

Regional Linkage Investigation in Tourism Development: The Case of Northwest in Vietnam

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Abstract

This research is conducted for investigating the facts of regional linkages in tourism development in the area of Northwest of Vietnam. Primary data were collected from government tourism management officers, staffs working at the tourism resort, researchers, and tourists in Northwest of Vietnam. In-depth interview approach has also been employed with tourism professionals and foreign & local travelers. The results show that most of the linkage projects are still mostly affiliate advertising; tourism-related projects have not yet designed a linkage between tourism; some provinces have not focused on developing regional and suburban tourist products; funding for tourism promotion is still substantially limited; joint programs have not yet developed mechanisms and policies for inter-regional. Based on the findings, policies for regional and sub-regional linkages in the Northwest are given for improving the linkages of tourism in and among provinces in the Northwest of Vietnam.

Keyword: Northwest, Vietnam tourism linkage, tourism linkage

1. Introduction

Being a small country in Asia, Vietnam has a population of nearly 100 million people in 2017, covering 63 provinces and cities and each province has an average population of about 1.5 million with relatively small economic scale. The economy is held on the basis of "province" unit. In this structure, the provinces are independent in terms of administration and budget management. 63 provinces and cities have different social and economic conditions but basically, have the same economic structure. The economic activity of the provinces is quite isolated, with almost no "horizontal" relationship between different provinces. So there are 63 comparable and similar "independent" economies (Tran, 2016). Such a system of territorial, economic structures is showing some major shortcomings such as (i) waste of resources due to inability to promote the advantages of economic scale; (ii) unfair competition among provinces; (iii) obstructing the modern economic development trend and expansion of linkages and production networks (Dong, 2017; Tran, 2016).

For overcoming the "provincial economy" structure like this, Vietnam administration recently employed "zoning plan" to promote and coordinate regional integration and linkage. The country is divided into six territories - subdivided into provinces with similar natural conditions and adjacent areas. Four key economic regions (KERs) have been set up to speed up the development trend to other neighboring provinces. However, KERs have not yet created the acceleration as expected, which is still mainly based on the development on the "width scale" (focusing on quantity rather than quality) – with low quality and efficiency Ngo and Vu (2015), there are not many products with high grey matter content.

The fact is that there is entirely no regional economic space established in Vietnam at the moment as there is no close linkage between provinces inside and outside the region. There are some reasons for limitations of regional linkage development in Vietnam, including (i) the limited recognition of the role of regional integration and linkage in national socio-economic development; (ii) lack of driven determinants to implement the policy on regional integration; (iii) limitations in defining and planning for strategic regional development; (iv) lack of policies and institutions to create a motive force for regional development; (v) and lack of linkage in planning among provinces and cities in each region (Vu, 2017).

The issue of linking and collaborating linkages between provinces in each region and among regions is viewed as a "milestone" that needs to be significantly solved for improving regional economic effectiveness and efficiency. In the context of extensive economic integration and modern technology, regional economic development and regional integration have become extremely important to (i) create

regional competitive advantages in the market-based economy and international integration; (ii) maximize and take a full regional advantage; minimize contradiction in planning and investment; (iii) find the breakthroughs; spur and create pervasive incentive forces to other areas; create pioneering areas for institutional reform, attracting investment, improving production and business efficiency; (iv) promote international integration, create regions for international competitiveness; and others.

Recently, some studies of the organization of tourism territory in Vietnam have been studied and applied in practice. It is said that tourism activities cannot develop effectively without significant attention to the spatial dimension of tourism. This refers to a spatially integrated system of tourism objects and related services basing on the optimal use of tourism resources, infrastructure and technical facilities and other determinants for achieving the target economic, social and environmental performance towards sustainable development (Pham, 2016).

