

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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**Considerations of the government's role in its efforts to boost the
tourism industry in Vietnam with some attention to regional factors**

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List of abbreviations

ARDL	: Autoregressive distributed lag
ECM	: Error correction model
FDI	: Foreign direct investment
GDP	: Gross domestic product
PAPI	: Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index
PCI	: Provincial Competitiveness Index
PRISMA	: Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses
R	: Respondent, who takes part in semi-structured interviews in the chapter 3
R&D	: Research and Development
R&D&I	: Research and Development and Innovation
SLR	: Systematic Literature Review
08-NQ/TW	: Tourism policy launched in 2017

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Abstract

To focus on Vietnam's post-war recovery, agriculture and industry have become the two main economic sectors of Vietnam. In particular, the Doi Moi Policy 1986 (comprehensive innovation policy) has helped the government gradually increase economic openness and cooperate in technology transfer to extend access to the vibrant international market. Consequently, Vietnam is gradually becoming an attractive destination for great investors, the growth has risen steadily over the years and quality of life has improved.

Vietnam's long-term development strategy aims to boost the service industry's contribution to the GDP, with a particular focus on the tourism sector. Over the past three decades, the industry has seen a significant increase in domestic and international travellers, total revenue and its contribution to the GDP. In 2017, the government issued the Tourism Policy, which aims to promote the tourism sector as a key economic sector alongside agriculture and industry. This is the first official policy that illustrates the government's comprehensive research into the resources, potential and competitive advantages of Vietnam's tourism industry.

Research into Vietnam's tourism sector has been flourishing since 2012. The main topics include the potential of resources and proposed solutions; planning a strategy for sustainable tourism development; and the benefits of tourism development such as reduction of poverty, creating more jobs for women and improving equality and empowerment. Many studies focus on as communities have more first-hand experience regarding the cost and benefits of tourism development, they are more willing to lend their support and increase their participation in related activities. In addition, there are various studies on the potential and development of types of tourism, namely eco-tourism, cultural tourism, community-based tourism, rural tourism, etc. *Topics such as micro- and macro-environmental factors affecting the growth of tourism industry are not popular.* Although tourism has been identified as a key economic sector since the launch of the tourism policy in 2017, there has not been any research to analyse, measure and discuss the effectiveness of this policy. While, in general, the literature reviews affirm the vital role of the government in orienting and launching development strategies for economic sectors in Vietnam, and it has a large gap in research on government intervention in tourism. Moreover, there also seems to be a lack of studies

measuring government efficiency in managing and operating the tourism sector, i.e., the governance put great effort in practicing good governance since the Declaration of Independence, and has these efforts positive impact on tourism development so far?

Vietnam's tourism industry has developed for six years with the priority of investment and development as the key economic sector. Furthermore, during 34 years of development (1990-2023), there have been no studies that officially assess the role of government in promoting the development of the industry. To fill this gap, this dissertation is conducted to have in-depth discussions of the following two questions: *Has all the government's efforts in practicing good governance (improving public administration, government competitiveness and public policies; raising economic openness and maintaining political stability) during these 34 years (1990-2023) increased the motivation to travel and tourists' spending which leads to the growth of revenue for a whole? And recently, has Tourism Policy 2017 positively boosted the tourism industry?* Due to the broad scope of the research question, this dissertation employs a multi-method approach, integrating diverse datasets and econometric models. Firstly, a systematic literature review is to identify the research gaps and research questions. Afterward, a semi-structured interview, spatial models and ARDL models are applied, respectively, to work on these research questions. The six chapters, respectively, stick to the main purposes and provide insightful reports related to the operation of the tourism industry in the studied period.

Vietnam's tourism economy has achieved significant success, which demonstrates the government's capacity for governance. This research hope to prove that effective institutions and good governance are key factors in the success of the tourism industry. Additionally, the government's wise interventions, such as sound and timely policies, play a central role in economic activities. Measuring the impact of good governance on the tourism industry and estimating the success magnitude of the tourism policy are to better understand the government's mindset, vision and governance. These research findings draw the framework of Vietnam's tourism industry and then serve as the ground for decision-making and new policy promulgation in the future.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research development proposals in Vietnam

The Vietnamese tourism industry and the achievements of 30 years of development

Since the launch of Doi Moi in 1986, a policy promoting national comprehensive innovation, Vietnam's tourism industry has developed rapidly: it has grown in scale and improved the quality of its services. The increasing number of tourism businesses translated into stable revenue growth while cooperation between tourist accommodation establishments contributed to the birth of the Vietnam brand. Both the state and the private sector have invested in tourism infrastructure. Vietnam is becoming an attractive international destination. In general, the flow of domestic and international tourists and total revenue continuously grow at a high rate, leading to an increasing contribution to GDP. The tourism industry diversifies livelihoods, increases income for residents, especially in remote areas with few opportunities for development and then improves living standards. The tourism sector succeeds in preserving the value of cultural heritage and natural resources while taking these advantages to promote Vietnam's image and level up its position first in the region and then globally.

The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report was first published by the World Economic Forum in 2007 and has been renamed the Travel and Tourism Development Index since 2021. This index measures the attractiveness of a country as a place to develop business in the travel and tourism industry, rather than a country's attractiveness as a tourist destination. **Table 1** below shows Vietnam gradually elevated its position over the years. Furthermore, Vietnam also won major awards voted by the World Travel Awards: Asia's Leading Destination for the years 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022, and 2023; Ha Noi, the capital city of Vietnam, is Asia's Leading City Break Destination and Asia's Leading City Destination 2023; Hoi An Ancient Town achieves Asia's Leading Cultural City Destination 2023. Moc Chau is Asia's Leading Regional Nature Destination in 2023; Phu Quoc, the pearl island of Vietnam won Asia's Leading Luxury Island Destination in 2023; Ha Giang - the place where “flowers grow in rocks”, titled Asia's Leading Emerging Tourism Destination 2023; Tam Chuc Complex is announced as the prizewinner of Asia's Leading Cultural Destination 2023.

