

From Ha Long Bay to Trang An Landscape Complex: Issues on Tourism Management at World Heritage Sites, Vietnam

Quản lý du lịch tại Di sản Thế giới của Việt Nam: Từ Vịnh Hạ Long đến Quần thể Danh thắng Tràng An

Tran Thu Cuc
Hanoi, Vietnam
cuctran.j@gmail.com

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Abstract

This paper discusses the issues related to tourism management at two attractive World Heritage sites in Vietnam, namely Ha Long Bay and the Trang An Landscape Complex in the viewpoint of economy and social aspects. In general, both sites are well-managed by local authorities with a strong commitment to preserving its outstanding universal values. However, there are several issues in governance, crowd management and tourism impact that affect local residents which need to be improved by the following recommendations. Firstly, reforming governance model to privatization or transferring operation authority to the private firm and strengthening public-private partnership with strong compliance to the laws and regulations are recommended. The type of investment should be widened to a less detrimental impact

on the heritage site, such as technology infrastructure, heritage-based performance, generating creative content in heritage and so on. Secondly, in terms of crowd management, it is necessary for local authorities to implement appropriate assessments, increase ticket prices and develop new tourist attractions in order to disperse overcrowded areas and enhance tourists' experience rather than massive tourism development. Thirdly, local authorities need to pay more attention to guarantee the social and economic benefits to the vulnerable local community so that their lives are not disrupted by visitors, simultaneously promoting interactive activities between local residents and visitors for cross-culture understanding through community-based tourism and creating sustainable high-paid jobs.

Editor's note: The author submitted this research paper as part of her internship at SEAMEO SPAFA in 2019.

Keywords: Vietnam, World Heritage, tourism management, Ha Long Bay, Trang An Landscape Complex

Báo cáo so sánh hiện trạng quản lý du lịch tại hai di sản của Việt Nam được công nhận là Di sản Thế giới, Vịnh Hạ Long và Quần thể Danh thắng Tràng An, theo góc độ hiệu quả kinh tế và tác động xã hội. Hoạt động du lịch tại Vịnh Hạ Long và Quần thể Danh thắng Tràng An được quản lý chặt chẽ với cam kết của cơ quan quản lý trong việc bảo vệ giá trị toàn cầu nổi bật của di sản. Tuy nhiên, hiện trạng quản lý vẫn còn tồn tại một số vấn đề về cơ chế, xử lý tình trạng quá tải do đám đông và tác động của du lịch đến cộng đồng sống trong di sản. Bài viết cũng đưa ra các kiến nghị nhằm góp phần cải thiện hiện trạng quản lý du lịch tại các điểm Di sản Thế giới. *Thứ nhất*, cần đổi mới cơ chế của cơ quan quản lý theo mô hình tư nhân hoá hoặc chuyển giao quyền khai thác kinh doanh du lịch cho công ty tư nhân, đồng thời tăng cường hợp tác công – tư với cam kết tuân thủ theo luật lệ và quy tắc; cần mở rộng lĩnh vực đầu tư theo hướng hạn chế tác động gây hại trực tiếp đến di sản như xây dựng cơ sở hạ tầng công nghệ, sản phẩm sáng tạo, tổ chức trình diễn trên bối cảnh của di sản, v.v. *Thứ hai*, về biện pháp xử lý tình trạng quá tải do đám đông, cơ quan chức năng cần tiến hành nghiên cứu đánh giá thích hợp sức chứa của di sản, tăng mức giá vé và khai thác hoạt động thu hút du lịch mới để phân tán khách du lịch tập trung tại một số điểm nhất định, tăng chất lượng trải nghiệm cho du khách, tránh phát triển du lịch đại trà. *Thứ ba*, chính quyền địa phương cần quan tâm hơn nữa đến việc đảm bảo lợi ích kinh tế và xã hội cho nhóm cư dân địa phương yếu thế, để tránh tình trạng cuộc sống của người dân bị hoạt động du lịch xâm hại, đồng thời tăng cường hoạt động tương tác giữa người dân địa phương với khách du lịch, nhằm thúc đẩy sự hiểu biết giao thoa văn hoá thông qua hình thức du lịch cộng đồng và tạo thêm nhiều việc làm thu nhập cao cho người dân địa phương.