Tourism is a combination of sub-regions tourism, tourism centers and tourism destinations. Northwest area includes 14 provinces of Vietnam with an area of 95,254 km² (accounting for 28.6% of the country's area). The population is 20.3 million (in 2016), mainly ethnic minorities of Tay, Nung, Thai people. This area is made up of mostly high mountains which divided the terrain seriously with full obstacles and not easy to access. The region has more than thirty ethnic minorities with a long tradition of culture and traditional festivals, national tourism areas and tourist centers with historical monuments and majestic attractions of Vietnam such as Sa Pa in Lao Cai, Dong Van in Ha Giang. But this is also the poorest economic area in the country of Vietnam. The rate of poverty households in this area is about 26%, which is three times higher than the national average, with the number of poor districts making up 70% of the country (Steering Committee for the Northwest, 2017). That is why tourism development plays an important part in promoting socio-economic development and poverty reduction. In recent years, this area has deployed some tourism development cooperation projects. However, the current projects seem inefficiency and ineffectiveness both in economic and social aspects. So it is urgent to promote tourism linkage and design a completed tourism linkage style/model for getting sustainable tourism development together with socio-economic development in the area of Northwest of Vietnam.

2. Review of Literature

Regional linkage

The most typical research on regional linkage in Vietnam can be regarded as the project named: "Research and propose guidelines and policies on regional economic development, regional linkage" (Central Economic Commission, 2015). The project has highlighted the international experience, provided general assessment and proposed some solutions for regional economic development and regional linkage in Vietnam.

Besides, other papers such as Ngo (2012), Tran (2016), and Vu (2017) have presented the situation of regional linkage in Vietnam. These authors argued that regional linkages in Vietnam are still limited, not yet forming regional governance institutions, each province has a small economic size and not yet formed a chain link.

Ngo and Vu (2015) analyzed three development linkages in the key economic regions (KERs): linking economic development, linking the development of infrastructure (transport, electricity, and water), linking to solve environmental pollution and linking in human resource development. However, the growth of KERs is still on the breadth perspective (attach importance on quantity), not yet formed the regional spatial linkage.

Some papers such as Ho & Le (2012), Truong (2009), Tran (2016) analysed and assessed the activities of linking provinces in the central coastal region of Vietnam and indicated that regional linkages in Vietnam are still limited. It lacks awareness of the need for regional integration as well as the idea of regional integration in socio-economic development has not been clearly expressed. Le (2016) and Vu (2017) emphasized that regional linkages in Vietnam remain voluntary, lack of scientific and practical ground basis, no close linkages between localities to form an organic linkage, and a lack of proper regional institutional governance.

Tourism linkage

In Vietnam, there have been a number of articles on tourism linkage recently published in scientific journals and conference proceedings. The content of these articles includes some of the following key issues.

First, the views, objectives, and content of the tourism linkage. Truong (2009), Ho and Le (2012) have raised their views on tourism linkages: equality, mutual benefit; links on a voluntary basis; linkages are projected and programmed with clear objectives. Ha (2014) has developed six principles: observance, voluntary, consensus, equality, mutual benefit, sharing. Consistently, Pham (2016) also concretizes three fundamental principles: equality; volunteering; and planning detailed tourism linkage projects and projects.

Ha (2014) proposes the objective of tourism linkage with enhancing the efficiency of economic growth, ensuring the satisfaction of tourists, creating a competitive tourism brand, establishing the vision that tourism as the significant growth resource of the region, building the key national tourist areas, regional and national tourist routes. Pham (2016) has set long-term goals to exploit and promote the potentials and strengths of each region effectively; the short-term target is to prioritize investment in key areas such as the development of tourism infrastructure, the connection of "destination" with key tourist destinations of the region, developing tourism commodity, training human resources.