Table 1: Vietnam's Travel and Tourism Development Index from 2007 to 2024

Year	2007	2009	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021	2024
Score	4,63	3,7	3,9	3,95	3,6	3,78	3,9	4,1	3,96
Rank	76/124	89/133	80/139	80/140	75/141	67/136	63/140	52/117	59/119
Source: Travel and Tourism Development Index, World Economic Forum									

Resolution 08-NQ/TW (Tourism Policy 2017, **Appendix 2**) outlines the country's strategy for tourism development until 2030. *The policy aims to boost the tourism industry's development as a key economic sector, creating jobs, reducing disparities between provinces, improving quality of life and promoting the development of other industries and the country as a whole.*

Tourism is a complex economic sector, which relies heavily on the system of public and social services and develops in concert with other industries. Because of this interconnectedness, a stable, dynamic but predictable, and attractive economic environment has particular significance for the growth and sustainable development of the tourism industry.

The Vietnamese government emphasizes tourism development is a shared responsibility of the whole political system and all economic sectors. The goals of tourism development must align with the broader goals of socio-economic development. As a key economic sector, the tourism industry must (1) always renew itself to transform from "one-season" into "year-round" tourism, (2) change the mindset of entrepreneurs and provincial governments, making them focus more on product and service quality, differentiation opportunities and competitive advantages, (3) develop safe, green, clean, civilized, modern and attractive tourism products and services, but preserve Vietnam's cultural heritage. In addition, tourism development should focus more on building regional linkages and mutual assistance between provincial governments, while working together with other countries in Southeast Asia to seek new development opportunities.

So far, Vietnam's tourism sector has been promoting its role as a key economic sector through its increasing contribution to the economy. The contribution of this industry to GDP has grown steadily from 1990 to 2023, reaching 9.2% in 2019. Although it dropped to 2.1% by 2022 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it rebounded soon after to 5% in 2023.

1.2 Gaps in the literature and research questions

Searching for the role of the government in tourism development initially yielded 223 articles in total. The two keywords relating to government intervention (public policies and tourism policy) also have the highest frequency of occurrence. These studies confirm the important role of the government in setting direction, planning, formulating strategies and promoting programs. Moreover, other important contents indicate the intervention of the government in improving awareness and participation of communities, types of tourism and the role of tourism in economic development. The government is a decisive factor in the tourism sector's success: the government is the originator of ideas, the inspirer and also the conductor of the orchestra (Tse and Prideaux, 2016; Syssner and Hjerpe, 2017; Ndivo and Okech, 2019). Obviously, research into the role and intervention of government is to understand the fastest way to the prosperity and sustainability of the tourism industry.

Research into Vietnam's tourism sector has been flourishing since 2012. The main topics include the potential of resources and proposed solutions; planning a strategy for sustainable tourism development; and the benefits of tourism development such as reduction of poverty, creating more jobs for women and improving equality and empowerment. Many studies focus on as communities have more first-hand experience regarding the cost and benefits of tourism development, they are more willing to lend their support and increase their participation in related activities. In addition, there are various studies on the potential and development of types of tourism, namely eco-tourism, cultural tourism, community-based tourism, rural tourism, etc. *Topics such as micro- and macro-environmental factors affecting the growth of tourism industry are not popular.* Although tourism has been identified as a key economic sector since the launch of the tourism policy in 2017, there has not been any research to analyse, measure and discuss the effectiveness of this policy. While, in general, the literature reviews affirm the vital role of the government in orienting and launching development strategies for economic sectors in Vietnam, and it has a large gap in research on government intervention in tourism. Moreover, there also seems to be a lack of studies measuring government efficiency in managing and operating the tourism sector, i.e. the governance put great effort in practicing good governance since the Declaration of Independence, and has these efforts positive impact on tourism development so far?

Vietnam's tourism is experiencing impressive growth. In order to sustainably benefit from the tourism industry long term, in-depth assessments of the development process, especially of goal setting, strategy making and implementation are needed. Therefore, these four research questions below become the main direction of this dissertation:

- (1) a - *How can Vietnam develop its tourism potential by building on the experience of other countries?*
- (1) b - *What are the most pressing issues that still need to be addressed by the research community?*
- (2) *How has the government successfully promoted the tourism industry to become a key economic sector as stated in Tourism Policy 2017?*
- (3) *How was the spatial spillover in tourism revenue of the 63 provinces both pre- and post-Covid-19 pandemic?*
- (4) *To what extent have the Vietnamese government's efforts to practice good governance affected tourism revenue over the past three decades?*

1.3 Methodology

Given the wide scope of the research question, which pertains to government policies and activities, this dissertation employs a multi-method approach, integrating diverse datasets and econometric models, with the objective of generating a range of insights.

Connecting to the introduction part, to respond to research question 1, **chapter 2**- a systematic literature review (SLR) is conducted. SLR is to review relevant literature on a certain topic or research questions through “a highly rigorous and systematic process”, and then provides “a broad understanding of the research topic”, lists what work has already been done, and what research methods and theories have been used. Finally, the research gaps and future research are identified for future work on Vietnam's tourism industry. To be specific, the final 149 articles chosen by Prisma diagram is used for analysis. Its first aim is to identify the main research topics related to tourism development from the past 48 years (1975-2023) with a particular focus on the role of government and the second is to find research gaps related to the role of government in promoting tourism development, specifically what the government in Vietnam has been doing in order to increase tourism revenue.

To respond to research question 2, **chapter 3** is a qualitative research using semi-structured questionnaires to invite feedback from universities, enterprises, local government

and tourists about how successful is Vietnam's Tourism Policy 2017. Based on the principles of policy analysis, the question set is structured into four groups, each designed to elicit responses aligned with the specific knowledge and experience of the individual. The content of the questions delves into the efficacy of Tourism policy 2017 and the extent of collaboration and coordination between stakeholders, with the aim of optimising the efficiency of the tourism industry.

To respond to research question 3, *chapter 4* applies a spatial regression model to specifically explore the spatial correlation of tourism revenue between the 63 provinces, which is one of the main objectives of Tourism Policy 2017. The spatial regression model is an effective tool to analyse and test the spatial dependence between area units. In many cases, the traditional ordinary least square (OLS) regression method is not effective because it does not take into consideration the spatial distribution of the data. The main purpose of this study is to look at the state of the tourism industry in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era, thence assist the government in thoroughly evaluating the policies and plans being implemented and making appropriate modifications where necessary. In addition, this study examines the effectiveness of the policy both pre- and post-pandemic in order to investigate the impact of a markedly different environmental and social setting. Therefore, the study compares data from 2019 which marked the peak of the tourism industry pre-pandemic and data from 2022 which was the first recovery year post-pandemic.

