

DOI: [10.6947/nairjc/00006.2](https://doi.org/10.6947/nairjc/00006.2)

ENHANCEMENT OF DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS OF THAILAND AND MALAYSIA – SOME REFERENCE EXPERIENCES FOR VIETNAM TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of the tourism industry is influenced by a variety of elements, including: transportation infrastructure; natural and social environment; sense of community; quality of the workforce; technical facilities, and, in particular, a level of competition that fosters synergy based on comparative advantages. In order to increase destination competitiveness, this article shares some of Thailand's and Malaysia's tourism development experiences (two Southeast Asian nations with similar circumstances to Vietnam but developed tourism industries)

KEYWORDS: *Competition, tourism, destination, capacity*

Citation: Duc Minh Tran (2022) Enhancement Of Destination Competitiveness Of Thailand And Malaysia – Some Reference Experiences For Vietnam Tourism Vol.8, Issue 9. North Asian International Research Journal of Social Science & Humanities ISSN: 2454-9827

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism, which is regarded as a smokeless industry, is playing an increasingly significant role in economic growth. The World Tourism Organization asserts that tourism has overtaken manufacturing as the most significant economic activity on a worldwide scale in the twenty-first century. More and more seasoned, informed, and concerned travelers are concerned with the environmental condition of the travel location and the facilities that provide tourist services. This puts more pressure on the nations in the area that value tourist development to boost their competitiveness. Thus, the ability of a nation or location to compete becomes the key element in deciding its long-term ability to draw tourists. Practice demonstrates that nations in the area that are successful in developing their tourist industries are also successful in competition. Competition among countries

in the development of tourism promotes efforts to adopt strategies to provide destinations a competitive advantage. Along with the general regional and global tourism development trend in recent years, Vietnam's tourism industry has expanded quite quickly, becoming a significant economic sector and positively influencing the economic development of the nation. The development of the tourism industry has boosted earnings, improved infrastructure, and many other important aspects of the economy. Diverse human and natural resources, as well as a suitable geographic position, are crucial resources and elements in the growth of Vietnam's tourist industry. However, compared to potential, both the number of tourists visiting Vietnam and the country's tourism revenues remain low. The question here is how competitive is Vietnam's tourist industry currently in terms of its destinations? Where does Vietnam tourism stand in terms of competitiveness as a travel destination as compared to regional and international competitors? In the face of strong rivalry from regional and foreign competitors, how can Vietnam's tourism improve its standing and strengthen its position as a destination? ... Thailand and Malaysia's experience in enhancing tourism destination competitiveness can serve as a useful example for Vietnam's tourism as it grapples with the demands of the country's economic development in general and the tourism industry in particular, especially in the context of the country's current international integration requirements and the country's increasingly fierce competition.

II. RESEARCH RESULTS

2.1. Some theoretical perspectives on the issue of destination competitiveness

A. Pool (1993) asserts that destinations need competitive advantages to provide long-term and persistent benefits. According to A. Pool, in order for destinations to be competitive, they must uphold four key principles: (1) prioritizing the environment; (2) making tourism a major economic sector; (3) bolstering distribution networks; and (4) creating a vibrant private sector (Poon A,1993). Destination competitiveness can be understood as capacity of a destination to better distribute tourism-related products and services than other locations. "Destination competitiveness is a broad notion that includes pricing variations associated to exchange rate fluctuations, the effectiveness of various tourist sector components, and quality aspects impacting the attractiveness or other elements of the destination." (National Administration of Tourism, 2009). According to Crouch & Ritchie, "The destination that achieves the highest success, which is the greatest prosperity for residents on a sustainable basis, is the one that is most competitive in absolute terms" (National Administration of Tourism, 2009). According to the aforementioned viewpoints and definition of destination competitiveness, "Destination competitiveness is the ability of a destination to effectively compete with another in regional and international tourism markets, resulting in a more fulfilling experience for tourists and more sustainable prosperity for local people". This concept has three main components: Firstly, a competitive destination must be

one that effectively competes and is more advantageous to the destination than another that is a competitor in the regional and international markets; Secondly, a competitive destination must be one that, when compared to other destinations, leaves tourists with a favorable impression and a satisfying experience both during and after their trip. Thirdly, a competitive destination is unquestionably one that draws the active involvement of locals in tourist activities, raising and improving their level of living. This may be considered the objective of enhancing destination competitiveness.