Truong (2009), Ho & Le (2012) outlined the content of linkages such as: redistribute of productive forces; adjust tourism development planning; establish synchronously the inter-provincial transport infrastructure; set up unified tourist space; joint training and development of human resources; mobilize investment capital and develop a common policy mechanism for the whole region; coordinate promotion of commercial tourism. Ha (2014) emphasized the content of linkage to develop particular tourism products; linkage to adjust the implementation of planning. Nguyen (2016) and Nguyen (2016) propose that the associated content should include the development of strategies, planning, and policies for tourism development; coordinating by provinces to develop effective linkage mechanisms; strengthening both vertical and horizontal linkage management.

Second, regarding solutions to enhance tourism links. Tran (2015), Nguyen (2015), Nguyen (2015), Do (2015) have proposed some recommendations such as: setting up the organizational structure of the management of the tourist area; enhancing horizontal and vertical linkage management; promoting tourism linkage brand development; mobilizing resources in linking tourism promotion and advertisement; tourism product development and quality management of tourism products.

Tourism links in the Northwest of Vietnam

So far, there are very few in-depth studies on tourism linkages in Northwest area.

Ha (2011) has proposed some measures to develop inter-provincial tourism products in Phu Tho - Yen Bai - Lao Cai. Do (2015) refers to four tourism product groups suitable for the northern mountainous region such as i) nature tourism and adventure sports; ii) exploring and experiencing the life of ethnic minority communities; iii) travel to the root tourism and agri-ecotourism product.

Tran (2015), Ha (2017), Nguyen (2017) analysed the current status of linking north-western area of Vietnam and proposed solutions for the Northwest tourism linkage development such as (i) establish an effective linkage mechanism (establish a steering committee for regional tourism linkage, a dedicated regional operational system, and a regional tourism fund), ii) build trademarks and tourism products bearing the identity of each region and each locality; iii) focus on promoting inter-regional tourism; iv) master plan regions and tourism sites and routes of each province as well as the whole region.

Regarding the issue of cross-border tourism linkage of the Northwest, Tran (2015) analyses the current status of tourism development in Yunnan with the provinces in the border-area of Vietnam, and proposed solutions on new tourism products mechanism, tourism human resources training.

In summary, prior studies on regional and tourism linkage in Vietnam had initially assessed situations and proposed some possible recommendations for improving the linkages of regions and tourism. However, studies on tourism linkages still have some limitations such as not clearly proposed governance policy of linking regions and sub-regions to develop tourism; a theoretical model has not been designed as the basis for implementation in accordance with Northwest conditions.

3. Data and Research Methodology

Data Collection

This study employs secondary data gathered from the Northwest Steering Committee, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, Provincial People's Committees, and reports from the Departments of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of the Northwest provinces. Primary data were gathered from the seminar, group discussion, interviews of members of the national scientific and technological research project with the provincial state management offices in tourism of Northwest provinces and managers in tourism areas and tourism centres in the Northwest such as Dong Van Sa Pa, Plateau, Ba Be National Park, Moc Chau and Na Hang which have been organized in 2017. The content of the seminar is issues of difficulties and advantages of tourism linkages, results, limitations and their causes in deploying tourism linkages projects; on these premises, guidelines on tourism linkage model in Northwest is also discussed. In particular, we conducted a survey with 755 people, including officials of the state management offices for tourism (185 people), officials and staff at tourist sites (91 people), tourism firms and tourism individual household business (183 people), scientists (60 people) and tourists (236 people).

The questionnaires included issues such as the respondents' evaluation of the importance of linkages in the Northwest area for each type of tourism; the importance of conditions for tourism linkage development; evaluation of the status of tourism development contents in; the expectations of the respondents on the content of tourism development; the extent to which tourism forms together with tourism development; assessment of the role of current stakeholders; the level of agreement on the content, forms and results of tourism linkage development; the level of agreement on solutions to build a model of regional and sub-regional linkage for tourism development in the area of Northwest of Vietnam.

Research Approach

Based on the secondary and primary data relating to regional linkage in tourism development with the case study of the Northern Midland and mountainous area of Vietnam, analytical analysis and description are employed for depicting the topic and then proposed some recommendations for improving the regional linkage in tourism development in the Northwest area of Vietnam.