To respond to research question 4, *chapter 5* aim is to describe the relationship between government intervention and changes in the tourism industry in the short and long term through an Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) regression model. The ARDL procedure can be used to test for cointegration and for making dynamic inferences regarding short-term and long-term relationships between variables. Thus, while the primary aim of the present study is to investigate the relationship between government intervention and changes in Vietnam's tourism industry for 34 years (1990-2023) and hence, provide input for policymakers - a valuable reference for policymakers to improve future development policies. In the present study, tourism revenue is considered to be a function of the exports-to-GDP ratio, the share of foreign direct investment in total annual investments in economic activity, the Human Development Index, the Government Effectiveness Index, the 'Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism' indicator and the 'Rule of Law' indicator:

$$TR = f(\text{Export}, \text{FDI}, \text{HDI}, \text{GovEff}, \text{PS}, \text{RL})$$

1.4 Research conduction

Studies focussing on the above questions would demonstrate how successful the government has been in boosting the growth of the tourism sector and point out challenges that need to be immediately resolved in order to eliminate obstacles to future sustainable development. The following chapters will work on these questions, respectively. This dissertation focuses on analysing the role of government and assessing the effectiveness of related policies to promote tourism revenue, therefore the background theories applied in the empirical chapters are policy implementation theory, institutional theory and theory related to good governance. Abstracts of each chapter are in neat presentation as follows:

Research question 1: (a) How can Vietnam develop its tourism potential by building on the experience of other countries and (b) What are the most pressing issues that still need to be addressed by the research community?

To answer this first question, a systematic literature review (SLR) is conducted. The history of research on tourism development shows that research on the role of government and government intervention is important for future strategic planning and has been studied quite widely in many countries. Analyzing and evaluating tourism development strategies or tourism development policies helps the government to identify resources, capacities, strengths and weaknesses, and thus to make appropriate adjustments. This SLR aim is to identify the main research topics related to tourism development from the past 48 years (1975-2023) with a particular focus on the role of government and find research gaps related to the role of government in promoting tourism development, specifically what the government in Vietnam has been doing in order to increase tourism revenue. This study highlights issues that need more research in order to support future policymaking in Vietnam. In addition, this is an effort to provide the Vietnamese government with a list of references on the work of other governments across the globe (Spain, Turkey, France, Hungary, China, Singapore, Japan, etc.) regarding various aspects of tourism development. Useful lessons from governments that developed this industry successfully, as well as the reasons why tourism development policies were ineffective in some other countries, are discussed. Lastly, the factors that enable

governments to be successful in developing and pursuing sound strategies for sustainable tourism development are analyzed. At present, there is a pressing need to assess the effectiveness of the Vietnamese government's current efforts in tourism development, specifically in increasing tourism revenue. In order for the tourism industry to truly become a key economic sector of Vietnam with sustainable growth, increasing contribution to GDP and a competitive edge over neighbouring countries, the government needs to rethink its policies and strategies. Therefore, the recommendations will focus on: (1) *How to perfect the governance apparatus and* (2) *How to improve policy, development strategy and promotional activity*. Drawing from the results of this SLR, the subsequent three research questions were also developed.

Research question 2: How has the government successfully promoted the tourism industry to become a key economic sector as stated in Tourism Policy 2017?

To answer this second question, a quantitative study using semi-structured interviews was conducted, which developed from policy analysis. Two essential components underpin the tourism industry's efficiency and competitiveness: a viable development strategy and a high-quality workforce. Obviously, having a sound strategy from the early stage of development is a crucial element for the tourism industry's success. This chapter uses semi-structured questionnaires to invite feedback from universities, enterprises, local government and tourists about *how successful Vietnam's Tourism Policy 2017 is*. Based on the principles of policy analysis, this survey is conducted to respond to the questions below:

- (1) *How has Tourism Policy 2017 contributed to the development of the tourism industry in Vietnam?*
- (2) *Does the actual performance of the industry reflect the effectiveness of the policy?*
- (3) *Have stakeholders fulfilled the roles envisaged in Tourism Policy 2017?*
- (4) *Which aspects of the Vietnamese tourism industry need improvement?*

Looking back at the 6 years since the launching of Tourism Policy 2017, all stakeholders seem to be focusing their efforts and working hard to have the tourism sector develop as a key economic sector. This study constitutes the first conversation with all stakeholders about the outcomes of Vietnam's tourism policy. Respondents' recommendations

for improving its effectiveness are summarized in this chapter which policymakers could find useful in the future.

Research question 3: How was the spatial spillover in tourism revenue of the 63 provinces both pre- and post-Covid-19 pandemic?

To simultaneously boost tourism revenue across provinces, the Vietnamese government focused its efforts on strengthening the linkages and fostering cooperation between regions regarding tourism policy. Furthermore, the government also invests heavily in improving the efficiency of the administrative apparatus in the provinces and has launched many policies to improve living standards, both of which are vital for tourism development in individual localities. The government's tourism policy needs to be updated on a regular basis, and that academia fills all research gaps in order to be in a better position to advise policymakers in that process. As a contribution, this study investigates how well the government's strategies are working in promoting regional connectivity and attempts to quantify it as spatial spillover effects on tourism revenue in the 63 provinces for the years 2019 and 2022. Building on the theory of policy implementation and based on preliminary research on the subject, chapter 3 aims to provide an answer to the query: *whether the government of Vietnam has been successful in increasing tourism revenue in neighbouring provinces by improving regional connectivity*. In addition, this study assesses whether:

- a) *government policies related to improving quality of life, for example, 'developing infrastructure' and 'improving health systems and safe living spaces' for the residents and tourists have had a positive effect on tourism revenue*
- b) *government policies aimed at improving government competitiveness, for example, 'business support policy', 'the level of proactive and creative provincial leadership in solving problems for enterprises' and 'a transparent business environment and equitable business information' have had a positive impact on tourism revenue*
- c) *a larger and better-trained workforce, a dynamic economic environment and higher income levels positively affect tourism revenue*
- d) *agriculture resources also positively affect tourism revenue*

This chapter specifically examines the spatial correlation of tourism revenues among the 63 provinces using spatial regression models, which is one of the important strategies of Tourism Policy 2017. The spatial regression model is an effective tool to analyse and test the spatial dependence between area units. In many cases, the traditional ordinary least square (OLS) regression method is not effective because it does not take into consideration the existence of spatial relationships of the data set. In-depth discussion and the policy implications of these findings are discussed, and recommendations are made on how to meet current challenges in the hope that these will be implemented across Vietnam.

