

Strategic Alliances between Universities and Enterprises in Training, Development of Human Resources for Tourism after COVID-19

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COVID-19 has revealed and even increased the shortage in quantity and skills to meet the flexible business strategy of enterprises after the pandemic, especially for enterprises operating in the hotel and tourism industry. Improving the quality of human resources and increasing the supply of human resources for tourism enterprises is an urgent and complex issue. This issue requires the efforts and cooperation of businesses, schools, and the direction of the Government to meet the demand for quantity and quality of human resources for the tourism industry after the pandemic in the current situation. In this research, the authors discuss the solution of training cooperation between schools and enterprises in training and developing human resources to adapt to the post-Covid-19 era.

Keywords: Tourism human resources, human resources for the post-COVID-19 period, human resource training and development, training cooperation between schools and businesses

INTRODUCTION

The issue of training linkage between universities and businesses initiated by Willhelm Humboldt, whereby, Universities, in addition to the training function, must have the following functions: research and collaboration with industry. Links between university and business understood such as direct or indirect interactions, personal transactions or non-personal between the educational institution and the enterprise to bring benefits to the parties, including: cooperation in research and development, personnel exchange (study, pseudonyms, students and professionals), commercialization of the results research and development, development and dissemination of chapters training, lifelong learning, business development and administration. In 1810, Willhelm Humboldt established the University of Berlin with a difference compared to other universities to shift the focus to research and training activities, especially the development of field technology for military and civilian purposes (Toan & Mai, 2016). Today, in developed countries such as the US, Canada, Australia, UK, France, Germany, most universities are connected. Close training links with businesses. Government always plays an important role in creating a legal environment, laws and policies, forming tripartite linkages: main government- school - business. In the world, cooperation University -

business is expressed in many forms and at the level. Common levels of cooperation are sending students to come to practice, visit, support expenses and equipment for teaching and learning. The higher levels are: exchange of experts, share knowledge and technology; invest for research and development for joint ownership and transfer of public turmeric; jointly invest in business development for commercial purposes scientific research results and product supply, services for society. Research by scientists on the world like Wilson (2012), Rohrberck & Arnold (2006) showed that training links between universities and businesses has become a global training trend and is evolving with increasingly diverse forms and levels. In line with that general development trend, the problem of connection training between universities and businesses has been and is getting a lot of attention in Vietnam. Vietnam is in the period of economic recovery after the Covid-19 pandemic, the tourism industry after 2 years of the pandemic is also gradually adapting to the “new normal” conditions, starting from March 15, 2022, open many opportunities for the “smokeless industry”. Tourism recovered, gradually developed again, in the face of changes in trends, the tourism market, digital technology developed strongly and the requirements for ensuring safety against epidemics were met. According to Anh (2020), besides the advantages, the human resources of the tourism industry also

face many new challenges and requirements. Human resources need to be supplemented and equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to play an important role in building, improving and perfecting tourism products and services. This is one of the key factors that increase the competitiveness and survival in the tourism market for each enterprise, locality, and the wider tourism industry of the whole country.

The main objective of this study was to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Vietnam's tourism industry based on statistics and interview practices and to propose effective recovery strategies for the post-COVID-19 tourism industry. Therefore, three research questions must be addressed:

1. How severe is the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on human resources Vietnam's tourism industry?
2. What are Vietnam's response policies to the tourism industry during the pandemic?
3. What strategies should be implemented to effectively recover the country's tourism industry after the pandemic?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research was conducted based on the collected secondary data. Data on Vietnam's tourism industry (e.g., tourists, revenue, labor, calendar businesses) during the epidemic-free period (from December 2019 and earlier) and the epidemic period (from January 1, 2020) were collected from the General Statistics Office (GSO), Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) and Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST). The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases from January 2020 to May 2021 was obtained from the Ministry of Health (MOH). The author used a non-parametric statistical method to solve the following specific issues

1. The Mann–Whitney U test was conducted to compare the differences between two independent groups. This test was performed to answer the question of whether any significant difference exists in the number of tourists, revenue and employment rate in the tourism industry in Vietnam between the epidemic and non-epidemic periods. The hypothesis (H_0) is that no difference exists in the number of visitors, revenue and employment rate in the tourism industry during the epidemic and non-

epidemic periods. The alternative hypothesis (H_1) is that a difference exists in the number of visitors, revenue and employment rate in the tourism industry during the epidemic and non-epidemic periods.