4. Current Facts of Tourism Development Linkages in the Northwest of Vietnam

Since 2008, a number of tourism development projects have been set up in this area, some of which are i) the program "tourism linkage to the roots"; (ii) regional and interregional bilateral and multilateral tourism projects.

4.1. Linkage Program "Travel to the Roots"

In 2005, the three provinces of Phu Tho, Yen Bai, Lao Cai cooperated to develop the program "Travel to the roots" on the principle of "voluntary, equal and mutual benefit," each province hosts the event every year respectively.

The program is increasingly being renovated in terms of content and organization. Since 2011, three provinces have agreed to coordinate activities in the field of tourism, tours organization and associated with unique tourism products; connecting the spiritual tour along the Red River which includes: Hung Temple (Phu Tho) - Bao Ha Temple - Thuong Temple (Lao Cai); developing terraced field tourism products along Route 32 from Phu Tho - Nghia Lo - Mu Cang Chai (Yen Bai) - Sa Pa (Lao Cai) - Nguyen Duong (Yunnan, China); construction of the type of adventure tourism such as conquering the Fansipan, and tourism to explore villages of ethnic minorities in all three provinces.

Since the provinces of Lao Cai, Phu Tho, and Yen Bai are officially members of the tourism development cooperation program of 8 open Northwest area, the provinces have agreed not to continue their "travel to the roots" tourism program in 2013 to better focus on enhancing the activities of the tourism development program within the cooperation of the whole 8 open Northwest provinces.

4.2. Regional and Interregional Bilateral and Multilateral Tourism Projects

In addition to the above linkage projects, the provinces in the Northern Midlands and Mountains have also implemented many bilateral and multilateral cooperation projects.

On December 4th, 2012, the association of eight open Northwest provinces signed a cooperation agreement with the Vietnam Tourism Association along the following main contents: i) cooperation on development and implementation of responsible tourism development strategy in the Northwest; ii) cooperation in tourism product development in eight provinces, with priority given to investment in the construction of community-based tourism products, adventure tourism, environmentally and socially-

responsible tourism; iii) cooperation on promotion and marketing of tourism for Northwest tourism in general and for responsible tourism in the area in particular; and iv) collaborative development of human tourism resources for tourism businesses and communities at tourist sites.

On January 9th 2017, Tourism Association and Tourist Firms of the eight open Northwest provinces signed a cooperation agreement for the period 2017 - 2020, including the contents: Cooperation, exchange of information on tourism development; organizing tourism promotion and advertisement activities; building and developing tourist products; fostering and training human resources for tourism; supporting member enterprises, organizations and individuals related to tourism.

Bilateral cooperation between provinces in the region and with localities in the country. On April 26 of 2014, the Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of Phu Tho and the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Bac Lieu Province signed a cooperation program for tourism development. Cooperation contents include i) Planning, calling for investment; ii) Promoting tourism; iii) Developing tourism products, and iv) State management.

On September 7 of 2016, the Department of Tourism, Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of 8 provinces and cities: Hanoi, Phu Tho, Ho Chi Minh City, Ba Ria - Vung Tau - Binh Phuoc - Binh Duong - Dong Nai - Tay Ninh signed a cooperation program for tourism development in the period 2016 - 2020. The content of cooperation projects include: i) Assisting in the state management of tourism such as exchanging information on tourism management activities; coordinating propaganda and promotion of tourism; cooperative linking tour with the spirit of eight provinces - one destination; coordinating human resources training in tourism; participating in tourism events, rotating organization of tourism events and projects; ii) coordinating to support enterprises, organizations and individuals related to tourism such as: supporting investors, enterprises, organizations and individuals to carry out administrative visa procedures, finding out investment opportunities, implementing tourism linkage projects construction of tourism products, connecting tours, tourism routes between provinces; coordinating the tourist support in the provinces to attract tourists to 8 provinces and cities.

