



Ecotourism Development in Moc Hoa District, Long an Province, Vietnam

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Abstract

Ecotourism has a lot of potential in Moc Hoa district, Long An province, however given the existing exploitation, development has not progressed as planned and is moving gradually in comparison to the aims. The research has offered recommendations for promoting the growth of ecotourism in Moc Hoa district, Long An province, based on the analysis and resources presently available.

Keywords: ecotourism, Moc Hoa, potential, development orientation

1. Introduction

Due to the characteristic natural assets of the Dong Thap Muoi area, ecotourism is gaining greater recognition and investment in Moc Hoa district, Long An province. Visitors who appreciate the outdoors and are interested in discovering about various ecosystems ought to consider this location to be perfect owing to its diverse melaleuca forest ecology, interconnected river system, and unspoiled natural sceneries. In addition to being essential for tourism, Moc Hoa's ecosystem is crucial for biodiversity preservation, ecological balance, and environmental protection. It also consistently promotes the local community's socioeconomic development.

On top of that, ecotourism in Moc Hoa contributes to a variety of communal and cultural values. In addition to providing tourists with an opportunity to appreciate the natural environment, tourism activities additionally provide an opportunity to learn about the individual lives, cultures, and practices of the local population, particularly the features of river-related activities. In addition to increasing public knowledge of environmental preservation, the growth of this sort of tourism boosts employment, increases personal incomes, and supports the local economy's sustainable growth. In order to evaluate the prospects and obstacles for the development of the tourist sector in this area, this study focuses on the analysis of tourism resources and the existing state of ecotourism exploitation in Moc Hoa district. Through the analysis process, the study will propose specific orientations and solutions to exploit the potential of ecotourism effectively, ensuring the harmonious development between economy, culture and environment, towards a sustainable ecotourism model in Moc Hoa district in the future.

2. Research basis and methodology

2.1. Rationale

Since ecotourism is a form of travel connected to the natural world, it encompasses activities including forests, oceans, mountains, and so on. According to the Vietnam Tourism Law of 2017: "*Ecotourism is a type of tourism based on nature, associated with local cultural identity, with the participation of the community, combined with education on environmental protection.*" (Vietnam's Socialist Republic's National Assembly, 2017: p. 2).

Ecotourists: are tourists who learn, experience, and evaluate the natural ecological and human ecological values in destinations. Characteristics of ecotourism: ecotourism has to take place in a natural setting that is pristine or comparatively undisturbed and connected to indigenous culture; The preservation of the attraction's ecological, cultural, and social features is actively supported

by ecotourism; Ecotourism is an extremely accountable and informative activity for the environment. Local communities must be included and local inhabitants must profit from ecotourism.

2.2. Practical basis

The border district of Moc Hoa is situated in the western part of Long An province, around 70 kilometers from both Tan An and Ho Chi Minh City. Ho Chi Minh City is around 100 km long, with a total natural area of 299.63 km² and a population of over 30,000. It has a 14.7 km boundary with Kongpongro district and ChanT'ria district (Cambodia). Due to its location in the Dong Thap Muoi area, the Moc Hoa district boasts a variety of natural tourism attractions, including rivers, waterlogged areas, and distinctive Melaleuca forest habitats. These benefits create favorable circumstances for the growth of ecotourism, experience tourism, and other forms of tourism in Moc Hoa district, Long An province. Currently, Moc Hoa district is strongly developing ecotourism products in combination with preserving the ecosystem of the natural values of this land. This is also considered a potential for tourism development here.

Natural tourist attractions in Moc Hoa district can be mentioned as Tan Lap Floating Village tourist area and Endless Field tourist area (Dong Thap Muoi medicinal material research and development area). These are two typical tourist destinations with a typical type of ecotourism and a typical wetland ecosystem. This place is prominent for the habitat of melaleuca, lotus, gun, hyacinth forests,... and is also home to birds, storks, fish,... contributing to the conservation of biodiversity of Dong Thap Muoi area. Particularly, the Endless Field tourist area (Dong Thap Muoi medicinal material conservation and development research area) has a large scale with a total area of 1,029ha of primeval wind melaleuca forest, of which over 800ha of special-use melaleuca forest is strictly protected, the remaining area is exploited to grow medicinal materials for medicinal material production and tourism business (Moc Hoa District People's Committee, 2024: p.3).

Due to its location in the Dong Thap Muoi area, Moc Hoa district offers a rich culinary culture that is infused with Southwest countryside, as well as an annual floating water season and an extensive system of waterways. The meals are prepared with local foods such lotus, crab, vegetables, fish, etc., however in the Tan Lap Floating Village tourism area, there are dishes created using sturgeon, which are naturally occurring species that dwell and breed in the area's

waterways. Common foods include grilled snakehead fish, lotus soup, and traditional cotton-flavored fish hotpot. In addition to restaurants that serve food in tourist regions, this location also sets up a rustic eating area nearby the outdoors to enhance the experience for visitors.