2. The Friedman test was conducted to determine the difference between groups when the measured variable was ordinal. It was used in this study to answer the question over time regarding the increasingly severe course of the epidemic: Is there any difference in the number of visitors, revenue and employment rate in the tourism industry? The hypothesis is that no difference exists according to the evolution of the epidemic.
3. The Spearman test verified the relationship between two ranked variables: one typed and one measured. In this study, the test was used to examine the association during the epidemic period. A negative correlation was observed between monthly cases and visitors and employment rates.

RESULTS

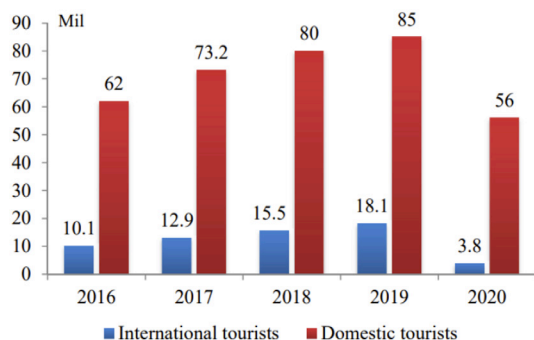
Descriptive statistics analysis

Impact on tourists and revenue. After the high growth momentum before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Vietnam's tourism industry had an average growth rate of 22.7% in 2015–2019, from 7.9 million visitors (in 2015) to 18.1 million visitors (in 2019). However, the number of international visitors is continuously decreasing due to the outbreak of the pandemic. In 2020, Vietnam only received 3.8 million visitors, a decline of 79.5% compared to the same period in 2019 (see Figure 1). Following the downward trend from 2020, in the first 6 months of 2021, international visitors to Vietnam were estimated at only 88,200 arrivals, down 97.6% over the same period last year (VNAT, 2021c). In general, international visitors to Vietnam by air in 2020 accounted for 80.3% and decreased by 78.6% compared to that in 2019, visitors coming by road decreased by 81.9%, and arrivals by sea decreased by 45.2%. In 2020, visitors to Vietnam from Asia accounted for 73.3% of the total international arrivals, a decrease of 80.4% compared to that of the previous year (see Figure 2). Visitors from all major markets decreased sharply: from China, 83.5%; Korea, 80.4%; Japan, 78.4%; Taiwan, 78.8%; Cambodia, 46.6%; and

Malaysia, 80.7%. Meanwhile, visitors from Europe in 2020 decreased by 69%, and those from the Americas decreased by 75.7% compared to that in 2019 (VNAT, 2021b). Vietnam’s domestic tourists in 2020 decreased by 34% compared to that in 2019, from 85 million (2019) to 56 million (2020) (see Figure 1; VNAT, 2021c). Some localities prospered to welcome domestic tourists in the first quarter of 2021; however, the COVID-19 epidemic continues to break out. Therefore, the number of domestic visitors in the first 6 months of 2021 was only 30.5 million (VNAT, 2021c).

Figure 1

Changes in the number of tourists of Vietnam in 2016–2020

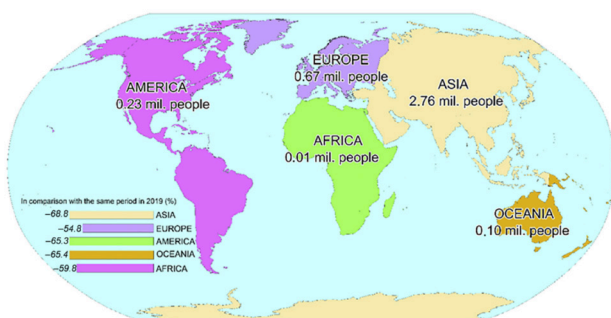


Source: VNAT, 2021a,c

Owing to the rapid decrease in the number of tourists, the total revenue from tourists in 2020 also decreased sharply. In 2020, Vietnam’s revenue from tourists only reached 312,000 billion VND, which is 58.7% lower than that in 2019. Meanwhile, the country’s total tourist revenue decreased in the first 6 months of 2021, reaching only approximately 134,000 billion VND, a decline of 24.2% over the same period in 2020 (VNAT, 2021b, c).

