



DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH QUALITY TOURISM HUMAN RESOURCES TO MEET THE INTEGRATION REQUIREMENTS IN HO CHI MINH CITY

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Abstract

Based on the demand of human resources in the tourism sector of Ho Chi Minh City in the trend of globalization and integration to the international economic community, the article addresses the situation of shortcomings in training issues as well as using tourism human resources. On that basis, the article proposes some recommendations with the hope that there will be proper coordination and concern of all levels and branches, which will be a great source of encouragement for training institutions, helping the training activities better respond to the supply of human resources for the sustainable development of the tourism and socio-economic sectors of Ho Chi Minh City in particular and the country in general.

Keywords: high quality human resource, tourism, integration, Ho Chi Minh City.



1. International integration and the impacts on tourism human resource training

International integration, first of all, economic integration, is a proactive process of simultaneous implementation of two things: on the one hand, linking the economy and market of each country to the regional and the world's markets through efforts to liberalize and promote liberalization of the national economy; and on the other hand, joining and contributing to building regional and global economic institutions.

The higher the international integration, the greater the link between and among nations, forming a global value chain. Countries want and are forced to participate more fully in the international division of labor. To avoid lagging and to benefit more from international integration, countries need to participate in the global value chain. However, the level of participation depends on the integration capacity, the level of availability and the level of labor force.

Tourism is a service-oriented integrated economy, so economic integration is seen as an important process to participate in regional and global value added service supply chains as well as to meet demand socio-economic development of any destination.

The demand for international integration in tourism is to strengthen relations for development; acquire experience; establish international standing; develop tourism and contribute to economic, cultural and social development. International integration in tourism will follow the following steps: Joining international organizations; acknowledging and applying information technology advances; strengthening globalization in the exploitation, protection and development of tourism resources; applying international standards in tourism development; signing bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements on tourism development; committing to liberalize and liberalizing tourism service market.

For successful international integration, tourism human resources must be trained with widely recognized professional skills and qualifications; can move and find jobs in the region; are oriented to actively participate in the process of international labor division, ensuring that Vietnam tourism has a worthy position in the regional and world quality supply chain of tourism services. Tourism human resource in Vietnam should be willing to participate in the international division of labor in tourism activities, first of all in the region. Tourism training must aim at regional and international skill standards and be recognized.

2. The reality of tourism human resources in Ho Chi Minh City in recent years

2.1 The results of Ho Chi Minh City's tourism activities in recent years

Ho Chi Minh City is one of the major tourist centers of the country. In the past years, the tourism sector of Ho Chi Minh City had a relatively high growth, contributing significantly to the process of economic restructuring of the City and increasingly asserting its role as an important economic sector. The number of tourists, especially the number of international tourists to Ho Chi Minh City and tourism revenue have increased from year to year. In 2003 the number of international tourist arrivals in Ho Chi Minh City was only 1,312,000, but in 2010 it reached 3,000,000, in 2015 - 4,600,000 and by the end of 2016, it nearly reached the threshold of 5,000,000 arrivals. Ho Chi Minh City takes over 50 - 60% of the total number of international tourist arrivals in Vietnam. Tourism revenue in 2015 reached over VND 94,600 billion, an increase of 10% compared to that of 2014.



In terms of tourist source characteristics, those arriving by air transport accounted for nearly 80%, road transport 17% and sea transport 3%. Pure tourists account for 75%, traders 15%, and travelers for other purposes combined with tourism about 10%.

In terms of markets, there are currently 15 leading markets for international tourists to the City: USA, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, China, Malaysia, Australia, Russia, Singapore, France, UK, Germany, Canada, Thailand, and the Philippines. Through the movements in the international tourist market, the market sources of Northeast Asia, Western Europe and the US are still traditional markets with stable inflow of tourists, and some promising emerging markets including Korea and Japan should be paid attention to, especially in promotion. Besides, in the context of close and comprehensive cooperation in ASEAN with the establishment of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), the number of tourists from this market will continue to increase strongly due to the trend of geographical distance and cultural intimacy.