Từ khoá: Việt Nam, Di sản Thế giới, quản lý du lịch, Vịnh Hạ Long, Quần thể Danh thắng Tràng An

Introduction

Integrating tourism development into heritage site management in order to enhance the heritage values, whilst simultaneously generating spill-over effects to national development is well-recognized and promoted in Vietnam. This paper is a comparison study on tourism management at two attractive World Heritage sites in Vietnam, namely Ha Long Bay and the Trang An Landscape Complex, based on multi-disciplinary approaches addressing social and economic perspectives. Ha Long Bay has been promoted as the main tourism destination for both international and domestic visitors, which was the very first site ever listed as a World Natural Heritage in Vietnam, whereas the Trang An Landscape Complex, which is situated near the capital city Hanoi, is an emerging tourism destination. This comparison aims to answer the question of which of these two sites perform better with regards to tourism management so that the lessons learned from one site could be a model for the other. The analysis primarily discusses the issues related to tourism management: governance system and tourism business operation, crowd management and impact on local life in the viewpoint of the planning, economy and social aspects. Eventually, several recommendations will be proposed to improve current tourism management at the heritage sites.

Ha Long Bay and Trang An Landscape Complex: Similarities and Differences

An aesthetic artwork combined by rocky islets in diverse shapes rising from the clear blue sea water twinkled by sunlight, together with calmly floating boats featuring its majestic scenery through the cinematic frames of an Oscar-winning movie “Indochine” (1992). This is Ha Long Bay, the “Descending Dragon” on the northeast coastal territory of Vietnam. Heading southwest to the mainland, there is a “Ha Long Bay of the land” which creates a photographic work capturing the contrast between the stillness of the yellow rice paddies, and the dynamism encapsulated by the flock of white storks flapping upward like in the Hollywood movie “Kong: Skull Island” (2017). This is the Trang An Landscape Complex, a mixed natural and cultural properties of scenic landscapes, historical and religious sites that are reminders of an ancient capital. Both Ha Long Bay and the Trang An Landscape Complex are representatives of World Heritage sites in Vietnam. Ha Long Bay was recognized as a World Natural Heritage Site by UNESCO, at the first time according to criterion (vii) for its outstanding aesthetic values in 1994, and at the second time according to criterion (viii) on geological and geomorphological values in 2000. In addition, Ha Long Bay was awarded the title “World New Natural Wonder” in 2012 by the New Open World organization. In contrast, the Trang An Landscape Complex primarily consists of three protected areas: the Hoa Lu Ancient Capital, the Trang An – Tam Coc – Bich Dong Scenic Landscape, and the Hoa Lu Special-Use Forest, which was listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2014 according to criterion (v) on the outstanding locale within Southeast Asia associated with a long cultural history, criterion (vii) on the aesthetic values generated from beautiful tower-karst landscape, the dramatic mountains, secretive caves, and sacred places, and criterion (viii) for its geological values created by limestone massif, and autogenic karst system.

The aesthetic values, geological-geomorphological values, biodiversity value created by nature, enriched by the uniqueness in cultural-historical values generated from inhabitants, plus heritage titles acclaimed at all levels (international, national, local), have developed Ha Long Bay and Trang An Landscape Complex to become internationally creditable tourism destinations. In recognizing the benefits of the tourism industry, the central and local governments have issued many strategic plans accompanied by various decisions drawing the clear mission and vision on tourism development in general, and heritage sites in particular. This has been done in order to boost the tourism industry for it to become a spearhead for the economy sector for the country by 2020 and turn Vietnam into a tourism-developed country in the region by 2030.

According to the Master Plan on Vietnam Tourism Development to 2020, vision to 2030, priority is put into marine, island-based tourism, followed by cultural tourism, particularly cultural heritage-based tourism and ecology tourism. The missions noted include “sustaining development embedding preserving culture, safeguarding landscape and environment, assuring security and social order” and “enhancing mobilising new and different types of investment, partnership and cooperation” (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism 2013).

