	3.5	4.0	71.0	11.5	10.0	100.0
5	Food processing profession for community-based tourism	3.5	4.0	11.5	71.5	9.5	100.0
6	Catering service profession for community-based tourism	3.5	4.0	11.5	71.5	9.5	100.0
7	Guidance and explanation profession	4.0	4.5	70.5	11.5	9.5	100.0
8	English for community-based tourism explanation	10.0	71.0	11.5	4.0	3.5	100.0
9	Organization of entertainment and art performance activities	3.5	4.0	13.0	70.5	9.0	100.0
10	Development of community-based tourism products	3.5	4.0	12.0	70.5	10.0	100.0

(Source: Summarized from research results in 2021)

With the above statistical results, this is a problem for the research team in improving the quality of human resources in community-based tourism in tourist areas and destinations in Thanh Hoa province.

4.2.3. Actual situation of the capacity of tour guides leading the way in community-based tourist villages, hamlets, areas, and destinations

A survey of 50 tour guides leading the way in community-based tourist villages, hamlets, areas, and destinations in the province regarding their knowledge, skills, and professional competence indicates that their knowledge, skills, and professional competence are generally regarded as adequate. However, foreign language proficiency is one of the most significant restrictions of the guides at the examined locations. This might also be considered a general constraint of human resources in Thanh Hoa's community-based tourism.

Table 5: Evaluation of capacity to guide community-based tourists through knowledge, skills/ professional competence

No.	Evaluation content	Recognition rate/ Evaluation scale					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
1	Knowledge of community-based tourism	8.0	8.0	22.0	40.0	22.0	100.0
2	Skills in communication, behavior and grasping tourists' psychology	8.0	8.0	24.0	36.0	24.0	100.0
3	Skills in organizing and welcoming tourists	8.0	8.0	24.0	34.0	26.0	100.0
4	Tourism guidance and explanation profession	8.0	8.0	38.0	24.0	22.0	100.0
5	English for community-based tourism explanation	8.0	38.0	24.0	22.0	8.0	100.0
6	Organization of entertainment and art performance activities	8.0	8.0	24.0	36.0	24.0	100.0

(Source: Summarized from research results in 2021)

5. Conclusion

Evaluation of the actual situation of human resources in community-based tourism is the foundation for developing solutions to improve the quality of tourism human resources in tourist areas and destinations, creating a premise for the tourism sector to become a spearhead economic sector, contributing to promoting socio-economic development, successfully implementing "Thanh Hoa must become a model province," and contributing to the development and construction of Thanh Hoa province. Consequently, to develop community-based tourism into an attractive product for tourists soon, localities in the province must concentrate on building teams, enhancing the quality of human resources, and consider improving the quality of human resources as the determining factor. Based on the research mentioned above circumstances, we propose the following solution to enhance the quality of community-based tourism human resources in Thanh Hoa soon:

(i) Solutions for training and development of human resources

Develop a tourism training facility that provides vocational training and education at all levels, from intermediate to university. Modernize the management and organization of human resource training, the contents, and training methods according to national standards for the tourism industry, and the connection between theory and practice and training and research to enhance lecturers' teaching quality and qualifications. Training must be at a macro level and capable of predicting the trend of tourism development, avoiding the problem of quick training that is not methodical to meet tourists' wants passively. Change workforce policies in the tourism sector to improve working conditions and environmental quality in tourism enterprises, propose regulations to improve employee remuneration, evaluation, and reward systems, complete the internal rules, bolster labor discipline, and arrange and divide labor appropriately. ([Tourism Department, 2021](#)).

Regularly organize classes to improve the skills of staff and guides. Organize study tours and exchanges. Organize educational courses for the local community. Open training and education classes on community-based tourism for people (tourism implementation methods, attitudes towards tourists, tourist reception profession,

etc.), tourists (environment, respect for the indigenous culture of the local community, etc.), and all individuals and organizations implementing tourism (Ha, 2019).

(ii) Solutions on mechanisms and policies for human resource development

Review, amend, supplement and issue new legal documents related to the digital revolution in the tourism sector in general and develop human resources for the tourism sector in Thanh Hoa province to suit the new context and situation. Adopt policies to promote and enhance the training capacity of tourist vocational training institutions in the province through the use of cutting-edge technologies, ensure harmony between the approach of staff reduction and the policy of recruiting high-quality human resources for the state management agencies responsible for tourism at all levels and create a suitable remuneration mechanism and a talent attraction mechanism for the tourism sector. Create suitable working conditions and an environment for qualified high-tech personnel in the tourism industry. Provide a framework to encourage and reward on-time employees in the industry who have ideas for innovation, creativity, research, and the application of modern technological advances to enhance productivity, quality, and efficiency (Vu, 2021).