2.2 Assessing the status of tourism business facility system development

As of the end of 2016, the City's tourism sector has:

Regarding travel enterprises: 1278 travel enterprises managed by the Department of Tourism including: 647 international travel enterprises, 607 domestic travel enterprises, 51 travel agents and 09 foreign travel representative offices in Vietnam...

Travel activities in the city in a difficult context have still been active in exploiting the markets, so travel enterprises have achieved positive results. Besides, the travel enterprises have always focused on diversifying tour programs, improving tour quality and paying attention to customer care services. A new feature is the trend of linking the travel enterprises to exploit the strengths to develop together, reducing unhealthy competition.

Regarding accommodation enterprises: 2,143 accommodation establishments and 50,633 rooms including 1,709 hotels with 44,251 rooms from 1 to 5 stars.

Regarding the stay enterprises, due to the current situation, supply has exceeded demand but the city is still in great shortage of hotels of 3 stars or more. Therefore, the upgrading and new construction of hotels, especially those of 3-5 stars has been paid attention and invested by the City to upgrade the quality, diversify services and expand business scale aimed at the tourist markets, especially the MICE tourism.

Regarding tourist transport units: over 2000 cars as well as over 150 waterway transportation vehicle

The granting of tourism service standard signs to 60 shopping, food and drink points also contributes to diversification of products to attract tourists to buy and experience the rich cuisine of Vietnam.

Activities of tourist and entertainment areas in the city such as Dam Sen Cultural Park, Suoi Tien Tourist Park, Cu Chi Tunnels, Can Gio Ecotourism Park... attract a large number of tourists and sightseers because most of these establishments regularly invest in many new types of entertainment.

In general, the socio-economic situation of the whole country and the City still faces many difficulties, affecting the city's tourism sector, especially the political instability of some countries



in the world; the epidemic and foreign currency devaluation have greatly affected the tourism activities in Vietnam in general and Ho Chi Minh City in particular.

2.3 Overall assessment of the workforce in the tourism sector

With a steady growth in arrivals in the coming time as well as the opportunities and challenges for Ho Chi Minh City tourism in the period of integration and development, it is necessary to utilize all resources to develop tourism of In Ho Chi Minh City, in which tourism human resource has the most significance, therefore the effective exploitation and use of tourism human resource is a core issue in accelerating the cause of development of tourism of Ho Chi Minh City. This can be successful only through the great efforts and synchronous solutions in the training, retraining and cultivation of tourism human resource, especially high quality human resource.

Table 1: Direct labor in tourism in Ho Chi Minh City in 2010-2015:

Fields	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Travel	13,000	15,855	18,700	21,565	24,425	28,800
Hotel	21,701	27,045	32,389	37,734	43,075	49,560
Others	6,940	8,580	10,115	11,860	13,500	16,200
Grand total	411,641	51,480	61,204	71,159	81,000	94,560

(Source: HCMC Department of Tourism)

Currently, Ho Chi Minh City is the country's biggest center of training tourism human resource, and the city's tourism human resource accounts for about 17% of the total tourism human resource of the whole country.

Table 2: Direct labor in HCMC's tourism by qualification

S.N	Classified by qualification	2015	
		Quantity	Percentage
1	Bachelor, graduate	1,891	15%
2	Intermediate vocational level and college	23,429	50%
3	Primary level	40,660	25%
4	Below primary level and untrained	19,000	10%

(Source: HCMC Department of Tourism)

* For Travel enterprises:

Large enterprises with leading brands in Ho Chi Minh City such as Saigon tourist, Vietravel, Ben Thanh tourist, Hoa Binh ... all have annual staff training policies such as training tour guides, training managers, drivers. Due to the large scale, most of the staff of these enterprises have been trained relatively well and have a lot of experiences, so the quality of service has met the requirements of tourists. In addition, some enterprises also set up tourism training establishments



such as Vietravel, Tranviet, Saigontourist, Mai Linh and Du Ngoan Viet, and each year they provide over 3,500 workers who are trained and fostered with vocational skills such as tourist guiding, tour operating, airline ticket selling, reception, waiting, ...