Specifically, cultural tourism is defined as one of the 13 sub-sectors of the cultural industries that can play a value-adding role in national economic development through “*value chain activities*” including production, distribution, and consumption of cultural tourism commodities. The advantage of the rich and distinctive cultural assets inclusive of cultural heritage can be effectively mobilised to generate benefits to the economy and society (Vietnam Institute of Culture and Arts Studies - VICAS 2013: 7).

Looking at the terms of the master plan for tourism development, particularly cultural tourism, it is recognizable that the frameworks for tourism development are well defined at the central and local government levels. However, the matters of crowd management and tourism impact on the local community have not yet been considered adequately. In fact, the concerns of both central and local government mostly gravitate to targeting a huge number of visitors, building infrastructure, facilities related to tourism development, tour boat operations, and environmental protection.

Based on the national vision on cultural tourism development at heritage sites, the local authorities in charge of Ha Long Bay and Trang An Landscape Complex have conducted many activities to promote tourism development. Thriving as a tourism hub, Ha Long Bay gains government investment of US\$1.02 billion, which is considerably higher than any other destination in northeast region of Vietnam, including the Trang An Landscape Complex, which was awarded only \$150 million (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism 2013). In 2018, the number of tourists to Ha Long Bay reached 4.1 million people with a resulting turnover of 1,184 billion VND (approximately US\$43.1 million). Compared to the figure of Ha Long Bay site, Trang An World Heritage achieved a higher number of tourists at 6.25 million people thanks to its domestic visitors, however, the turnover for Trang An was only 665.8 billion VND (approximately US\$28.7 million), which is US\$14.4 million less than Ha Long Bay (Vietnam National Commission for UNESCO 2019).

Tourists can appreciate nature and culture at Ha Long Bay by visiting cave, beaches and the bays. By riding on boats, tourists can enjoy the breathtaking view of the natural landscape created by rocky islets and seawater surface. Cave sightseeing is another amazing experience where viewing the stalactites and stalagmites while listening to stories by the tour guides enables visitors to learn about ancient Viet history and culture. However, the set-up for drinking and eating inside caves carried out by some commercial businesses recently became a contentious issue between the business operators and those concerned with nature conservation for fear that such business practices are degrading the natural heritage value of the site (Thien Phuong 2016).

Known as “Ha Long Bay of the land”, the Trang An Landscape Complex also amazes visitors with its natural environment. Taking a small boat driven by skillful local people, most of whom are women, it is calming to follow the slow-moving water currents whilst listening to the sounds of nature. Experiencing nature at Trang An feels more intimate because the water is clearer, allowing visitors to see the river creatures and plants in the water. Visitors are also able to get up close and smell the land flora which is unlike sightseeing at Ha Long Bay. The caves at Trang An are as narrow as tunnels, giving a sense of adventure when entering inside. In general, Ha Long Bay is vibrant as a photo picture, while Trang An Complex is calm as a water-ink painting. The tourism attractions at Trang An Landscape Complex are more diverse thanks to its natural and cultural heritage. Not only does the natural beauty amaze visitors, but also the religious ambiance of the local pagodas provides a different experience from Ha Long Bay.

Despite the difference in scale of national investment and the extent of size between the two sites, there are several common issues in governance, crowd management and tourism impact on local residents that will be discussed specifically as follows.

Governance and tourism operation system

Ha Long Bay has been effectively managed overall with the local government’s strong commitment in ensuring the conservation of its heritage values for over 20 years since its inscription to the World Heritage List (Janet and Win 2018). Similarly, after being inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2014, the Trang An Landscape Complex has accomplished remarkable achievements in management and preservation tasks according to the comprehensive management plan based on the principles of the World Heritage Convention, all the relevant laws and regulations issued by central and local government, and through consultation with all stakeholders.

The Provincial People’s Committee plays a role as a local authority of heritage site, preparing and implementing plans for heritage site management including tourism management, with approval from the central government, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and in cooperation with other relevant authorities. The Heritage Management Board is a non-profit organization, established to undertake day-to-day missions including visitor management, under the supervision of a local authority.