Research question 4: To what extent have the Vietnamese government's efforts to practice good governance affected tourism revenue over the past three decades?

Vietnam successfully escaped from the "poverty trap" and has gradually moved towards economic prosperity thanks to the implementation of the Doi Moi Policy 1986. In line with striving to ensure a stable political economy, the government has gradually increased the country's trade openness and constantly strengthened cooperation with the most powerful economies in Asia (Japan, Singapore, China, etc.). Vietnam has successfully built a "highway" connecting Vietnam to the world with the current economic opening¹. These strategies have gradually increased Vietnam's weight in the global economy. In addition, Vietnam's economy has been repeatedly restructured within the frame of consecutive five-year strategic plans and hence, currently, the services sector generates a significant part of the country's GDP. The tourism industry also benefits from these favourable conditions, as demonstrated by its impressive growth results.

Vietnam is now recognized as an emerging competitor in Asia, rich in resources for tourism development and the labour force is also improving qualifications to seize all development opportunities. In recent years, a series of awards in tourism for destinations, heritage sites and services of Vietnam have been given by prestigious world organizations. This demonstrates that Vietnam not only relies on natural resources but also has sound development strategies and methodical investment strategies to increase competitiveness and

¹ Report of General Statistics Office of Vietnam 2023: www.gso.gov.vn

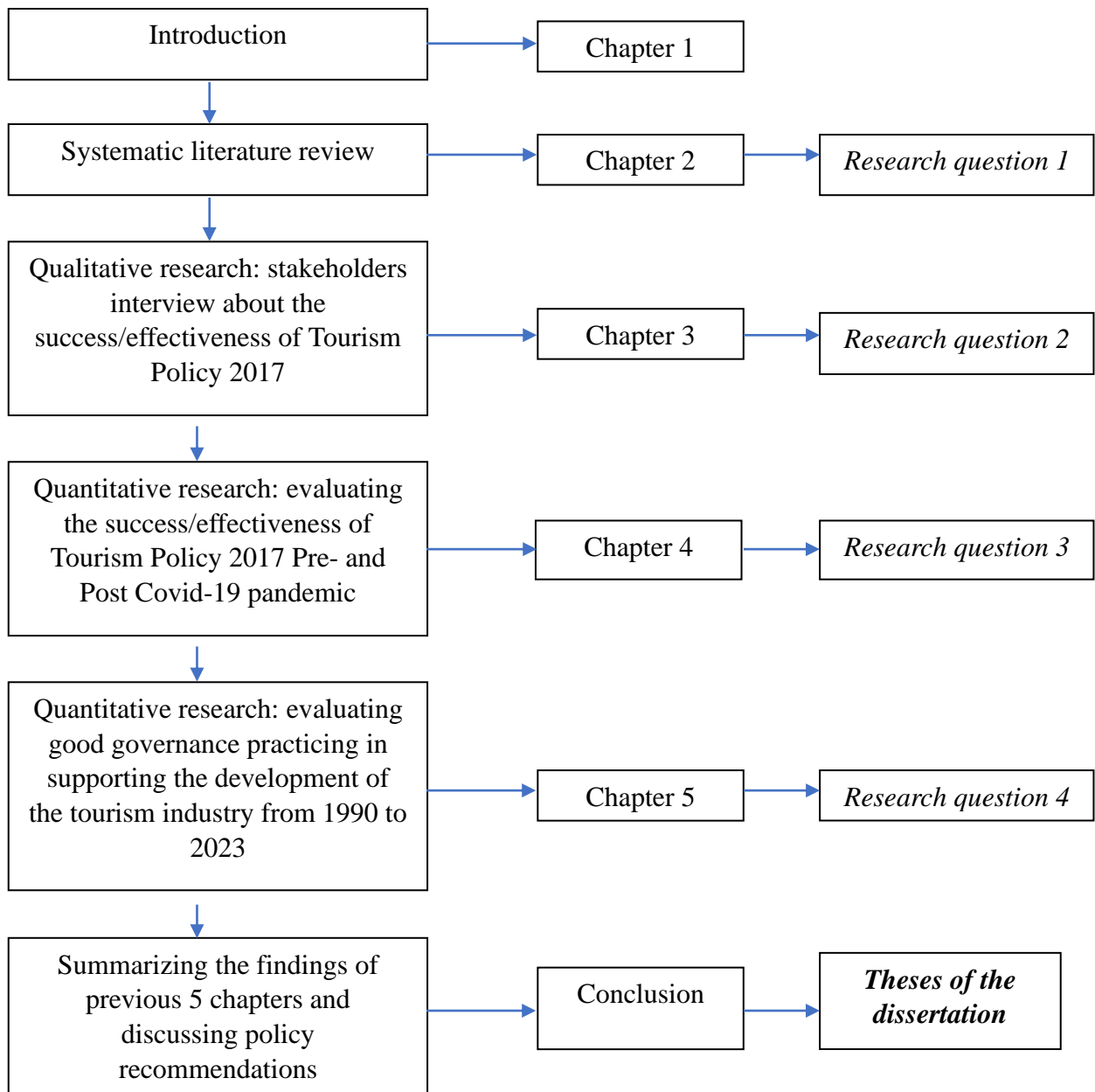
efficiency. Therefore, the tourism economy is also becoming a popular topic among researchers in Vietnam. Policymakers can now rely on an increasing body of diverse and extensive studies on the subject to make informed decisions about the country's tourism industry. However, additional macro-observational studies are needed on tourism policy, trade strategy, economic openness and national security level. This chapter aims to fulfill this task. To do this, the ground theories and the selection of observed variables are developed from institutional theory and good governance theory. The main objective is to make recommendations for sustainable tourism development based on analyses of how tourism revenue is affected by good governance.