For the tourist guide force (TG), there is currently a shortcoming. Some popular foreign languages have been taught, but the quality of teaching is not high, and there is a lack of tourist guides in some rare foreign languages due to the binding of conditions of the Tourism Law... causing the phenomena of shortage in quality while redundancy in quantity.

Table 3: Number of international tourist guides in HCMC by foreign languages

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Sept 2016	International tourist arrivals in 9/2016
Foreign language							
UK	917	1,116	1,367	1,467	1,632	1,709	
French	194	217	231	229	224	216	95,100
Chinese	95	126	166	187	195	203	301,500
Japanese	136	150	166	150	151	145	275,800
Russian	71	92	114	114	112	112	42,600
German	59	82	99	107	96	91	64,800
Spanish	19	26	32	33	36	36	10,200
Thai	8	9	15	17	22	29	92,400
Korean	4	4	6	12	19	21	311,500
Indonesian	4	5	10	10	13	15	35,800
Khmer	0	1	3	5	7	11	16,800
Italian	2	5	5	4	5	7	16,600
Grand total	1,509	1,833	2,214	2,335	2,512	2,595	

(Source: HCMC Department of Tourism)

Table 4: Number of domestic tourist guides in HCMC

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	9 months of 2016
Quantity	1559	2178	2772	2275	2310	2376

(Source: HCMC Department of Tourism)

For small and medium enterprises, due to small scale and limited finance, local staff training and retraining are almost unavailable. These units mainly take part in training courses organized by the sector management organizations (mainly attended by managers). The average number of employees in these enterprises is from 3 to 6 persons (most of the employers have not been trained yet in tourism management and operation skills) and one person takes many positions to save expenses, so the tour price is low, leading to poor service quality affecting other enterprises.

As the demand for entertainment, leisure and sightseeing of tourists is increasing, the workforce at entertainment spots has increased significantly. However, the majority of speakers



have not been trained in tourism skills to qualify for tourist tour guide cards in accordance with the Tourism Law.

For specialized tourist transport enterprises, due to compulsory regulations, in the past years, they have been very interested in and actively participated in tourism professional classes for drivers, staff and crews, drivers of waterway vehicles. Through these professional classes, the workforce understands more about tourism activities, regulations in tourism activities, how to communicate and behave better to serve tourists.

** For hotel enterprises:*

4-5 star hotels are always interested in the work of training professional skills for employees at the units. Every year, they all have plans to train and cultivate their employees on a quarterly basis and divide them into sections such as room service, reception, etc., and for managers, they are often trained in courses of improving professional skills abroad or participate in seminars and short-term classes supported by foreign organizations.

Currently, hotels are very interested in the skill of professional assessment according to VTOS standards. Some 5-star hotels such as Park Haiyat, New Word, Sofitel, etc. have hired Vietnam Tourism Professional Certification Council to evaluate the professional skills of the staff at the hotels for the purpose of fostering and recognizing whether the staff's skills in the work process have met the tourists' current requirements and regional competitiveness when the ASEAN agreement on human resource freedom is implemented. Therefore, the training policy is made to suit each part of the hotels.

For 3-star hotels or lower, the labor force of these units has mostly been trained in professional classes: room handling, table waiting, management, reception, kitchen. This proves that the enterprises have started to pay attention to the quality of service and regulations in the business of accommodation compared to previous years. However, the executive management force of private hotels is still poor in professional management profession.

Overall assessment of human resources in Ho Chi Minh City shows that the labor force working in joint ventures, state-owned enterprises and limited liability companies are trained in a relatively methodical manner. However, in general, the majority of the labor force in the sector, especially in private, small and medium enterprises, has not yet undergone formal training, both in professional and managerial skills. In general, tourism human resource in Ho Chi Minh City has not met the demand of tourism in terms of quantity and quality. In terms of quantity, tourism training institutions only meet 60-70% of demand. In terms of quality, trained human resources are currently weak in foreign languages and knowledge of society, culture and history, affecting the quality of the services delivered to tourists.