However, there is a limitation in power to determine and implement management functions due to the reliance on other agencies (Janet and Win 2018: 35). It is the consequence of the governance system that the policy and technical guide is provided

by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (Ninh Binh Provincial People's Committee 2015: 20). The lack of management capacity is one of the factors leading to a delayed response to take measures against violations at heritage sites. In addition, the problem of the current tourism operation model at heritage sites may raise the issue of monopolies, thereby reducing competitiveness on the principles of the market. The objective of tourism business is to gain profit, thus, it is necessary to separate the administrative management task with the business management task of the Management Board. There were two private enterprises proposed to transfer authority to do business at Ha Long Bay site with the promise to share a great proportion of return to local government. However, they were voted against by the public (Thien Phuong 2016). Currently, the Management Department of Ha Long Bay has the full responsibility of the entire tourism operation including ticketing, controlling and operating tour boats, and itineraries.

In terms of tourism operation, the active public-private partnership in operation at Trang An World Heritage is impressive. The Trang An Landscape Complex Management Board has coordinated with private firms to operate the activities of construction, repairing, restoration and other facilities building for tourism management. By 2015, there were five private enterprises assisting the Management Board in the property (Ninh Binh Provincial People's Committee 2015: 111). In particular, the local construction company, Xuan Truong Enterprise was granted the authority to operate at Trang An – Tam Coc – Bich Dong Scenic Area for a period of 70 years (Ninh Binh Provincial People's Committee 2015: 20). In the aspect of the commercial business, the private enterprise can take a role of strengthening the effective operation at the site by its business expertise in human resources, mobilising funds, and returning contributions from the sale of tickets and other services. Cooperating with the private sector can tackle the obstacle of mobilising the financial budget and inefficient project implementation due to the lack of national budget which is also a common issue of other tourism destinations in Vietnam. Taking a look at the financial breakdown on investment from 2005 – 2013 period at Trang An World Heritage as one of the instances, the Xuan Truong Enterprise invested totally 3,914,848,000 VND (approximately US\$169,000), accounting for over 96 per cent of the total funding for the Trang An Landscape Complex for the project of repairing, building infrastructure, car park, and other services at the heritage site from 2005-2013 (Ninh Binh Provincial People's Committee 2015: 150). It is clear that the majority of investment funding was due to Xuan Truong Enterprise's contribution.

Despite the efficient use of financial resources, Xuan Truong Enterprise's business might cause an adverse impact on the heritage site if it addresses economic benefits over the other factors. Xuan Truong Enterprise has invested in numerous construction projects within the heritage protected area and buffer zone creating deterioration to the landscape and nature of the heritage site by land clearance, digging and cutting into the mountain, etc (Tieu An 2018). In term of business, the company once had been accused of tax evasion (Mai Chi 2018). There is another mismanaged investment at Cai Ha Mountain within Trang An Landscape Complex caused by Trang An Tourism Joint Stock Company. The company built a staircase cutting into Cai Ha Mountain and other supporting facilities within the Protected Zone without any authorized permission. This illegal construction violated the laws and regulations in terms of encroaching land, forest and cultural heritage which was the conclusion made by the inspection team (The Voice of Vietnam 2018). These negative cases are

the lessons for management authorities to be cautious to ensure that the operation must be carried out properly with the provisions and the private firms must commit to non-violation of the laws.

Crowd management

It is undeniable that tourism development brings a great contribution to the national budget by revenue earned from tickets which is reinvested into heritage conservation projects. As a result of tourism growth, the national budget for Ha Long Bay was 50 billion VND, while the turnover derived from ticket sales was 1,100 billion VND in 2017 (Lam Song 2018).