Adopt policies to attract and supplement managers with tourism-specific training for the Office of Culture and Information of the People's Committees of the districts, and the Management Board of community-based tourism activities, particularly in districts where community-based tourism activities develop. Ensure a suitable wage and social assistance system to entice individuals with superior professional credentials to participate in these activities. This team will follow, accompany, and assist participants in tourism-related activities.

Local authorities must activate all local human resources, create propaganda to summon people to action, not allow anyone to be an outsider, and incorporate new rural programs skilfully into the growth of community-based tourism. Establish artisans' groups comprised of individuals with an in-depth understanding of the local traditional culture, and organize training classes for local children, especially young ones, to preserve and equip them with sufficient knowledge of the local culture. Establish professional teams comprised of local workers to create jobs for local people, especially ethnic minorities, to mobilize all human resources to participate in tourism activities.

(iii) Solutions to attract people in the community to participate in tourism development

Strengthening the local community's consensus and participation is considered one of the essential directions for sustainable tourism development. People should be given opportunities to participate in tourism and receive more equitable and significant benefits from tourism development. Since then, people's attitude towards tourism development and resources has improved, increasing their acceptability limit for tourism (D. H. D. Nguyen & Truong, 2019). Governments at all levels, especially the grassroots level, need to organize forums for people to contribute opinions on tourism development planning and plans in the area. Maintaining regular channels of communication and information exchange helping community members and stakeholders see that they are essential actors involved in the decision-making and implementation of tourism projects.

Raise awareness of the promotion, conservation, and preservation of tourism resources. For each locality, we need to have classes to introduce the value of local tourism resources, how to exploit those values, and the requirements for the conservation, preservation, and promotion of these tourism resources. Strengthen propaganda and education activities to raise each person's awareness of the characteristics of the tourism sector, and emphasize the advantages of community-based tourism development (having the opportunity to communicate widely, access to the cultures of many countries, work that is not monotonous, etc.), specify the difficulties and challenges of the profession (working hours, breaks, the intensity of work, etc.), and simultaneously promote propaganda to raise the public's awareness of the difficulties and challenges of the profession. Moreover, authorities at all levels must defend the role of people as proprietors, which implies that persuading locals to participate in and benefit from tourism operations is a crucial and essential concern. This not only increases income sources and improves the living standards of a portion of the population, reduces pressure on natural resources, and contributes to gender equality and the subsequent socio-economic development, but it also helps people increase their knowledge, learn how to calculate business and better comprehend the outside world, and contributes to gender equality.

References

- Baum, T. (1994). National tourism policies: implementing the human resource dimension. *Tourism Management*, 15(4), 259-266.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177\(94\)90042-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177(94)90042-6)
- Baum, T. (2002). Skills and training for the hospitality sector: a review of issues. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 54(3), 343-364.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820200200204>
- Dang, V. P., & Nguyen, M. H. (2015). *Which solution to the problem of training tourism human resources in Binh Thuan province*. <https://www.academia.edu>
- Ha, T. (2019). *Solutions to develop community-based tourism in Ly Son to improve livelihoods and raise living standards for island district residents*. Institute for Tourism Development Research, Vietnam National Administration of Tourism.
- Mayaka, M., & Akama, J. S. (2007). Systems approach to tourism training and education: The Kenyan case study. *Tourism management*, 28(1), 298-306.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2005.12.023>
- Nguyen, B. N. (2013). Training human resources in the tourism sector to meet the requirements for economic development of tourism. *Communist Review*.
- Nguyen, D. H. D., & Truong, T. T. H. (2019). The participation of local communities in tourism development in Thanh Thuy Chanh village. *Scientific Journal - Hue University: Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 128(6), 101-119.
<https://doi.org/10.26459/hueuni-jssh.v128i6D.5467>
- Nguyen, N. Q., & Nguyen, V. D. (2012). Textbook of Human Resource Management. In (pp. 153-169). National Economics University Publishing House, Hanoi.
- Tohidy Ardahaey, F., & Nabiloo, H. (2012). Human resources empowerment and its role in the sustainable tourism. *Asian Social Science*, 8(1).
<https://ssrn.com/abstract=2457390>
- Tourism Department. (2021). *Solutions to improve the quality of tourism human resources*.
<http://dulichbacgiang.gov.vn>
- Tran, S. H. (2011). *Development of tourism human resources in the South Central Coast and Central Highlands*. (Doctoral dissertation). National Academy of Public Administration, Hanoi, Vietnam.
- Vu, T. L. (2021). Actual situation and solutions to develop human resources for the tourism sector. *Vietnam Trade and Industry Review*, (18).