2.4 Assessment of the training situation at the tourism training institutions in the area

Currently, in Ho Chi Minh City, there are about 56 tourist training institutions (16 universities with tourism departments, 12 colleges and 1 vocational college specializing in tourism training and 11 colleges with tourism faculty, 26 vocational training schools and 2 vocational training centers.

Regarding the content and training program:



At present, although there is a consensus on the training time of each occupation, there is not a unified program system from primary to university level. The schools have made many improvements in the program content in line with the general development needs of the sector; there have been many forms of domestic and foreign training links with tourism training schools of countries with developed tourism sector. However, the content of the programs now just focuses on equipping theoretical knowledge and underestimate practical skills. The duration of professional training is too little for students compared to theoretical study. In addition, the professional skills and foreign language qualification of the graduates are a concern in the training program because according to the evaluation of tourism enterprises in general, one of the current weaknesses of the forces preparing to participate in the tourism sector is the limited ability in communicating in foreign languages. In addition, the training of guides using rare languages (Spanish, German, Thai) should also be paid attention.

Regarding the lecturers and training managers:

Compared with the previous years, the teaching staff participating in tourism are constantly increasing in both quantity and quality. Most of the teaching staff from primary level to universities, in addition to professional knowledge, are well-trained or professionally trained at home and abroad, and have practical experience in the field of tourism. However, there is also a concern that the stable faculty is still thin, mostly visiting lecturers teaching at many different schools and centers, so they have very little time to participate in professional work as well as school management, and they hardly have conditions to share knowledge and experiences with each other.

Regarding facilities and technical bases for training:

In general, most schools are equipped with relatively modern teaching facilities such as overhead, slide projector, video, VCD, Lab ... even some schools enlist the support of facilities from international organizations such as the City Tourism and Hospitality Vocational Training School funded by Luxembourg (in addition to the above facilities, it is also equipped with things for practice such as kitchen, chamber, restaurants, wine bars, reception counters ...), Sai Gon Tourism Vocational Training School assisted by the French Consulate on teaching materials and facilities

However, there are still some shortcomings such as a number of schools still in shortage of equipment and materials and technical facilities for teaching as well as practice, the locations still unstable, hired and scattered in many places. This also partly affects the quality of the schools' output.

Regarding the quality and effectiveness of training:

The quality and effectiveness of training of the system of schools is assessed through the number of graduates who are employed in tourism enterprises. In the past years, the schools provided a skilled workforce for the tourism sector, however, compared to the number of graduates, the rate of recruitment in tourism enterprises is still modest. One of the reasons is that they do not meet the professional and foreign language requirements of the enterprises. This is also a challenge for the schools in the study for improvement and updating of new knowledge in the teaching program and content to partly meet the above requirements.



3. Advantages and shortcomings of tourism human resources in Ho Chi Minh City

3.1 Advantages

Ho Chi Minh City is the largest tourist center in the country, with international visitors arriving in Ho Chi Minh City accounting for more than 66% of international tourist arrivals in Vietnam. We have a rich and qualified tourism human resource, accounting for more than 40% of the country's tourism sector; tourist accommodation facilities are increasingly improving infrastructure to meet the needs of tourists (from 1 to 5 stars); travel businesses are always in the top 10 of the country, creating brands in the domestic and foreign markets with the system of tourism training institutions from intermediate level to colleges, universities. Ho Chi Minh City has a favorable geographical position, is the largest circulation center of the country with a diversified and rich transportation infrastructure system: air, waterway and road; the conditions of temperate climate are less affected by natural disasters and floods, so the system of infrastructure is relatively modern to meet the requirements of domestic and foreign investors. And especially, we have a relatively safe and orderly security system that meets the needs of tourists when visiting and traveling.

3.2 Shortcomings

Firstly, the State management still has many shortcomings (especially the planning and plan-making) and the orientation of human resource development is still limited and quite fragmented and inconsistent.