2.2. Some experience on enhancement of destination competitiveness of Thailand and Malaysia

2.2.1. Thailand's experience

Thailand is a country in Southeast Asia with territory of 513,115 km² and with a population of about 66.48 million people. Thailand has 30 ethnic groups, of which Thais make up more than 80%, followed by Chinese and Malays at 10% and 3%, respectively. Thailand has a wide variety of hereditary resources. Thailand, which has a total length of 3,219 km, contains 170 seaside and island resorts, including numerous well-known beach destinations like Pattaya and Phuket. The nation contains 138 designated eco-tourism zones, including national parks and natural reserves. Thailand now has ten historical parks, three of which, Sukhothai Old Town, Historic City of Ayutthaya, and Ban Chiang Archaeological Site in Udonthani, have been designated by UNESCO as World Cultural Heritage Sites. Thai cuisine is also very attractive to tourists. Thailand has a large pool of creative resources. There are several accommodation facilities in the country that meet international standards. Up to 165,000 hotel rooms may be found in Thailand's top 5 tourist destinations. There are Thai restaurants all around Thailand and in many other nations. Thailand hosts a variety of intriguing folk festivals. Every year, a number of celebrations and events take place, making this nation a top destination for travelers in the past. Thailand's shopping industry is extremely developed, and tourists increasingly concentrate on it when visiting the nation. Supporting elements and resources from Thailand also help to promote tourism. Thailand has 106 domestic and foreign airports, including 6 major international airports.. Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport is the biggest international airport in the area. Bangkok has developed routes for both major airlines and the majority of low-cost carriers. Additionally, Thailand has 9 international seaports and 17 heliports that cater to cruise travelers. Suvarnabhumi International Airport's rail, subway, elevated tram, and high-speed train systems all aid in the growth of the tourism industry. Thailand has 64,000 km of roadways, 4,500 km of national highways, and connections with neighboring countries. Tourists can use the public transportation, including taxis, buses, and tuk-tuks. Thailand also boasts more than 4000km of rivers and canals, which are advantageous for the development of tourism along rivers and canals. Modern water, electricity, and communication infrastructure are also available to fulfill the demands of visitors (Nguyen Anh Tuan, 2010). The people of Thailand, often known as the country of smiles, are warm, kind, and welcoming. When it comes to drawing tourists from abroad,

Thailand is the second-largest nation in Southeast Asia. It is also Vietnam's primary tourism competitor. The Thailand Tourism Organization was founded in 1960. The primary roles at the outset were marketing and planning cultural festivals. This company operates effectively. Thailand welcomed a million tourists in 1973. Thailand's first National Tourism Development Plan was created with assistance from the National Socio-Economic Development Council and the Netherlands Tourism Development Consulting Institute in 1976. However, Thailand's tourism industry did not really take off until 1987, when the nation launched the Thailand Tourism Year campaign to honor the King's 60th birthday. This campaign is still regarded as a very effective marketing strategy model that helped Thailand become more competitive on the global tourist scene. Thailand has consistently ranked as one of the top two ASEAN nations for attracting tourists from abroad since 1987. Thailand has concentrated on increasing marketing, tourist promotion, and producing tourism items with Thai characteristics in order to increase destination competitiveness. The primary responsibility of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is to enhance the reputation of the country as a tourist destination. To maintain effectiveness and clear communication between the supply and demand for tourism, TAT conducts a variety of tourism-related activities and events each year in close collaboration with Thai tourist enterprises. 21 offices for the promotion of Thai tourism have been opened overseas. The Thai government spends TAT between 80 and 150 million USD annually to coordinate marketing initiatives and advertise tourist attractions abroad. The organization of the Year of Tourism and various destination marketing campaigns, the most well-known of which is the Amazing Thailand Campaign, is one of the key promotional initiatives. The Thai Ministry of Tourism and Sports established the following guiding principles in 2003 to increase destination competitiveness (Nguyen Anh Tuan, 2010):

- Promote and develop sustainable tourism by undertaking initiatives to reduce its detrimental effects on the environment, nature, culture, and society.
- Enhance the industry's quality by creating and managing tourist resources to maximize profits.
- Standardize tourism products to attract quality tourists.
- Promote Thailand by focusing on the distinctiveness of the Thai people while creating and enhancing a brand identity for each region.
- Present products in a variety of ways to accommodate travelers' demands.
- Promote important sporting events across the world as a major tourist attraction.
- Apply information technology to create a unified model for information management, public relations, and customer relations.
- In 2004, Thailand carried on with the introduction of a new marketing campaign for tourism, which was one of the 10 components of the plan for enhancing national competitiveness.