For the purposes of the analysis, all variables are highly relevant to good governance dimensions: economic openness (exports-to-GDP ratio and share of FDI in total annual investments in Vietnam's economy) is a proxy of strategic vision, the Human Development Index (HDI) is used as a proxy for equitable and inclusive governance, the Government Effectiveness Index is used as a proxy for government effectiveness, 'Rule of Law' and 'Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism' are also considered in the analysis. Building on the previous studies using the same observed variables, an in-depth statistical analysis was conducted, utilizing an autoregressive distributed lag (ARDL) model, an error correction model (ECM), the Granger causality test and time series from the interval 1990-2023, in order to give a comprehensive respond to the above research question. Thence, policy recommendations are discussed in an attempt to support the tourism sector's sustainable development.

1.5 The dissertation's structure

The dissertation is built up with 5 chapters and a conclusion (**Figure 1**). *Chapter 1* is an introduction including a discussion of the research objective and specific research questions. *Chapter 2* is a systematic literature review that aims to give an overview of government interventions in other countries for tourism development and to identify related research gaps in Vietnam. *Chapter 3* is a qualitative study, which takes a stakeholder approach to the evaluation of the effectiveness of Tourism Policy 2017. The discussion focuses on actions taken by all stakeholders to fulfill their roles envisaged in Tourism Policy 2017, on both achievements and limitations as well as on some recommendations for the future. *Chapter 4* is a quantitative analysis, that complements chapter 3, with the aim is to assess Tourism Policy 2017's efficacy by quantifying (1) any spillover effect between the 63 provinces? and (2) the degree to which (multi-level) governance and public-service reform, workforce training and increasing social participation contributed to the increase of tourism revenue. This chapter compares the results for 2019 and 2022 to have a closer look at the impact of Tourism Policy 2017 pre-and post- Covid-19 pandemic. Chapters 3 and 4 assess the effectiveness of the first official development policy targeting the tourism industry with the objective of transforming it into a key economic sector. In contrast, *Chapter 5* provides an overview of 34 years of tourism development in a macroeconomic context, focusing on government efforts to practice good governance and its effects on the tourism industry. This chapter also presents the efforts of the government to create favourable conditions for general economic development and for the tourism industry, in particular. The main findings of Chapter 3,4,5 present an evolution of government strategies targeting to develop tourism more effectively. Lastly, the *Conclusion* systematises the findings of the previous chapters and discusses several policy recommendations. This section also includes limitations and recommendations for further study.

Figure 1: The structure of this dissertation



Chapter 2: The government and tourism industry

A systematic literature review

2.1 The government and the success of tourism industry

The tourism sector becomes attractive for investors and develops dynamically due to the great benefits it brings to the economy, culture and society. Research into the tourism path and strategy for promoting development in the future also attracts scholars with diverse approaches. A survey of scientific literature revealed those keywords that most commonly co-occur with “tourism development”. **Figure 2** below summarizes the results based on 874 articles published by Elsevier, Springer, Wiley, Sage, Emerald and Taylor Francis over the past 48 years (1985-2023). Notable keywords include sustainable development, destination image and the perception of the community regarding the cost and benefits of tourism growth.

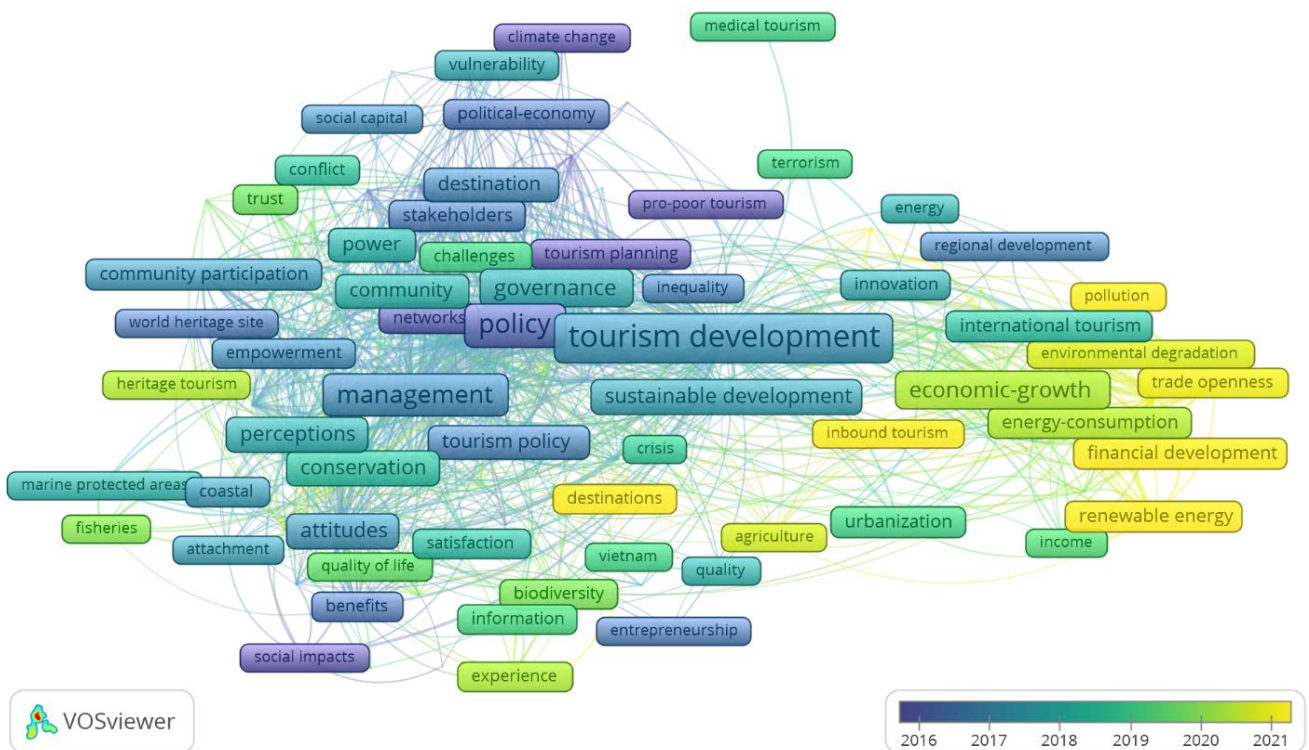


Figure 2: The keywords that most frequently co-occurred with “tourism development” from 1985 to 2023

The author's construction using VOS viewer, 2023

Searching for “the role of the government in boosting the tourism industry” initially yielded 223 articles in total. **Figure 3** indicates the clusters of keywords and two keywords relating to the government intervention (policy and tourism policy) are also highlighted. Studies confirm the important role of the government in setting direction, planning, formulating strategies and promotion programs. Moreover, other important contents indicate the intervention of the government in improving community awareness and participation, types of tourism and how tourism contributes to economic development. China has the most research on both government and tourism development policy (**Figure 4**). It can be affirmed that the effectiveness and success of the tourism industry mostly rely on the management of the government: the government is the originator of ideas, the inspirer and also the conductor of the orchestra (Tse and Prideaux, 2016; Syssner and Hjerpe, 2017; Ndivo and Okech, 2019). Obviously, research into the role and intervention of government is to understand the fastest way to the prosperity and sustainability of the tourism industry.