Secondly, the teachers and managers in the tourism sector still fail to meet quality requirements. The force of teachers and lecturers from different sources is diversified and unspecific; a part of them who have been trained in developed countries over the years are young and inexperienced; Many lecturers are still limited in their foreign language proficiency and modern pedagogical methods while the requirements for knowledge and skills in undergraduate and postgraduate teaching are increasing.

Thirdly, there is a serious shortage of undergraduate and post-graduate training institutions specialized in tourism. In addition, the curriculum of some training institutions is still patchy with few new factors; the content of the program has not been linked to reality, affecting the quality of training. In addition, the coordination and sharing of responsibilities between the training institutions and businesses in practical training is weak, leading to limited training quality.

Fourthly, the workers switching jobs to tourism are at a low level (many of them have not been trained yet). The job creation for high-quality workers has reached the quantity, but the quality is not high, not sustainable;

And the last but not least factor is that the total income of skilled workers in the tourism sector is not competitive with other regions and other services. This is especially true for experienced, qualified and technical professionals.

3.3 Challenges

- In 2015, when the ASEAN agreement on freedom of labor transfer between countries in the region took effect, it puts higher and stricter requirements for human resources with professional and foreign language skills.



- The development of diverse types of tourism requires training institutions to be more dynamic in their human resource training orientation to ensure the supply of labor for tourism types that are attracting tourists.

- The unhealthy business environment leads to the difference between the training way of the institutions and the reality.

- The difference in income between domestic and foreign workers is still quite far away, so it is not enough to attract high-quality workers committed to the profession.

- The cost of human resource training for tourism sector is high due to consumption of materials. In the course of practice, the practice rooms must be equipped with standard equipment in comparison with a 3-5 star hotel model.

- The lack of trainers who are properly trained and have good experience with the profession is a big challenge to high-quality tourism human resource training.

- The qualification of foreign language proficiency among students much varies, leading to the many limitation in foreign language training that does not meet the current needs; this problem is still the biggest challenge for the tourism sector when Agreement on free labor transfer among countries in the region takes effect at the end of 2015.

4. Orientation for developing human resources in Ho Chi Minh City by 2020

It is expected that from now to 2020, each year, Ho Chi Minh City needs about 21,600 workers in the service sector (about 8% of total demand). However, in order to meet the requirements, and especially the requirements of quantity and quality, in parallel with improving the training facilities, having training and cultivation plan orientations for human resources suitable to the need of development and supporting businesses is always an urgent requirement.

In order for the quality of tourism human resources in Ho Chi Minh City to be on a par with other cities in Southeast Asia by 2020, meeting the needs of the quantity and quality of human resources in most fields of the tourism sector, Developing Ho Chi Minh City into a training center of tourism human resources for the Southern region and the whole country, the state management agencies, tourism enterprises and tourism training institutions need specific orientation and solutions as follows:

4.1 For state management agencies

- Develop the right orientation, strengthen policy making capacity, form the legal framework and mechanism for developing high quality human resources to serve the tourism sector.

- Ensure the close link among State management agencies, tourism enterprises and tourism training institutions, ensuring to be a bridge for enterprises and training institutions The State encourages investment in tourism training, provides tax support, ...

- Provide necessary information on tourism human resources for training institutions in the process of integration, especially when the ASEAN agreement on freedom of human resource circulation takes effect by the end of 2015.

- Vietnam Tourism Occupation Standard (VTOS) new version includes 6 main occupations (Reception, chamber service, restaurant service, food processing, tour operation and tourist guiding) and expansion for 4 specialized career areas that meet the high demands of the sector



(tourist interpretation, ship service, hotel management and small-stay accommodation operation), developed compatible with the ASEAN Common Competency Standards for Tourism Professionals (ACCSTP) and meeting the requirements of the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Agreement on Tourism Profession (MRA-TP).

- Strive for the goal that by 2020 all managers of the tourism sector are trained and fostered with professional knowledge about the sector and foreign languages to be capable of doing State management.