To implement this cooperation program, the Department has implemented specific measures such as the establishment of a permanent tourism cooperation department in 8 provinces, including Department leaders and specialized office of the Department, building an e-mail box for the 8 provincial Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism, holding an annual rotating meeting to evaluate and coordinate the plan for implementation of cooperation.

On March 27 of 2014, Phu Tho and Ho Chi Minh city have signed a cooperation program of tourism development in the period of 2014 – 2018 which covers four areas: exchange of information on the development of tourism, tourism promotion, development of tourism products, and planning to attract investment.

Cooperating with foreign partners. A number of provinces have strengthened their regional tourism connections with the provinces of the Northeast, Yunnan (China), Thailand and Laos such as Dien Bien province, which initially has tourism linkage development with Chiang Rai (Thailand) to coordinate and promote cooperation between the two provinces; they also coordinated with Phong Xa Lu, U-Dam-Xay, Luang Prabang (Laos) to develop tourism cooperation activities. Lao Cai province cooperates to develop inter-regional, inter-route and tourism products in conjunction with Con Minh (China) - Lao Cai - Ha Noi - Hai Phong - Quang Ninh economic corridor.

5. Assessment of Tourism Linkage Projects in the Northwest Area

Basing on the results of questionnaires and interviews collected, some weaknesses have been raised as:

First, most of the linkage projects are still mostly affiliate advertising. New affiliate projects focus on hosting events, exchanging information; have not really paid attention to supervising and administering the performance of linkage contents. The content of linking specific product building, human resource training, planning, investment, etc., are less focused or not implemented.

Second, tourism-related projects have not yet designed a linkage between tourism, mainly horizontal cooperation by provincial agencies, territorial space linkage and inter-sectoral linkage, which lack of coordination and close linkage with tourism associations and tourism business enterprises and still in the form of formalism. Therefore, tourism cooperation activities are not effective and sustainable.

Third, some provinces in the Northwest have not focused on developing regional and suburban tourist products with little or no interest in developing new and typical regional and suburban products. Moreover, there is still overlap between the provinces, especially the community tourism products.

To assess the status of tourism linkage of the provinces in the Northwest, 755 people were asked, including officials in the tourism management bodies, officials in tourist resorts, tourism firms, researchers, and tourists. Survey results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Evaluation of Tourism Development of Northwest of Vietnam

	Tourism officials of state management bodies	Tourism sites' officials	Tourism firms	Researchers	Tourists	Overall
1. The linkage situations of tourism development strategies, planning, and policies						
Linkages of tourism development strategies	2.98	3.09	3.14	2.77	3.28	3.11
Linkages of planning of development of tourist areas	2.78	2.97	3.11	2.98	3.11	3.00
Linkages of tourism promotion policies	2.66	2.90	2.92	2.86	3.08	2.90
2. The linkage situations of tourism service development						
Linkage on development of tourism services in the whole region	2.93	3.29	3.03	2.92	3.19	3.08
Linkage on development of specific service of each sub-region	2.91	2.99	3.06	2.98	3.26	3.07
Linkage on development of specific service of each province	2.90	2.75	2.99	2.87	3.17	2.99
Linkage to form a chain of tourism services in the whole region	2.73	2.88	2.92	2.82	3.15	2.93
Linkage to establish tourism tours and routes	2.84	2.81	2.98	2.91	3.20	2.99
3. Current status of linkage in tourism promotion						
Linkage to design the common online website	2.90	2.97	3.08	2.91	3.24	3.06
Linkage to design the joint brands	2.53	2.85	2.84	2.65	3.11	2.83
Linkage to design and participate in tourism fairs	2.99	2.99	3.04	2.88	3.14	3.04
Linkage to share tourism information	2.93	3.08	3.19	2.95	3.09	3.06

(Based on the Likert scale of 1 is the lowest score and 5 is the highest mark)

Data in Table 1 illustrate that the average point of the status of linkage content in the region on tourism development strategies, planning and policies; linkage on the development of tourism services; and linkage on the promotion of tourism is very low, only 2.9 to 3.11 marks. Similarly, the average score of intra-regional and inter-regional linkages, linkages between destinations is relatively low, ranging from 2.8 to 2.9 point.