Nevertheless, over-tourism is associated with the influence of tourism growth. The congestion made by tourists as well as boats at Maya Bay, Thailand had threatened its environment and ecosystem for years. Consequently, the crisis led to a temporary closure at the renowned Maya Bay (Saira Asher 2019). In general, the operators work to attract more tourists, whilst on the other hand, they face the challenge of managing the tourists to avoid overutilisation, particularly at the heritage sites, so as to achieve sustainable development. Regarding the matter of managing visitors at the heritage site, the concept of '*carrying capacity*' has been discussed widely among Vietnam tourism researchers as an indicator for planning to manage an appropriate volume of tourists coming to the destination in order to balance between service demand and supply, which also can help ensure efficient and effective operation. Discussing the concept to assess site capacity, Janet Mackay (2018) mentions '*limits of acceptable use*' (LAU) as a more holistic approach to manage visitor numbers compared to '*carrying capacity*', which allows greater number of visitors whilst maintaining impact at an acceptable level by using predetermined indicators monitoring sustainability, such as arrival numbers, length of stay, occupancy rates, state of environment, pressure on supporting infrastructure or socio-cultural impacts (Janet and Win 2018: 49-50). However, there is no comprehensive study that assesses whether capacity has thoughtfully been undertaken by both Management Boards to control visitor crowds at Ha Long Bay or at Trang An.

In term of tourist control, the development orientation of Trang An Landscape Complex is divided into two areas with specific restriction terms: Firstly, the strictly protected areas where people are not allowed to live, and where tourists are not allowed to stay overnight and construction is prohibited; and secondly, the area for tourism development, residential areas and surrounding agricultural landscape that allows limited construction and needs special control (Ninh Binh Provincial People's Committee 2015: 120). Meanwhile, the local officials at Ha Long Bay heritage adopt a more practical solution to prevent overcrowding problems. The relevant government authorities in charge of policy/decision-making have proposed new tour itineraries in order to reduce pressure to the core area of the property. In parallel with monitoring the tourism boat operations, the authorities also strengthened surveying visitors' demand to create more eco-tourism services by which tour offerings can be diversified and help to disperse visitors at the heritage site (Duc Long 2018).

Impact on local life

It can be argued that the local community is left behind by the tourism development at Ha Long Bay. Unlike the people living in the buffer zone who benefit from tourism activities, the people living at the core zone are fishing households who originated from the sea territory and whose livelihoods are directly engaged with the sea. They had lived on floating boats gathering as fishing communities, are mostly illiterate, and struggle with poverty due to the uncertainty of weather. Despite the hard life, the villagers possess the unique cultural identity generated from their surrounding natural environment, which is distinct from the others living on land. By 2014, the local government had implemented the “Relocate fisheries community to land” project, moving people to a new living area in order to settle their lives, simultaneously protecting heritage property from influence of the unorganized floating boats and the fishermen’s destructive fishing activities. The project aimed to set a new life for the local community by providing housing property on land as well as other necessary facilities such as the construction of a new harbour to enable boats to access easily between the new habitat area and sea. Meanwhile, some of floating facilities remained with the local government for use as cultural heritage objects for tourists to learn about the distinctive fishing community and their lifestyle (Lam Hanh 2018).

The objectives of the project were highly praised because of its promising social effects. It definitely brought new hope to the local fishermen. However, the outcome is not as positive as the proposed plan on paper. There were arguments during the process of approval of qualified households. The most ironic issue was that their lives had been worsened after being relocated. Having been bonded with fishing, boats and the sea, the people were shocked when they started living on land due to lack of literacy. The government even did not provide alternative livelihoods as they promised. The new harbour construction was stuck in the process due to financial problems. As a result, people got in trouble with the modern social problem of unemployment, and still struggle with poverty. That is the way tourism development adversely affected to the local community caused by the inefficiency of the local government’s policy. There are even no socio-economic benefits shared to the fishermen’s families as well (Tien Phong 2017).

Furthermore, the conserved floating houses and fishing tools which are currently utilised as tourist attractions do not work well as the display lacks soul for the people associated with the facilities and items had been separated from their culture. In the aspect of social welfare, this has been a failure which has seriously impacted this vulnerable local fishing community. To solve the crisis, the local government has been running another project taking those people back to the sea so as to revive their livelihoods and culture. In terms of tourist attraction, watching a local child playing peacefully with his beloved dog on the floating house could be an impressive scene for tourists. However, it might cause discomfort to the local residents because their daily lives are exposed to strangers without any interaction.