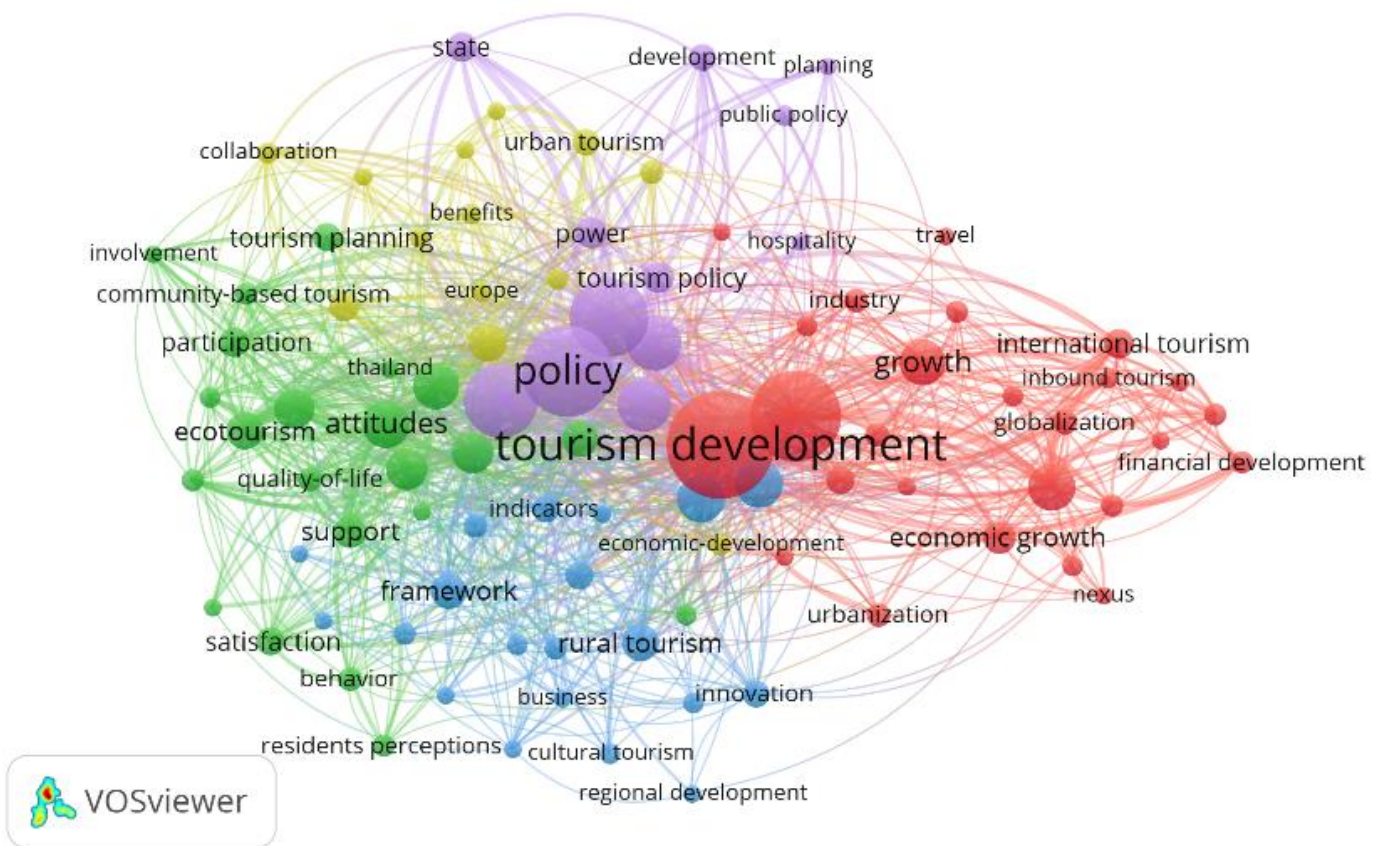


Figure 3: Policies related to tourism development
The author's construction using VOS viewer, 2023