- With the phrase “Thailand - Happiness on Earth”, TAT started a tourist campaign in 2006 with an emphasis on brand creation, which was regarded as the company's top strategy. Thailand's plan to sustain the market, increase tourist income, and strengthen Thailand's competitive advantage includes the new marketing slogan “Unforgettable Thailand”, which has been in use for three years. The “Amazing Thailand” campaign, which promotes Thailand as a peaceful and welcoming nation that offers great services and products at reasonable prices year-round, is still used by the Thai tourism industry.

- At the end of 2006, TAT launched a new campaign titled “7 Amazing Wonders of Thailand” in an effort to strengthen Thailand's competitive position as a travel destination. TAT has divided and compiled its primary domestic tourist offerings into a seven-point package that has been introduced to the world under the trademark “7 Amazing Wonders of Thailand”. In a global research conducted in 2006 by Future Brand, a preeminent global brand consulting business, Thailand was ranked first in the country brand index for value for money.

- Thailand places a high value on creating and diversifying tourist products, considering it as a strategic priority in the development of the tourism industry. TAT proposes creating a national strategy on ecology as a foundation for expanding tourism in the proper direction and creating a sustainable tourism system in order to produce goods to increase destination competitiveness. The management of natural and human resources, social development, community engagement, and the enhancement of people's quality of life are all important aspects of cultural and ecological tourism. Thailand therefore views the policy relating to these issues as a whole, where each issue has a favorable effect on the others in order to improve the whole system, such as: environment, tourism resource management, sustainable tourism, socio-economic development, and participation of local communities.

- Thailand's sea resort tourist product and service supply is very professionally planned, built, and organized. Additionally, Thailand's competitive strength has grown through time as a result of the availability of comprehensive facilities, a wealth of entertainment options, combined with a competent, responsive, and courteous service style and quality.

- In 2008, Thailand introduced its “Amazing Thailand to the World” national marketing campaign. With an emphasis on “quality” rather than quantity, there has been a significant change in strategy. Thailand places a lot of emphasis on marketing itself in 18 key markets, mostly in Asia-Pacific and Europe. The focus of TAT's marketing efforts during this time is on: Increasing visibility and awareness, developing and promoting the “Thailand” brand; Increasing the industry's capacity and improving Thailand's international competitiveness; Promoting high-quality travel; Preserving current market share; and Encouraging Repeat Visitors. Through collaboration with key tourism partners and the use of incentives, TAT has increased the visibility and knowledge of Thailand as a travel destination while preserving Thailand's share of the tourism market.

With policies and efforts to enhance Thailand's destination competitiveness, the tourism industry saw considerable success between 2000 and 2008 in terms of attracting tourists and generating revenue, significantly boosting the Thai economy. 9.51 million foreign visitors arrived in Thailand in 2000, generating close to US\$7.5 billion in revenue. Tourism revenue was US\$17.6 billion by 2008, when there were 14.54 million tourists, more than double from 2000. Thailand was ranked 43 out of 124 countries in the WEF's Tourism Competitiveness Ranking Report in 2007. The nation gains from the highly welcoming nature of its residents toward tourism (ranked sixth), the government's strong emphasis for tourism (ranked fourteenth), excellent destination marketing, and efforts to secure national representation at significant international travel fairs. Nevertheless, there are still certain problems in the quality of transport and tourism infrastructure. Thailand was ranked 42 out of 128 in 2008 by WEF; Rich natural resources, a significant tourist attraction (ranked 20th); welcoming attitude toward visitors of people (ranked 10th), Government priority for tourism (ranked 12th), with very effective destination marketing campaign and strong price competitiveness. In 2009, Thailand was ranked 39th out of 133 countries by WEF in terms of tourism competitiveness. According to WEF, Thailand possesses rich natural resources and strong tourist attraction (ranked 24th and 22nd), welcoming attitude toward visitors of people (ranked 13th), strong Government priority for tourism (ranked 12th), similar to Malaysia's effective destination marketing campaign and strong price competitiveness. The Covid outbreak has recently had a substantial impact on Thailand's tourism industry. TAT is, nevertheless, taking acceptable measures to enhance Thailand's destination image, regain tourists' confidence, and maintain Thailand's destination competitiveness with its decades of expertise, high efforts, dynamism, professionalism, and creativity.