Forth, funding for tourism promotion is still substantially limited, lack of binding and funding mechanism to hold inter-regional tourism activities which made the tourism activities unprofessional. Many provinces do not have effective promotional tools and are not able to conduct major promotion projects/programs at local and foreign tourist centers.

Fifth, joint projects have not yet developed mechanisms and policies for inter-regional as well as within the sub-region under the specific characteristics of the whole region and each sub-region. It has not established a common governance framework for coordination across the region. Moreover, tourism activities are still self-contained in each province. So, the collaboration outcomes are limited, the fragmentation in tourism is still quite popular.

Under the survey, among the 755 surveyed, 358 people (47.4%) agreed that linkages in Northwest do not have a clear coordination mechanism among provinces and in the future, the mechanism should be designed more clearly.

6. Policies for Regional and Sub-regional Tourism Linkage in the Northwest

First, establish a Coordination Committee for tourism linkage throughout the Northern Midlands and Mountains and Steering Committee to link tourism in sub-regions; define the functions, tasks and operation regulations of the Committee to ensure the effectiveness of the association.

In Vietnam, the region has not become an administrative level. Thus, the regional Coordination Committee and Sub-Regional Tourism Committees, when established, are not an intermediary level between the central and provincial governments but the lead agency plays an important role as the "conductor" in operating tourism linkage of the region and each sub-region. Therefore, it is necessary to form a regional tourism management institution; assign detailed authorities for the Steering Committee to handle specific management issues in managing tourism resources and developing tourism according to planning, in line with the regional socio-economic development master plan as well as the master plan for tourism in Vietnam by 2020, vision 2030.

At the regional level, a regional tourism consultancy team will be established, including prestigious and qualified experts, to advise the Coordination Committee on tourism development and tourism linkages in the region. At the sub-regional level, it is necessary to have the establishment of teams: Tourism Coordination Team, Tourism Product Development Team, Tourist Information Promotion Team, Tourism Human Resource Development Team. Regarding the Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, it needs staffing for the tourism management department and assignment of specialized staff on coordination, promotion, and development of human resources.

According to the survey, 691 out of 755 respondents (accounting for 91.53%) said that they needed to build a regional coordination organization in the northern midland and mountainous.

Table 2. Necessity to Establish a Tourism Coordination Organization in the Northwest

	Very unnecessary	unnecessary	Neutral	Necessary	Very necessary	Total
Total surveyed (No. of people)	1	4	59	407	284	755
Management officials of state agencies in tourism	1	2	17	105	60	185
Management officials at the resort	-	-	8	58	25	91
Tourism firms	-	2	7	89	85	183
Scientists	-	-	7	41	12	60
Tourists	-	-	20	114	102	236
Structure-based on level of necessity (%)						
Total number of surveyed (%)	0.13	0.53	7.81	53.91	37.62	100
Management officials of state agencies in tourism	0.54	1.08	9.19	56.76	32.43	100
Management officials at the resort	-	-	8.79	63.74	27.47	100
Tourism businesses	-	1.09	3.83	48.63	46.45	100
Scientists	-	-	11.67	68.33	20.00	100
Tourists	-	-	8.47	48.31	43.22	100

Second, the establishment of an operational fund for the Regional Tourism Coordination Committee and Sub-Regional Tourism Steering Committees. The tourism development fund is formed from the following sources: support from the Government budget, provincial contribution budgets, business contributions and other sources such as entry visa fees visits, tourist contributions, and other sources.