2.3 Research methodology

Document research method: is a method of collecting information through books, newspapers and documents as a theoretical basis for the topic, thereby forming scientific hypotheses, predicting the properties of the research object, building initial theoretical or experimental models. Since then, the research team has identified the potential and current status of ecotourism development in Moc Hoa district, Long An province and proposed corresponding development solutions.

Fieldwork method: is a method that requires researchers to approach local reality from which to accumulate practical documents accurately and scientifically to complete the research. The research team conducted fieldwork in Tan Lap Floating Village Ecotourism Area and Endless Field Tourist Area to learn specifically about the potential and current status of ecotourism development here.

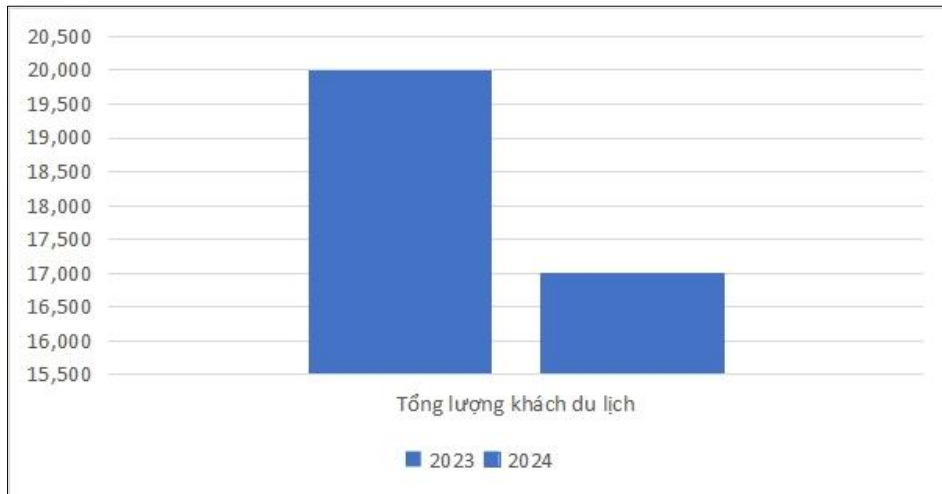
3. Research Results

3.1 The state of ecotourism development in Long An province's Moc Hoa district

With the characteristic of wetlands ecosystems in the Dong Thap Muoi area, Moc Hoa district in Long An province is a place to develop ecotourism. Over the years, Moc Hoa tourism has been steadily developing to attract people by its unspoiled natural environment and ecotourism and community concepts. Nevertheless, though these immediate benefits are accessible, it is still a work in progress to rid the area of the many constraints during travel and tourism. In order to evaluate and create typical tourism items in the district's tourist locations, the District People's Committee frequently collaborates with the Long An province's Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism.

Tourist arrivals to Moc Hoa district, Long An province

According to statistics, the number of visitors to Moc Hoa district decreased in both tourist areas. In Tan Lap Floating Village Tourism, in 2023, about 20,000 visitors were welcomed, but in 2024, about 17,000 visitors came to visit (see Chart 1.2) (People's Committee of Moc Hoa District, 2024: p.2).



Source: Author's data processing, 2025.

Chart 1.2: Total visitors to Tan Lap Floating Village in 2023, 2024 (Turns)

In the Endless Field Tourism, in 2023, about 8,500 visitors

will be welcomed, but in 2024, about 7,000 visitors will come to visit (Moc Hoa District People's Committee, 2024: p.4).



Source: Author's data processing, 2025

Chart 1.3: Total number of tourists to the Endless Field Tourism in 2023, 2024 (Turns)

Tourism infrastructure in Moc Hoa district, Long An province

Technical Infrastructure

Technical infrastructure in the Moc Hoa area has advanced significantly, satisfying people's requirements for mobility and fostering the growth of regional tourism. Significant highways that pass through the region, including Provincial Road 817 (23 km), Provincial Road 819 (8.3 km), National Highway 62 (10.8 km), and the urban transportation system, are essentially finished. Furthermore, an increasing number of rural roads are being paved and concreted over time, thereby rendering it easier to link different parts of the district. In particular, in 2024, the district completed the route of Axis 2, connecting Provincial Road 817 to the Endless Field tourist area. This is a road planned as a "commercial street" of the district, contributing to promoting tourism activities. In addition, the construction of a road connecting National Highway 62 to the inter-district of Moc Hoa – Thanh Hoa has also completed phase 1 and is speeding up the progress of phase 2. This is an arterial route that connects the district center with the main transport routes. Nevertheless, there are still an extensive number of issues with the area's

transportation infrastructure, which hinders travel between the locality and prominent tourist spots. These include narrow roads, worn roads, rocky spots, underdeveloped waterways, and a lack of wharves to greet visitors. (People's Committee of Moc Hoa District, 2024: p.7).

In general, the district's power system, water supply and drainage, lighting, telecommunications, etc., guarantee that the demands of the local population are met and that visitors are welcomed. Nonetheless, Saturday power outages continue to occur frequently resulting in it challenging to accommodate tourists (Moc Hoa District People's Committee, 2024: p.8).