2.2.2. Malaysia 's experience

Malaysia is a peninsular country in Southeast Asia that has a population of 27.73 million and a landmass of 330,000 square kilometers. Malaysia, which has a tropical equatorial climate, is one of the nations in the region and the world with a wealth of natural resources. In addition to countless beaches and other major and small islands, Malaysia's more than 9,000 kilometers of coastline is home to a number of well-known island eco-tourism attractions, including Borneo, Penang, and Langkawi. There are also around 40 marine and island ecological reserves in Malaysia. Due to its long history, which dates back to the small island of Malaca on the same-named strait in the 15th century, Malaysia has a diversified population, which is reflected in the distinct national cultural identities of the Malays, Chinese, Indians, and other ethnic minorities. Malaysia is home to 7 UNESCO-designated World Heritage Sites. The accommodation facilities in Malaysia are quite advanced. Malaysia had 2360 hotels with 160,336 rooms in total as of 2007. Malaysia possesses convenient seaports and a fleet of 5-star Star Cruises yachts. The support infrastructure in Malaysia is also fairly advanced, which promotes the growth of the tourism industry. The road and air transportation systems in Malaysia are fairly developed and

ideal for the development of the tourist industry. Five international airports are located in the nation's major tourism destinations. Kuala Lumpur International Airport with synchronous and modern infrastructure is one of the busiest airports in the region. There are 15 airports in Malaysia. Malaysia has a sophisticated metropolitan transportation network that includes all forms of public transportation, including buses, taxis, sky trams, trains, and an 860 km long international highway system that connects to Singapore and Thailand. The water and energy delivery systems in Malaysia are likewise extremely sophisticated and adapt to the demands of the tourism industry. The country's information and communications technology is extremely advanced, generating advantageous conditions for tourists (Nguyen Anh Tuan, 2010). With the aforementioned tourism resources, Malaysia has the necessary context to increase its competitiveness, draw in foreign tourists, and foster the rapid growth of the tourism industry.

Malaysia is the Southeast Asian nation that draws the most international visitors. This nation places a high value on the development of the tourist industry, recognizing it as one of the key sectors that contributes significantly to socioeconomic growth. This country is committed to improving its position in an area with a comparable natural environment, cultural legacy, and way of life. The following milestones demonstrate Malaysia's outstanding achievement in raising destination competitiveness during the process of expanding the tourism sector and their significant contribution to elevating Malaysia into one of the top 10 global tourist destinations:

- In 1990, Malaysia established the Ministry of Culture and Tourist in 1990, eventually redesignating it as the Ministry of Culture, Arts, and Tourism (MOCAT), establishing a legal framework for the growth of the tourism industry and for the first time classifying it as an economic sector. In 1992, MOCAT took over the entire functions and duties of TDC and then TDC was changed to Malaysia Tourism Board (MTB) with the function of marketing and promoting the Malaysian destination.

- The Malaysian government has launched a policy of tax exemption and deduction, encouraging investment in tourism development and tourism services, particularly tax exemption for tourists traveling in groups. At the same time, a special fund has been established to support tourism development, particularly support for small and medium enterprises.

- The government's budget for tourism is increasing, with the primary priorities being destination marketing, building out the industry's infrastructure, and raising the standard of the travel industry's products and services. With the beginning of the "Visit Malaysia Year 1990" campaign, Malaysia began its Long-Term Tourism Development Master Campaign. The marketing of Malaysian tourism both domestically and abroad has heavily utilized campaign slogans like "To know Malaysia is to love Malaysia" and "Fascinating Malaysia. Naturally More." Nature tourism, adventure tourism, and agritourism are the principal services offered for sale.