Figure 2

Number of international visitors to Vietnam in 2020 by continent



Source: VNAT, 2020b

The prolonged COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected thousands of Vietnamese tourism businesses. Tourism businesses have fallen into a state of exhaustion and no longer have the resources to maintain minimum operating conditions. Challenges accumulate when most companies have debts with banks and are almost unable to pay in the current period.

According to the GSO, employees in the tourism industry have been the most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, approximately 60% of the employees of Vietnam’s tourism industry lost their jobs due to closure of borders and restriction of domestic travel caused by the COVID-19 outbreak. The number of employed workers in the sector fluctuates by only around 30–40% (GSO, 2020). In 2021, the unemployment rate in the tourism industry continued to increase, reaching approximately 90% of the total number of employees in travel businesses and 70–80% of workers in accommodation establishments (VNAT, 2021c).

Inferential statistics analysis

Analysis of differences. According to the results of the Mann–WhitneyUtest, the number of tourists (international and domestic), revenue and employment rate during the epidemic period was significantly different from those in the non-epidemic period. The disparity is concentrated in the number of international tourists, revenue and employment in the tourism industry, which is the largest (see Table 2). The results show that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly reduced the number of tourist arrivals in Vietnam. The difference in the number of visitors, revenue and employment rate in the tourism industry between the epidemic and non-transition periods requires the government of Vietnam to control the epidemic to restore tourism activities effectively. Simultaneously, a strategic solution is necessary to increase tourist attractions, emphasizing that “Vietnam is an attractive and safe destination.” According to the results of the Friedman test, a substantial difference existed in the number of international tourists and revenue over time. This indicates that, when the epidemic becomes increasingly severe (through two outbreaks in 2020), this difference becomes more extensive and significant than when epidemic did not emerge (see Table 3).

Table 2

Difference of measuring variables in epidemic and non-epidemic periods (comparison between 2019 and 2020)

Tourism variables	Epidemic period	Non-epidemic period	P-value
International tourists (millions of visits)	3.8	18.1	0.001*
Domestic tourists (millions of visits)	56	85	0.000**
Labor (million people)	1.3	0.52	0.001

Note(s): * and ** indicate significance at the 5% and 1% levels, respectively

Table 3

Differences in the performance of the tourism industry according to the months of the epidemic

Tourism variables	February 2020	March 2020	April 2020	P-value
International tourists (millions of visits)	1.400	450	26.2	0.001*
Revenue (billion VND)	45.5	35.2	17.6	0.032

Correlation analysis

The results of Spearman's rank correlation analysis indicate that the rate of negative correlation is significant between the number of visitors and that of recorded cases by month, but the other variables were not significant. Thus, evidently the Spearman test is true to the actual situation, with a negative correlation between the number of infected cases and that of tourists, the outbreak of the disease and the number of tourists decreasing due to the increasing awareness of epidemic prevention. Therefore, tourism planners and managers, along with the government of Vietnam, must promote propaganda on safe epidemic prevention measures and raise public awareness to contribute to disease control. This aims to reduce the negative correlation between the number of tourists and the evolution of the pandemic (see Table 4).