Third, at the provincial level in the Northwest, it is proposed to separate the tourism management department from the current Department of culture, sports, and tourism to establish a tourist department under the provincial People's Committee. Tourism is considered as one of the most important economic sectors, striving to become a key economic sector by 2020. Therefore, it is necessary to form a separate state

management agency in the field of tourism in the potential provinces that have advantages of tourism development.

Fourth, to formulate planning on tourism development in the northern midlands and mountain region and each sub-region up to 2030 with a vision toward 2050. The planning must be systematic and united; have a long-term vision; promote community and business roles, in line with market principles; review and supplement the tourism planning of provinces in accordance with the planning of tourism in the whole region, pay attention to specific nuances of regional and sub-regions. Besides, it is suggested to continue to complete the planning of tourism in unplanned provinces.

Fifth, the state management should determine the content of tourism linkage at the whole region and each sub-region level such as: jointly formulate regional tourism development planning, have linkage in construction of specific tourism products for the whole region and each sub-region; step up the promotion of tourist sites at regional and sub-regional levels; combine the construction and improve the transport system and the tourist infrastructure, build regional and sub-regional tourist development funds; associate in training and human resource development.

Sixth, the linkage in establishing a system of transport infrastructure and supply chain development to meet the requirements of tourism development. Besides, it needs to upgrade the transport system in the northern midland and mountainous areas to expeditiously complete the transport infrastructure projects for bordering provinces; continue investing in the construction of new routes such as: the 4C National Road Ha Giang - Dong Van, the 4D National Road of Ban Phiet - Sin Ten intersection, National Road 32 of Deo Ke - Tu Le section to connect the inter-provincial tourist routes.

Besides, it should concentrate investment in a number of tourist cities to establish the “central pole” for tourism growth of the whole region, such as Sa Pa (Lao Cai), Dong Van stone plateau (Ha Giang province) Dien Bien (Dien Bien province), Moc Chau (Son La province). Visitors from major centers such as Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang, Ha Long will go to major tourist cities in the region and spread to other provinces. As such, these central poles will become the center for distribution of visitors, centers of travel services, accommodation, souvenir production, human resources training of the whole region. These thriving “central poles” will become the locomotives of the entire tourism cruise ship.

Seventh is about joint training for tourism human resources development; linking the establishment of science and technology and linking tourism enterprises.

The Tourism Coordinating Committee for the whole region and the Steering Committee for Tourism of the sub-regions closely coordinate with the provincial Departments of culture, sports, and tourism, enterprises, universities and colleges to train and foster managers and staffs of tourism; prioritize the selection of ethnic minority children to work in tourist resorts. The State can support investment in the development of tourism universities in the region such as Tay Bac University (in Son La province), Hung Vuong University (in Phu Tho province), Tan Trao University (in Tuyen Quang province), Thai Nguyen University (in Thai Nguyen province) to become a professional tourism training centre for the whole region.

Besides, it is essential to research to connect social network with tourism promotion, encourage information technology application, connect the online network for all hotels of the whole region with the Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism in the Northwest and with the international border gates.

Finally, there should be a linkage between the core elements of the tourism supply chain, including shipping companies, travel agencies, and local communities to provide high quality and affordable products for visitors. Moreover, they should promote effective linkages between local authorities and enterprises and linkage between large tourism enterprises in the tourism centers (Hanoi, Ha Long, Ho Chi Minh City and Da Nang) to establish a complete supply chain for tourism development. The regional and sub-regional tourism Steering committees, as well as local authorities, should promptly resolve obstacles, support and create favorable business conditions for tourism enterprises in the area.

In short, tourism linkage development towards sustainable is the solution to create the tourism development for the whole the region. Link development across the region and each sub-region is closely related to the issue of sustainable development. To build a sustainable tourism linkage requires the implementation of effective content, forms, and solutions. Particular attention should be paid to the linkage in each sub-region, avoiding administrative barriers and natural conditions. Linking requires total power, coordinated public and private, multi-stakeholder cooperation.

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