Accommodation Facilities

Currently, in Moc Hoa district, accommodation facilities are only small businesses such as Kim Chi guesthouse (10 rooms), Thanh Dat guesthouse (8 rooms), hotel system at Tan Lap Floating Village tourist area,... However, the accommodation system is not guaranteed to serve a large number of guests, the rooms are not up to standard, only serving a small number of guests (People's Committee of Moc Hoa district, 2024: p.8).

Destinations

In Moc Hoa district, there are two typical tourist areas: Tan Lap Floating Village and Endless Field. In addition, in the district, there are many places for public tourism: recreational fishing services Channel 12, Tan Thanh commune; Ut Cuong recreational fishing, Binh Phong Thanh town,...

The tourist destinations are highly regarded as they possess a lot of potential to become eco-tourism destinations in order to capitalize on ecotourism for leisure, river tourism for sightseeing, etc.

3.2 Several strategies to promote ecotourism in Long An province's Moc Hoa district

Infrastructure

Implement measures to improve transportation, including roads and waterways to facilitate the movement of visitors to and from tourist attractions. Specifically, investing in upgrading and expanding routes to key tourist destinations. It is necessary to ensure the quality of road surface, signage system, traffic safety. For waterways, focus on investing in upgrading and renovating waterways, ensuring safety and convenience for the transportation of passengers by boats. To put into the planning of investment in the construction of wharves and bus stations with standards for tourism, meeting the increasing demand of tourists. The wharves and bus stations need to be designed in a modern and comfortable manner to ensure environmental sanitation. In particular, it is necessary to pay special attention to investment in wharves to promote the connection of river tours, promote the exploitation of the typical river tourism potential of Moc Hoa. There should be close coordination between authorities, tourism enterprises and local communities in effectively managing and exploiting the transport system for tourism. The investment in transport development will make an important contribution to attracting tourists, creating a driving force for socio-economic development of the locality.

Building brand's reputation

Building brand for Moc Hoa tourism needs to focus on identifying the highlight of Dong Thap Muoi eco-tourism and experiencing river culture to create a unique brand. Dong Thap Muoi with a diverse and rich ecosystem is home to many typical species of flora and fauna such as spirit fish, gun cotton, lotus, melaleuca and red-headed crane. Visitors come here not only to admire the unspoiled natural beauty but also to experience the life of the people in the river region: fishing, picking cotton guns, canoeing through the cauliflower fields, and exploring traditional craft villages. Besides, Moc Hoa river culture is also an important highlight. From specialty cuisines such as braised fish, sour soup of wild-caught fish, to traditional festivals such as boat racing, moon worship, all carry the cultural imprint of the river. The image of Moc Hoa people being friendly, hospitable, and attached to nature also contributes to creating attraction for local tourism. The branding should focus on conservation and sustainable development, and encourage community participation to create a unique and impressive Moc Hoa tourism brand. An impressive slogan, typical representative image will be the key to promote the image of Moc Hoa tourism to domestic and foreign tourists.

Local Connections

An essential first step in establishing connections and promoting sustainable growth for the local tourism sector is

linking Moc Hoa with popular tourist locations within and beyond the province, particularly those in the Dong Thap Muoi region. Designing long-term tourism itineraries that seamlessly blend ecotourism, local culture, and gastronomy is essential to achieving this. The distinctive features of Moc Hoa, such its verdant fields, rich ecological regions, and well-known agricultural goods, ought to serve as the foundation for these tourism itineraries.

People

In Moc Hoa district, Long An province, human factors have been identified to be an essential factor in the growth of ecotourism. Regular staff training is therefore crucial. Professional knowledge and abilities need to be updated, particularly in the areas of ecotourism, local culture, and nature protection. Simultaneously, foreign language instruction should be tailored to the requirements of servicing foreign visitors. Employee participation in advanced courses, seminars, and training programs should be encouraged and facilitated by management. Alongside enhancing the caliber of current human resources, focus should be given as well to the creation of new ones. One strategic approach is to collaborate with colleges, universities, and vocational institutions to develop top-notch human resources for the ecotourism sector. In addition to creating jobs, putting an emphasis on hiring and educating locals helps them properly comprehend and commit to local ecotourism, which supports the preservation and sustainable growth of tourist resources.

Promotion

One important tactic for drawing visitors is utilizing social media, promotional movies, and internet platforms to disseminate local pictures. In order to do this, a professional website showcasing the locality's tourist services, trips, and locations must be created. Digital marketing strategies should also be established to draw in prospective tourists. Using eye-catching advertising films on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube will help people establish lasting impressions of the area's culture and beauty. Organizing livestreams to introduce local culture, cuisine, and landscapes is also an effective way to connect with young customers who often search for information through social media. Encouraging locals to participate in sharing their travel experiences can create richer and more authentic content that increases trust in the eyes of travelers. All these efforts will contribute to enhancing the image of the locality, promot

4. Conclusion

The research project examined the present state and future prospects of ecotourism in Long An province's Moc Hoa area. As a result, studies have revealed that the growth of ecotourism in this region is not matching its potential. As a result, we provide several strategies and approaches to advance ecotourism and encourage the full utilization of resources for travel in the Moc Hoa area of Long An province.

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