Table 4

Relationship between the number of infections and the variables of the tourism industry

Spearman rho	International tourists	Domestic tourists	Labor
International tourists	1	-0.092	0.182
Domestic tourists	-0.092	1	0.460
Labor	0.182	0.460	1

Note(s): * $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$

The current situation of quality of human resources in the tourism industry in the post-Covid-19

Tourism is an integrated economic sector that plays an increasingly key role in economic, political, social development and environmental resources. However, at present, this "smoke-free industries" has been severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The impact of Covid 19 on the tourism industry is expected to be huge, far exceeding the epidemics that Vietnam has experienced in recent decades. In 2020, the number of international visitors to Vietnam only reached 3.7 million, a decrease of over 80% compared to 2019, domestic visitors decreased by 50%. The tourism industry lost about 23 billion USD in revenue in 2020. According to statistics, about 95% of international travel businesses have stopped operating, the occupancy capacity of many hotels in big cities and tourist areas is only reaching 10-15%, many hotels must close. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound and comprehensive impact, changing the entire strategy, plan, and structure of the industry, including tourism human resources. Challenges businesses face include: Organization business activities in the post-Covid period, changes in personnel,... Especially, after 2 years of the epidemic, almost the tourism industry froze, human resources in the tourism industry suffered a significant shortage in numbers. quantity and quality. Li, X. (2020) in his research points out that most of the human resources for life have changed to other occupations. Since the reopening of activities, some workers have voluntarily returned, but many workers have settled into new jobs and higher income sources, so they do not want to return to the industry. In addition, the problem of training new and additional young human resources is also difficult. Because this training process takes time to implement and foster. Therefore, the problem of tourism human resource shortage is an urgent issue that needs to be calculated and promptly supplemented in terms of quantity and quality. Currently, businesses, especially hotel businesses, are still in a state of "thirst" for human resources who can't do unprofessional work, have poor labor discipline, and lack attentive service attitudes. The use of foreign languages fluently in the work of Vietnamese workers is still very limited (laborers who can use foreign languages account for only about 57%). The comprehensive opening of tourism brings many opportunities, but in reality, many tourism human resources have left their familiar jobs, while some new human resources have not been properly

trained, especially skills. New skills need to be added such as skills to guide tourists on epidemic prevention and control measures, use of new technologies to serve customers, digital transformation applications, etc. On the other hand, additional knowledge is needed in Covid-19 epidemic prevention and control, environmental protection, necessary informatics knowledge and skills. According to Directive No.16/CT-TTg, every business in the tourism and post-pandemic service sector needs to pay more attention to equipping employees with additional knowledge and skills when welcoming guests to ensure the safety of tourists, tourism staff and the community population at the destination. Therefore, for the old workforce to return to work, it is necessary to provide additional training with new professional knowledge and skills and supplement necessary knowledge in the new context. In addition, at present, the training and training of new tourism human resources still has many shortcomings. Specifically, according to a survey at universities, the training program for students lacks practicality. According to statistics of the General Department of Tourism, each year the whole industry needs 40,000 more workers. However, the number of students majoring in Tourism is only about 15,000 people per year, of which only 12% have college or university degrees or higher. Many students, after starting work in enterprises, did not meet the job positions, most businesses must spend time and effort to re-train professional skills, foreign language skills and especially professional consciousness. In order to solve the shortage in quantity and improve the quality of human resources to meet the needs of post-pandemic recovery, the tourism industry needs to implement many different solutions. In which, the issue of linking human resource training between universities and tourism enterprises is really necessary. However, Casey (2007), in his research show that in fact, the association of human resource training between tourism training universities and tourism enterprises still faces many difficulties and limitations, such as: there is no specific policy, effective and sustainable to link training with human resource use institutions and strong priority policies to encourage tourism enterprises to participate in training at training institutions; the information on the development orientation of tourism human resources has not really been “transferred” smoothly between the stakeholders, making the training and labor needs not be recognized correctly; Many businesses have not really supported the school in accepting interns as well as arranging jobs suitable