The result is that the Tourism Year has brought in 7.45 million foreign visitors and generated more over US\$2.5 billion in tourism revenue, significantly strengthening Malaysia's status as a tourist destination.

Early in the 1990s, Malaysia began adjusting its marketing approach in an effort to enhance tourism, increasing product variety, promoting its image, and encouraging nature tourism. Malaysia continues to strive to advertise itself as having it all despite the effective marketing of nature tourist products. Using this strategy, Malaysia has become a convention, sports, and shopping destination. Malaysia began focusing on becoming a “shopping paradise” in the middle of the 1990s after understanding that this was one of the key activities that generated actual cash for the country's economy.

Malaysia transitioned from rural to urban tourism development, including sports and health tourism. The government's goals to put Malaysia on the tourist map around the world are reflected in the government's ambitious construction projects like the Petronas Twin Towers, Kuala Lumpur International Airport, Sepang International Circuit, Langkawi International Sea Show, and the new Kuala Lumpur Central Railway Station. The Malaysian government has sponsored a number of international events.

- The promotion of destinations is targeted and based on three primary factors: the desire for travel, the quality of the target tourist groups, and the possibility of new tourism market. Through market research, this information is carefully acquired and examined. Malaysia used the slogan “Malaysia - Truly Asia” to successfully market its image. The massive tourist sector's success has made it possible for the service sector to expand rapidly and keep Malaysia's economy growing in 2007. With this achievement, Malaysia is able to continue promoting the Year of Tourism in 2008, pull off a 50th anniversary celebration of the national day, and advertise activities all around the country.

- In an effort to attract Vietnamese visitors, the Malaysian Tourism Minister continued to visit Hanoi in June 2008 to introduce new Malaysian tourism goods and to start the "Discover Malaysia" campaign, which would promote Malaysia as a top travel destination for Vietnamese visitors. For the purpose of disseminating details about the campaign and other tourist attractions in Malaysia, Malaysia has created a website in the Vietnamese language at www.khamphamalaysia.com. Additionally, they established connections with a few other websites including the online publication vnexpress.net. Malaysia has formed a collaboration with Saigon Marketing, a youth newspaper, to publish weekly pieces about the country's top ten tourism sites. Despite the fact that the end of 2008 was impacted by the global financial crisis, the number of Vietnamese tourists visiting Malaysia climbed significantly as a result of the effective organization of this campaign in Vietnam.

In addition to establishing national tourism policies, Malaysia's Ministry of Tourism is also in charge of fostering the country's image abroad and promoting Malaysia as a travel destination. Tens to hundreds of millions of US dollars are allocated each year for destination promotion. The Malaysian government considers this

expenditure as a worthwhile investment, thus the country's tourism industry has always had a sizable budget, even in the years when there weren't many foreign tourists. As one of the most efficient information channels for promoting Malaysia to tourists and boosting the destination's competitiveness, Malaysia has created a network of foreign tourism representative offices, including two in Vietnam.

- The immigration policy is one of the measures increasing Malaysia's destination competitiveness. Malaysia has unilaterally waived visa requirements for citizens of roughly 40 other countries. Immigration processes are rapid, straightforward, and uncomplicated at land border checkpoints, ports, and airports. Additionally, Malaysia and Singapore work together to streamline immigration procedures for visitors traveling in groups and cut down on one-time declarations; delegations to the two countries only need to submit the entry and departure declaration of one nation.

- Malaysia places a lot of emphasis on diversifying its tourist offerings since it considers this as a critical component of raising destination competitiveness. Malaysia places a strong emphasis on developing ecotourism and products. Furthermore, Malaysia has expanded its product line through the growth of MICE tourism, shopping, etc. in order to strengthen its competitive advantage. The country has taken measures to encourage visitors to purchase, such as arranging the yearly "Mega Sale Carnival" (super sale) event in the summer, which has been lasting since 1999. Throughout the festival, several big shopping malls, supermarkets, retail shops, and stores on the country's streets concurrently give discounts of 20–80% on all items. Customers can bargain for numerous things from 10 to 70%. When visitors exit, several things are tax-free. Duty-free products are thought to be the cheapest in the world for things like cameras, watches, pens, cosmetics, fragrances, cigarettes, alcohol, and technological goods. Due to the aforementioned strategy, this festival has grown to be the major draw for millions of tourists from across the world each year, providing a significant source of income for Malaysia's tourism and trade sector.