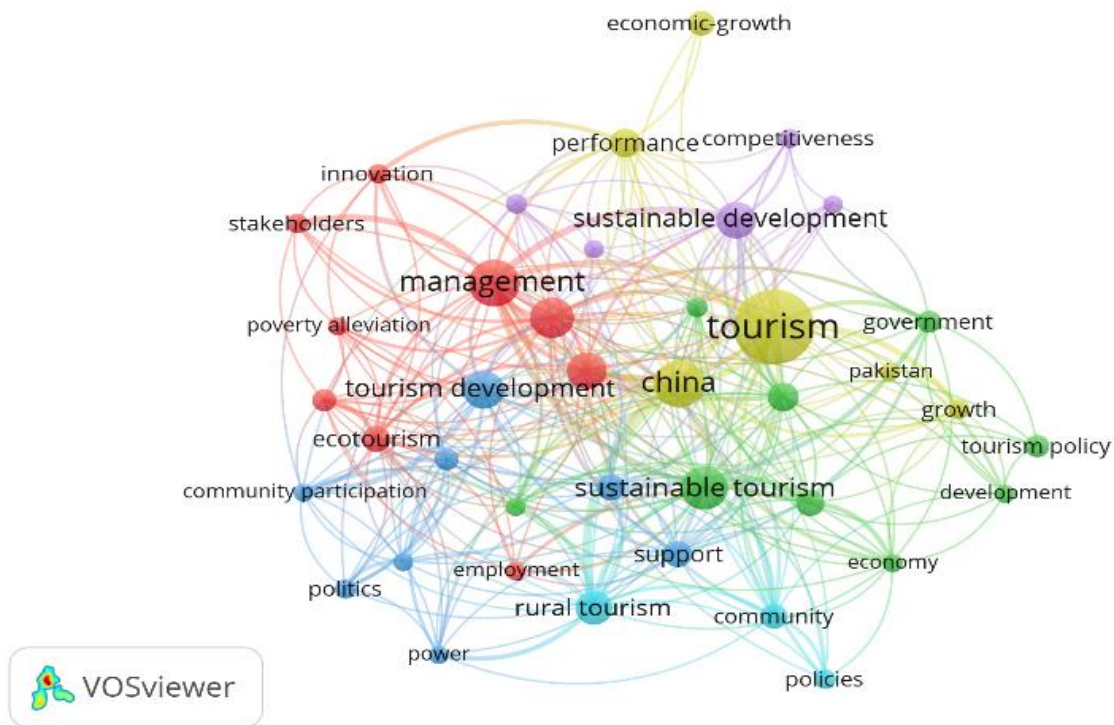


Figure 4: Government and tourism sector
The author's construction using VOS viewer, 2023

Numerous studies demonstrated the positive role of local government in tourism development. The beneficial impact that local government plays in the promotion of tourism has been shown by numerous research. Take Hurunui in New Zealand, a rural county, as an example, where the tourism sector has impressively developed over the past 25 years. Shone, Simmons and Dalziel (2016) broadened our understanding and recognition of the vital role of the local government and the positive effect of public policy on tourism development, which included sustainable tourism development policy. The authors also demonstrated the significant effects of the public sector in tourism development: public sector participation, the rationale behind public sector participation and the operation of the public sector, especially at the local government level. Importantly, the boundaries of government action and intervention (both central government and local governments) in the tourism market (both successes and failures) are and will continue to be hotly debated.

The Chinese government's nonstop efforts have helped the tourism sector to grow remarkably. From 1949 to 2013, the government launched 379 policies related to tourism

development (Tang, 2017) and most of which were highly successful. The key to Chinese government's success is that the goal of tourism policy is always in harmony with the goal of socio-economic development. In addition, more and more government agencies are involved in tourism policy making which results in guaranteed main goals while taking into consideration the interests of all stakeholders.

Likewise, Zatul, Hussin and Buchmann (2019) pointed to the success of the Malaysian government in direction-setting and interventions in tourism development. From the First Malaysia Plan (1966–1970), through the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2010–2015), to the flexible post-Covid tourism opening policy and the attractive discount policy, as a result of which Malaysia achieved the largest annual growth rate in international tourist growth in Southeast Asia in 2023.

Whether the tourism industry of a country becomes a truly flexible economic sector with a large international market, it depends not only on the governance capacity of the government in that country but also on the intergovernmental collaboration among nations (Wong, Mistili and Dwyer 2010). Thus, to better realize the vision of economic integration and sustainable tourism development, it is also necessary to make continuous efforts to establish, promote and protect the common interests of lower level of government. Hall (2008) synthesized the literature regarding the potential and emerging benefits of tourism development in Central and Eastern Europe. This author emphasized the importance of transformation and connection to expand the tourism development path. Furthermore, The EU needs to have specific policies for the tourism sector, because this sector was being "neglected" leading to the potential of tourism being wasted. However, the government in each country also needs to seriously consider its resources, upgrade the infrastructure, improve the transport network, strengthen economic cooperation and educational exchange, and finally, "refine and redefine their identity" through destination image. The role of the EU in regional development is generally undisputed, it has not been discussed much in relation to tourism development. The task that should be strongly assisted by the EU in tourism development is to support regions in promoting their strengths while strengthening linkages to support new destinations to keep up. European and Nordic documentary sources mention only a few programs to increase the standard and competitiveness of European destinations such as the emergence of new multinational tour operators and low-cost airlines (Henrik, 2010). This

author proposed to improve the intervention of the EU in tourism development by "transition mindset" and "flexibility" in governance activities, and he also draws attention to the benefits that tourism brings to nations such as reducing disparities between regions and improving quality of life. Tourism activities with reasonable strategies and plans help residents escape poverty and succeed in liberating some economies from their stick with underdevelopment. The European Union has launched several programs to promote tourism development projects, all aimed at promoting growth and job creation in peripheral areas. To investigate whether the decrease of regional disparities was facilitated by the expansion of tourism and the implementation of appropriate tourism policies, Bohlin, Brandt and Elbe (2016) took Sweden to check spatial changes after these policies. However, the reality revealed that “the potential for creating sustainable rural tourism growth through tourism policy seems to be much less than the expected planning with just a few exceptions” (Bohlin et al., 2016). Thus, the effectiveness of government intervention in the tourism sector is dependent upon the level (i.e., local, state) at which it occurs.

Research into Vietnam's tourism sector has been flourishing since 2012. The main topics include the potential of resources and proposed solutions; planning strategies for tourism development; the benefits of tourism development such as reduction of poverty, creating more jobs for women and improving equality and empowerment. Many studies focus on as communities have more first-hand experience regarding the cost and benefits of tourism development, they are more willing to lend their support and increase their participation in related activities. In addition, there are various studies on the potential and expansion of different types of tourism including adventure tourism, medical tourism, eco-tourism, cultural tourism, community-based tourism, rural tourism, etc. (**Figure 5**). Topics such as micro- and macro-factors affecting tourism development are not popular. Although the tourism industry in Vietnam has been identified as a key economic sector since the introduction of Tourism Policy 2017, there has not been any research to analyze, measure and discuss the effectiveness of this policy. While, in general, the literature reviews affirm the key role of the government in orienting and launching development strategies for economic sectors in Vietnam and it has a large gap in research on government intervention in tourism.

This SLR is conducted to summarize the main topics related to tourism development carried out from the past 48 years (1975-2023) with a particular focus on observing and

assessing the role of government. *The main objective is to find research gaps related to the intervention of government in promoting tourism development, specifically what the government in Vietnam has been doing in order to increase tourism revenue. This study highlights issues that need to have more research to support future policymaking in Vietnam.* In addition, this is an effort to provide the Vietnamese government with a list of references on the work of other governments across the world regarding various aspects of tourism development. Useful lessons from governments that developed the tourism sector successfully together with the reasons why tourism development policies were ineffective in some other countries, are discussed. Lastly, the factors that enable the government to be successful in developing and pursuing sound strategies for sustainable tourism development are analysed.