for training occupations during the internship period, etc., greatly affecting the awareness and professional attitudes of students. It can be said that the lack of consistency between inputs and outputs causes significant difficulties for enterprises in the recruitment process. As in research by Wilson (2012), the main cause of this situation is the mismatch between theory and practice in the school’s training program. To solve this problem, promoting training links between schools and enterprises is one of the necessary solutions. Because, for students, the connection between the school and the enterprise gives them the opportunity to choose a suitable internship location, thereby developing their skills to handle situations in a real environment, and at the same time have the opportunity to find out more about their career. find a job after graduation. For the universities, cooperation helps to improve the quality of training, ensure the output for the learners, thereby enhancing the position and prestige of the universities. On the business side, this is an opportunity to recruit skilled workers. capacity in accordance with actual requirements without the cost of recruitment and probationary period as well as retraining of human resources after graduation. Therefore, the adaptive solutions of the tourism training system and the tourism human resource user unit need to clearly show the close links in training to meet the needs of society and the integration trend in the post-Covid-19 era.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we presented the strategic alliances between universities and enterprises in training and development of human resources for tourism after covid-19. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Vietnam’s tourism industry were analyzed based on data sources from state agencies. Results of the non-parametric test method used in this study indicate the large difference of Vietnam’s tourism industry before and during the pandemic. The tourism indicators’ employment rate tended to decrease compared with the pre-pandemic period. Consequently, the overall economic efficiency of the tourism industry has declined, and its role in national economic growth has been reduced. The analysis results also show a negative correlation between the number of cases confirmed and that of tourists who travel. With more issues identified, the number of people traveling decreases due to psychological reasons, fear of pandemic-related problems and

border closure policies of countries. However, due to limited statistical data sources, in the correlation analysis, new statistics only shows that the number of infections is inversely proportional to the number of tourists in a month. Regarding sufficient statistics and time, the author believes that the further analysis will fully reflect the impact of the pandemic on Vietnam's tourism industry and will help the tourism industry. Further, combining quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis (interview experts in tourism and hospitality) and statistics was important to further research. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have complicated effects both worldwide and in Vietnam, it can be surmised that Vietnam's tourism industry may take 2–3 years, perhaps even longer, to fully recover. However, the government is determined to address the pandemic, and stakeholders such as universities and enterprises have a consensus in the development of the tourism industry, combined with the rational use of well-founded recovery strategies, and development of human resources for the recovery of Vietnam's tourism industry promptly.

Implications and suggestions

This study puts forward a set of implications and suggestions based on the findings, as follows to improve strategic alliances between universities and enterprises to meet the sufficient quantity and improve the quality of human resources in the post-Covid-19.

Firstly, it is necessary that the university training and vocational education system together with tourism enterprises strengthen linkages with the implementation of human resource training in various forms of training, retraining, for tourism human resources. This is to equip knowledge and skills about the digital technology revolution with the tourism industry; improve the capacity of employees to use information technology in their work in the tourism industry; improve the qualifications and understanding of employees about the source and core technologies of the digital revolution and their applicability to the tourism industry.

Secondly, the universities develop and flexibly implement the cooperation policy between the universities and enterprises, enhancing the comprehensive participation of enterprises in vocational training activities, deploying the model of linking enterprises into schools, considering enterprises as the second school of learners. At the same time, diversify training models, forms, types,

and levels, implementing the motto of both ensuring quality and meeting the diverse needs of learners, the needs of businesses and the labor market, etc. The universities develop training programs in a modern, open, and flexible direction. with the close participation of enterprises based on output standards. Enterprises are an integral part of the universities in the process of training labor resources for the market.

Third, for enterprises, they can participate in training by evaluating and criticizing the curriculum so that the universities can improve and adjust it to suit reality; output standards in accordance with enterprise requirements; have a specific plan in inviting business representatives to cooperate in training, in which the relationship with alumni must be tightened, because this is an effective connection channel between the universities and enterprises,... Therefore, the linkage in tourism human resource training between universities and enterprises can bring high efficiency.

Fourth, for the State, there should be mechanisms and policies to support enterprises in the process of attracting human resources through high-quality human resource training projects, such as support for facilities, loans, provide incentives and promote activities to attract foreign investment into Vietnam in the field of tourism. At the same time, the State should have policies such as: increasing training targets for tourism human resource training schools, providing support and career orientation for students , etc., thereby increasing the supply of resources. human resources for the tourism industry, meeting the shortage of human resources in the coming years. Thus, in the current post-Covid situation, along with the general recovery of the economy, the tourism industry must also prepare for itself solutions to overcome difficulties, including difficulties in quantity and quality of human resources. The fact that enterprises and universities shake hands to gradually meet high-quality and sufficient human resources in the coming years is a key solution that needs to be implemented in the current period.

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