- Malaysia places a high priority on assisting the tourism industry become more competitive, paying attention to the industry's real capabilities and connecting the macro-level creation of destination marketing plans with the industry's focus on business growth. They make tourist companies more competitive so that they can create more successful growth plans and marketing and advertising strategies.

- In order to increase destination competitiveness, boost tourist growth, and create a more secure and stable economic system for the nation, the Malaysian government released a new tourism strategy at the beginning of 2009. The development of various forms of tourism, including sports tourism, agricultural tourism, educational tourism, and medical tourism, is the emphasis of this new tourist initiative.

- In 2009, Malaysia established the National Tourism Advisory Council to promote the quality of tourism services and enhance the destination's competitive advantage. This council acknowledges feedback, detects

problems and proposes solutions to overcome difficulties in the tourism industry. Members of all Ministries, Government entities, and NGOs, including those in the environmental and commercial sectors, will be represented on the Council. In order to provide suitable regulations to guarantee that tourist development does not impair the natural environment, the Ministry of Tourism also routinely collects public input through NGOs and enterprises. Currently, 46% of the Malaysian economy's GDP is made up of the service industry, which includes tourism. Malaysia has competed successfully as an international tourist destination and has aided the tourism sector in producing extremely impressive results with the implementation of the aforementioned series of relevant and effective policies and initiatives. According to the Malaysian Ministry of Tourism, in 2000, this nation welcomed 10.27 million foreign tourists, and its tourism industry generated 5.011 billion USD. In 2008, that number increased to 22.05 million, more than doubling that of 2000, and its tourism industry generated 15.277 billion USD, tripling that of that year. After industry, tourism is Malaysia's second-largest source of foreign exchange revenue. According to UNWTO statistics posted on the organization's website, www.unwto.org, Malaysia, one of the few nations with significant growth following the negative effects of the global economic recession, received 23.6 million foreign visitors in 2009, a rise of 6.7% from 2008. This placed Malaysia in the top 10 countries in the world for attracting international tourists. (Nguyen Anh Tuan, 2010). Although most of the tourism industry in the region and the world is heavily affected by the Covid epidemic Ms. Nancy Shukri, Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture of Malaysia, reported that the country welcomed about 1 million foreign visitors in the years 2019–2021, exceeding 50% of the campaign's target of 2 million visitors in the campaign “Malaysia Truly Asia 2022” (VOV Newspaper, 2022). With this result, Malaysia maintains its lead in the global tourist sector.

2.3. Some lessons learned to improve destination competitiveness as a reference for tourism in Vietnam

2.3.1. Vietnam tourism resources

Due to its excellent geographic position, temperature, and natural circumstances, which include a coastline of more than 3,000 km with lush woods and breathtaking vistas, Vietnam has a significant amount of potential for the growth of the tourism industry. Vietnam has more than 125 beaches, and it ranks in the top 12 nations for the beauty of its bays. With a revenue of almost 200,000 billion dong in 2013, tourism is a major contributor to the economic growth of Vietnam. By the first half of 2022, Vietnam's tourism industry had served 60.8 million domestic visitors and welcomed 413 thousand foreign visitors, bringing in a projected total of 265 trillion dong. (General Statistics Office, 2022). Vietnam has more than 3,000 landscapes and historical sites listed as national heritage. Eight World Heritage Sites include: Ha Long Bay (Quang Ninh), Thang Long Citadel (Hanoi), Trang An Scenic Landscape (Ninh Binh), Citadel of the Ho Dynasty (Thanh Hoa), Phong Nha - Ke Bang Cave (Quang Binh), Hue Ancient Capital (Thua Thien - Hue), My Son Sanctuary and Hoi An Ancient Town (Quang Nam). As