At the Trang An Landscape Complex, the traditional livelihoods of local communities are subsistence gardening (i.e. paddy rice cultivation), farming and fishing. In addition, there are many local residents who are directly engaged in services within the property by being employed as forest rangers, security officers, maintenance staff and boat operators (Ninh Binh Provincial People’s Committee 2015: 39). Amongst

these, it is a noticeable fact that the majority of boat operators are women who have surprising skills in operating the boats which go through the narrow caves while they tell folk stories of the area to visitors. According to the evaluation report conducted by the local authority to UNESCO World Heritage Committee, boat operation has benefited sufficiently to all the residents (Ninh Binh Provincial People's Committee 2015: 39). There are also other eco-tourism services generating extra income for local residents which helps alleviate poverty as well as boost the local economy, such as souvenirs, food and beverage, handicrafts, traditional cultural performances, and diverse types of accommodations such as resorts, hotels, guest-houses, home-stay, and farm-stay premises (Ninh Binh Provincial People's Committee 2015: 39). Tourism development benefits more than 7,000 people, which results in an average salary of 3 million VND/person/month and nearly 10 million VND/person/month during peak months (Bui Van Manh and Pham Sinh Khanh 2018). However, it can be seen that the locals are low-paid employees and salaries are uncertain as they depend on the tourism season. Therefore, the local authorities should create more sustainable jobs to local residents in order to bring adequate incentives to local people through tourism development.

In comparison to Ha Long Bay, tourism development at Trang An Landscape Complex demonstrates direct social and economic impact to the local community, particularly in terms of employment. However, fisheries villagers' lives at Ha Long Bay site are more exposed to visitors. Engaging local people in preserving the heritage site while guaranteeing better lives to them is a problem that needs to be solved with a cautious approach and which requires input from or discussions with all of the stakeholders.

To sum up, the comparison in tourism management between Ha Long Bay and Trang An Landscape Complex is shown in the table below.

Subjects	Ha Long Bay	Trang An Landscape Complex
Type of heritage	Natural heritage	Natural and cultural heritage
Year of inscription	1994, 2000	2014
Criterion	(vii) Outstanding aesthetic values (viii) Geological and geomorphological values	(v) Outstanding locale (vii) Aesthetic values (viii) Geological values
Authority organization	Ha Long Bay Management Department	Trang An Management Board
Tourism operation model	Government monopoly on tourism operation (ticket, itinerary control)	Public-private partnership by cooperation with private enterprises on tourism operation (ticket, itinerary control)
Tourist attractions	- Natural landscape sightseeing: tour boat, kayak	- Ecological tourism: tour boat - Religious sites visit (e.g:

	- Local life experience	shrines) - Local life experience
Crowd management	Propose the new itineraries and strengthen surveying visitors' demand to create more eco-tourism services	Divided into two restriction areas: 1. The protected areas where people are not allowed to live, tourists are not allowed to stay overnight and construction is prohibited, and 2. The area for tourism development, residential areas and surrounding agricultural landscape that allows limited construction and needs special control
Impact on local life	Adverse impact: - People got in trouble with the modern social problem of unemployment, and still struggle against poverty after being relocated to the land - No socio-economic benefits shared to the fishermen's families	Positive impact: - People are directly engaged in services - Benefited sufficiently to all of the residents, however, they are low-paid employees and salaries are uncertain as they depend on the tourism season

Table: Tourism management comparison between Ha Long Bay and Trang An Landscape Complex

Recommendations

Regarding governance system, increasing entrepreneurialism is a necessity in order to be independent of government subsidy, while improving business and enhancing productivity as well as competitiveness in the market (through creating added value), but not to the detriment of heritage. In addition, the efficiency in business derived from the private business model, together with independence on policy making and operation are reasons for reforming governance system at the heritage site. The current governance, management, and investment models are criticized as the weakness of cultural industries due to inappropriate investment proportion, a 'top-down' investment, which has led to the dependence on state-subsidy and limitations on business models. The state-owned governance model is the reason for the difficulty in trading commercially, fund-raising and collaboration (VICAS 2013: 14). Dependence on state-subsidy is critiqued as one of the barriers to national development in Vietnam. Thus, commodification and monetization of cultural heritage through public-private partnership model could be taken into account to achieve reform. The important point is the process must be transparent to appoint a proper partner and strong supervision from government authorities is crucial. Otherwise, it might cause violation of the law, mismanagement problems and raise dispute among the public like the aforementioned case of construction at Trang An Landscape Complex. In parallel, public-private partnership model should be widened to a range of cooperation, such as investment to E-tourism, technology, creative

products, landscape-based performance (as “Hoi An Memories” show), not just constructive infrastructure projects.