- Create conditions for businesses and tourism training institutions to participate in international training cooperation programs to improve the quality of tourism human resources in the city in the integration period.

- Promote and build images of tourism sector in order to create a beautiful impression in the community to attract new human resources in the future.

4.2 For enterprises

- Develop a long-term and regular plan for training and retraining of the workforce at the units, especially for senior management staff to develop management plans and programs suitable and responsive to the development trend of the world.

- Develop flexible salary and bonus policies to attract, retain and promote high-quality human resources to work at enterprises.

- Strengthen international cooperation to exchange workers between and among units in order to help Vietnamese workers have more opportunities to study and improve their qualifications abroad, especially in the region.

- Develop the association and support policies for training institutions in the city.

4.3 For tourism training institutions

- Identify the needs of the societies and the markets of visitors arriving in the city to have a training orientation that is specific to each market to meet the output standards.

- Innovate the training programs to reduce theoretical study and increase practice, especially organizing practical training in regional countries.

- Develop cultural exchange programs among tourism students in the region. This is an opportunity for students to experience reality and learn about culture, and gain more practical knowledge when integrating with ASEAN.

- Monitor and update information on ASEAN integration process to make timely adjustments in the training of tourism human resources.

- Improve the quality of lecturers in terms of skills, pedagogical methods, continue to innovate the training programs to suit the trend.

- Increase the number of enrollments, at the same time focus on the quality of inputs; especially the foreign language proficiency must be relatively similar to avoid the differences. Hence, a labor force that meets the standard of foreign languages and expertise can be created.

- Develop universities specialized in tourism training in the coming time.

5. Solutions to develop tourism human resources in Ho Chi Minh City

Firstly, for State management agencies



- Develop the orientation and strengthen policy making capacity, form the legal framework and mechanism for developing high quality human resources to serve the tourism sector. At the same time, pay attention to ensuring a close link among State management agencies and tourism training institutions and tourism service enterprises in training, fostering and using high quality tourism human resources.

- Create conditions to build universities specialized in tourism training and postgraduate training programs to meet the current needs of training and developing high quality human resources in the City's tourism sector.

- Develop preferential mechanisms and policies to attract gray-mattered labor sources to serve the tourism industry, while retaining the workforce committed to the industry.

- Strengthen the training and retraining of management staff and tourism labor force in the City (training postgraduate levels, strengthening international cooperation on training in ASEAN)

Secondly, for tourism training institutions

- Constantly improve the professional level and intensive development of teaching staff by various new forms of training, retraining and cultivating to access information, knowledge and practical experience in the tourism field home and abroad.

- Complete the curriculum framework aimed at approaching advanced training programs in the world in combination with development of training and compensation forms (inter-university and post-graduate training, short-term classes,...). Tourism training institutions will apply Vietnam Tourism Occupational Standards (VTOS) to realize the national standards in the field of vocational training thereby contributing to improving the capacity of tourism human resources.

- Facilitate students to explore actual environment (participate in occupational competitions and sector events) and strengthen cooperation and exchange with international projects to enlist support of funding for training and developing long-term human resources (especially foreign language training).

- Increase investment in facilities and equipment for teaching, practice and internship of students to avoid the current situation of heavy theoretical learning.

- Among the training institutions, it is necessary to promote cooperation and association in training. In addition, they must also actively link with domestic and foreign enterprises in training to create tourism human resources that meet the current needs of society.

Thirdly; for enterprises

- Need to develop a flexible salary and bonus mechanism to attract, retain and promote high quality human resources to work at the enterprises.

- Focus on training and retraining through organizing short-term training courses (sending staff to study or invite leading experts in tourism) to constantly improve the quality of the high quality workforce at the enterprises.

- Have appropriate policies to create a realistic learning environment for students of training institutions (universities, colleges and intermediate vocational training schools) in tourism in the locality as well as actively cooperate with training institutions to support and finance some projects to develop tourism human resources at the training institutions.



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