of May 2021, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has inscribed 14 intangible cultural heritages of Vietnam into the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, including: Nha Nhac (Vietnamese court music) - Court Music of the Nguyen Dynasty; Cultural space of Gong in the Central Highlands; Quan ho Bac Ninh folk song; Ca Tru Singing; Giong festival of Phu Dong and Soc temples; Xoan singing of Phu Tho; Worship of Hung kings in Phu Tho Province; Art of Don ca tai tu music and song in the South; Vi and Giam folk songs in Nghe Tinh; Tug-of-war games and rituals; the worshipping of the mother goddess belief; The art of Bài Chòi in Central; Practices of Then by Tay, Nung and Thai ethnic groups and most recently Art of Xoe Thai. As of 2021, Vietnam has 11 world biosphere reserves, including: Can Gio mangrove biosphere reserve; Biosphere Reserve – Cat Tien National Park; Cat Ba Biosphere Reserve; Red River Delta Biosphere Reserve; Kien Giang coastal and marine biosphere reserve; Western Nghe An Biosphere Reserve; Ca Mau Cape World Biosphere Reserve; Cu Lao Cham-Hoi An Biosphere Reserve; Lang Biang Biosphere Reserve; Nui Chua Biosphere Reserve in Ninh Thuan; Kon Ha Nung Gia Lai Biosphere Reserve (GSO, 2022). Vietnam also has three world documentary heritages including Woodblocks of Nguyen Dynasty, Royal documents of Nguyen dynasty, Stone steles in Van Mieu - Quoc Tu Giam; The 4 documentary heritages of the Asia-Pacific region are Woodblocks of Vinh Nghiem Pagoda, Literature on Hue Royal Architecture, Woodblocks of Phuc Giang School, and The Envoyship Journeys to China (Ngo Thi Dieu An & Nguyen Thi Oanh Kieu, 2014).

With its current resources, Vietnam can develop a wide range of tourist destinations, such as: Nature tourism, Cultural tourism, Social tourism, Recreational tourism, Ethnographic tourism, Thematic tourism, Religious tourism...

2.3.2. Lessons learned for Vietnam tourism

We derive several significant tourism-related lessons for Vietnam from the experience of enhancing the destination competitiveness of Thailand and Malaysia, in particular:

Firstly, Vietnam should define the role of tourism effectively and develop regulations and competitive strategies to promote destination competitiveness. Both Thailand and Malaysia place a high priority on the development of the travel and tourism industry, recognizing it as one of the key sectors promoting the growth of the national economy. This is done in order to promote tourism development and effectively compete in both domestic and international markets. Both Thailand and Malaysia place a strong emphasis on developing tourism policies, resulting in a synchronized and unified policy and legal framework to support the growth of the industry and boost each nation's position and competitiveness as a global tourism destination. The environment of domestic and international tourism development, the findings of market research, competitor strategies, and the pressing need to enhance destination competitiveness are the foundations of tourism policy. Both Thailand and

Malaysia place a high value on developing destination competitiveness strategies, which result in the creation and execution of specific plans to increase destination competitiveness for each period in accordance with the market orientation and requirements of tourism development.

Secondly, Vietnam should establish campaigns to promote destination businesses and develop a destination marketing strategy. The market, features, psychology, tastes, and spending power of each target audience must be thoroughly understood by destinations if they are to compete to draw tourists, and they must then adopt the proper strategies to best fulfill their requirements and preferences. Destinations must have a plan and strategy for destination marketing to achieve this. As a result, Thailand and Malaysia place a high value on developing and successfully implementing destination marketing strategies. Simultaneously, in order to increase destination competitiveness, Thailand and Malaysia place a high value on creating and promoting destination brands through logos, slogans, information, public relations, direct and mixed marketing, product and service development, in order to establish the image and position of tourism in these countries on the global market. The slogans of Malaysia ("Malaysia-Truly Asia") and Thailand ("Amazing Thailand") are well known and leave a lasting impression on tourists. The recent increase in competitiveness and the influx of foreign tourists into these nations are largely due to the efforts undertaken to develop this destination's brand. Thailand and Malaysia have established national tourism representative offices in key market to assist market research, build connections with international travel agents, offer, guide, and promptly respond to information for visitors and directly advertise to potential tourists. Additionally, these countries frequently participate in forums, seminars, and fairs across the world. Malaysia leads the globe in terms of attendance at international tourism fairs. The success of this effort has aided the aforementioned nations in enhancing their destination competitiveness. This is a crucial experience for Vietnam as it works to increase its visibility and market the country as a travel destination at national and regional tourism events.