In terms of crowd management, it is significant to consider relevant indicators to set appropriate visitor numbers. The government authorities should look further into the achievement of growth of visitor numbers in the short term and make proper policy to regulate tourists for sustainable development in long term. Amongst the proposal for better visitor management made by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) experts, the pricing and revenue generation is a considerable solution, which aims to strengthen the tourists’ quality as opposed to massive tourism (Janet and Win 2018). Referring to the recommendation from two experts, the Ha Long Bay Management Board proposed the plan for promoting three new routes/itineraries as well as increasing the price which is targeted at tourists who are willing to pay higher fees from 1 January 2019 onwards. From the point of view of management, ticket pricing policy is a measure to prevent undesirable tourism overcrowding. However, in the view of tour operators, high pricing creates obstacles to their businesses. That is the reason why many tour operators disagree with the pricing proposals, blaming that the management authority pursue profit whilst not improving on the level of service quality, and they warn that the price increase might cut down the competitiveness leading to a decrease in the number of tourists (Nguyen Vu Moc Thien 2018). However, decreasing tourists, especially at the risk of over tourism, is exactly the ultimate goal of tourism management. The arising conflict between the two stakeholders (i.e. the Management Board and the tour operators), due to the differing goals from each other, needs to be solved through fair communication to enhance mutual understandings, assuring benefits for both sides. Ticket price increasing proposal is a common shared issue with Trang An Landscape Complex also.

From the point of view of overcrowding management, developing new attractions is the solution to disperse the concentration of tourists at certain points. It is anticipated to create new earnings for local residents by supplying commercial services and simultaneously enhancing the experience for tourists by offering diverse activities, reducing the direct impact to heritage site as cultural tourism is an integrating industry. The important point is how to properly manage these integrated activities so that there is no conflict with one another.

Regarding benefits to the local community, it is necessary to create productive income by the added value obtained from tourism development at the heritage site to local residents so that the spill-over effects from market trading can create high-paid and sustainable employment. All stakeholders should comply to implement tourism development in parallel with raising socio-economic growth for local people while protecting their nature and culture. In addition, solving cross-culture issue through interaction between visitors and local residents thereby can avoid undesirable irritation.

Conclusion

This paper has compared the tourism management at two World Heritage sites of Vietnam, Ha Long Bay and Trang An Landscape Complex, through discussing several issues pertaining to governance system, tourism operation model, crowd management, and impact on local life. Similarly highly appraised by the unique natural beauty between both heritage sites, there is also a difference in tourism

attractions development. In general, both sites are well managed by local authorities with a strong commitment to preserving its outstanding universal values. In recognizing the importance of sustainable development, local authorities have endeavoured to achieve tourism growth balancing with social-economic development. However, there remain several problems in operation which needs to be improved. Reforming governance model to privatization or transferring operation authority to the private firm, and strengthening public-private partnership with strong compliance to the laws and regulations is recommended. The range of investment should be widened to a less direct impact on the heritage site, such as technology infrastructure, heritage-based performance, and so on. In terms of crowd management, it is necessary for local authorities to implement appropriate assessments, increase ticket prices and develop new tourist attractions in order to disperse overcrowded areas and enhance tourists' experience rather than massive tourism development. Another significant issue is preserving local life within the heritage site. Local authorities need to pay more attention to guarantee the social and economic benefits to the vulnerable local community so that their lives are not disrupted by visitors. It is also significant to promote interactive activities between local residents and visitors for cross-culture understanding through community-based tourism and creating sustainable high-paid jobs.

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