Thirdly, Vietnam should create market-competitive tourism products and services. The tourism product of the destination is crucial in enhancing the destination's competitiveness. Tourist attraction will be challenging if the tourism industry's offerings are monotonous and uninspiring. Consequently, diversifying tourism is essential to enhancing destination competitiveness. In order to fulfill consumer demand, Malaysia and Thailand both place a lot of emphasis on creating and diversifying their tourist industries. The past few years have seen a significant increase in efficiency and a strengthening of the competitive position of the destination countries as a result of the development of eco-tourism, culture, event tourism, thematic, MICE, shopping, resort, mountain climbing, scuba diving, etc. in new directions. Both countries have definite, continuous plans and schedules for events in their tourist-friendly regions throughout the year. All year long, there are sporting, shopping, and cultural events. In order to attract tourists during the off-peak season, Malaysia and Thailand effectively conduct activities like

“super discount” campaigns, reduced rates for travel and other services,... This is a crucial lesson to learn in order to lessen the seasonality, boost tourist demand, promote local exports, and enhance trade and tourist businesses' operational effectiveness. notably lodging facilities, given that many tourism administrators place little emphasis on the quality and sustainability of tourist sites and instead place a significant deal of emphasis on growing the number of tourists.

Fourthly, Vietnam should actually build a synchronized tourism infrastructure system. Infrastructure is advanced and encourages the growth of the tourism industry. That is the insight gained from studying how both Malaysia and Thailand developed their tourism industries. These two countries seldom experience peak-time tourism overflow because to their excellent infrastructure. Basic infrastructure and the development of the tourist infrastructure are crucial supporting factors to encourage tourism growth and increase destination competitiveness.

Fifthly, Vietnam should reach an agreement to guarantee the protection and safety of tourists. The best circumstances for drawing tourists are a stable political atmosphere and high levels of security. This benefit has in the past brought lots of tourists to Thailand. The major problems for the country's tourism business lately, particularly from the end of 2008 to the present, are political instability, insecurity, and tourist insecurity. Tourists' perception of Thailand as an attractive and peaceful holiday destination has been gradually losing. As a result, Thailand is now losing market share in this area. In order to draw tourists and increase destination competitiveness, it is crucial to ensure security, safety, and a stable political environment.

Sixthly, Vietnam should recruit and train professional tourism personnel. The research findings from Malaysia and Thailand demonstrate that investing in tourist human resources will significantly increase destination competitiveness. Both countries' tourism human resources are effective in the competition because they are properly trained, have extensive professional knowledge and experience, enjoy their jobs, and take their jobs seriously. Professional training for human resources in the tourist industry is very important to Malaysia and Thailand as well. Additionally, these two nations serve as regional hubs for tourism training. The two nations' standing and competitiveness as international travel destinations have been boosted by their professional and superior human resources.

Seventhly, Vietnam should preserve its environment and pursue sustainable development. Respect for environmental preservation and sustainable development is a crucial approach for preserving and enhancing a destination's long-term competitiveness. Thailand and Malaysia today both have regulations to safeguard the tourist industry, particularly initiatives to safeguard the nation's green hue and become one of the nations with the region's most pure natural environments. Due to their efforts to expand tourism in a way that is environmentally friendly, sustainable, and governed by stringent laws and rules that safeguard the environment and ecology via the

growth of ecotourism, Malaysia and Thailand are also two successful countries in the global market. Thailand has a legislative system that both directs and controls the growth of ecotourism. All of Malaysia's well-known tourism attractions revolve around eco-tourism, particularly eco-tourism on islands and in the ocean. The majority of tourists to Malaysia are ecotourists.

IV. CONCLUSION

Enhancement of destination competitiveness of Vietnam's tourism is an urgent issue, particularly in light of the region's and the world's increasingly fierce competition among travel destinations, as well as the immense difficulties and challenges the industry is currently facing as a result of the effects of the global economic downturn, terrorism, natural disasters, and epidemics. It is well known that Vietnam is currently working on a plan to put into action the Tourism Development Action Program for the years 2021 to 2025 with the aim of achieving the target of striving to become a tourist destination on par with Thailand and Singapore by 2030. The aforementioned tourism development program is envisaged to be realized by Vietnam's tourism as destination competitiveness increases.

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