To fulfill these purposes, the rest of this research is structured: *Section 2.2* is a detailed description of the methodology including step-by-step discussion of data collection and the iterative process to get the final number of articles that serve as a basis for review. *Section 2.3* presents the main findings which is a list of references to the government and a critical evaluation of articles in order to identify the research gap that might be fulfilled in Vietnam which is presented in *section 2.4*. Lastly, *section 2.5* is the conclusion and recommendations, which highlight aspects of government intervention that require further research and other recommendations to the research community.



Figure 5: Issues related to Vietnamese tourism have been studied
The author's construction, 2023

2.2 Conducting a systematic literature review

2.2.1 Methodology

Systematic literature review (SLR) is to review relevant literature on a certain topic or research questions through “a highly rigorous and systematic process” (Mackenzie et al., 2012; Newman & Gough, 2019). The process of conducting an SLR covers not only "the important and highly relevant content" found in literature but also "the systematic methods" used to find these documents. An SLR provides “a broad understanding of the research topic” and lists what work has already been done, what research methods and theories have been used, and indicate areas that require more consideration from researchers (Miskolczi et al., 2021). Then, the research gaps and future research are identified for future work. An SLR must fulfill seven key criteria: transparency, clarity, integration, focus, equality, accessibility and coverage (Mackenzie et al., 2012).

Such research on the topic of tourism development has been carried out (Gamage et al., 2020; Kassim and Isik, 2020; Janowski, Gardiner and Kwek, 2021). There are 290 SLRs related to keyword “tourism” and 14 SLRs with keyword “tourism development”. These SLRs

focus on analyzing factors affecting tourism development, tourism performance, sustainable development, benefits and costs from tourism development, and finding solutions for types of tourism to gain further development in the future, etc. (**Figure 6**). In addition, Sarangan, Hewege and Perera (2022) cataloged topics that have been carried out with the SLR approach, including tourism governance, technology & innovation in tourism, tourism service quality, leadership in tourism, entrepreneurship in tourism, film-induced tourism, etc. As such, an SLR focusing on government intervention will complement and diversify research in tourism development internationally and in Vietnam.

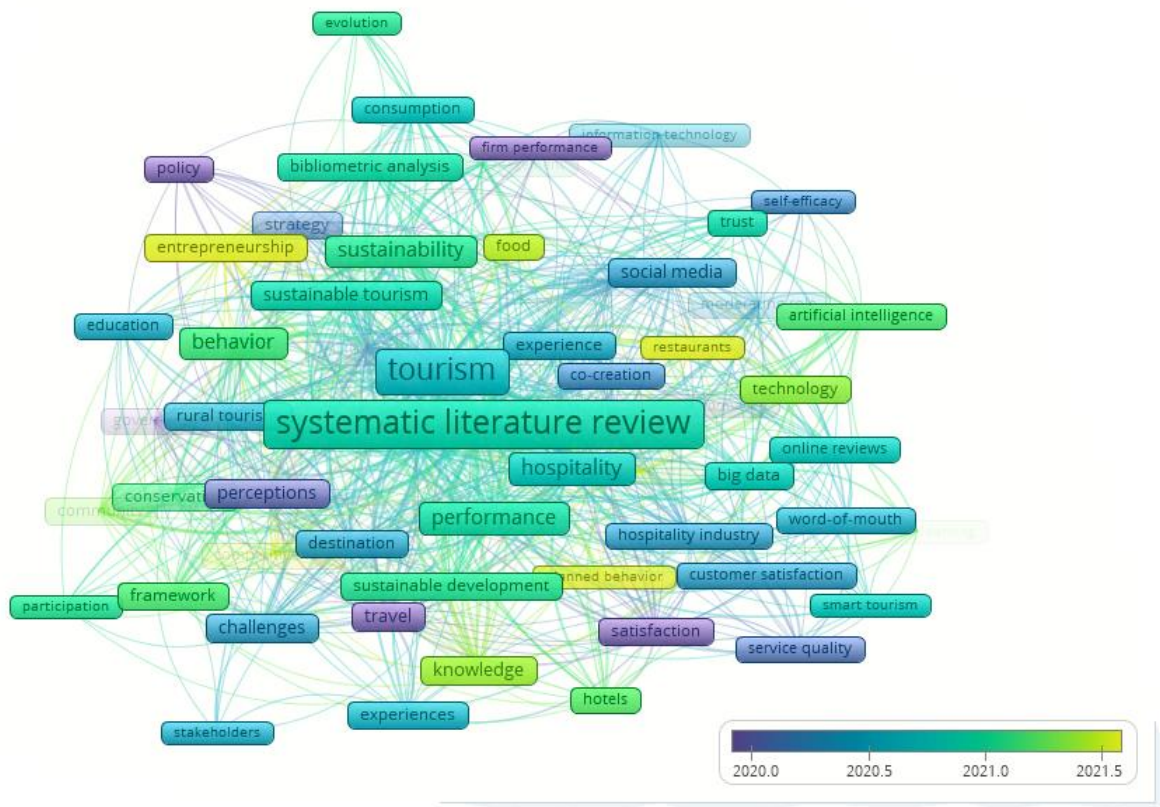


Figure 6: SLR topics that so far have been addressed
The author's own construction using VOS viewer, 2023

2.2.2 Data collection for systematic analysis

Keywords and criteria for specific data collection are presented in **Table 2**. In order not to miss the research that contributes to tourism development, articles from Scopus, Web of

Science (WOS), Springer Nature, Wiley and Science Direct are collected. Collecting data on multiple platforms will produce duplicates, which need to be eliminated. Among the above data hubs, WOS proved to be the most effective in searching articles from all the selected publishers.

In order to get sufficient content, the keywords are also used in different combinations but with the main focus on "government" and "tourism revenue". The articles are collected from 1975 to the present and are written in English. Using a few high-prestige sources, articles published by Elsevier, Springer, Wiley, Sage, Taylor & Francis and Emerald are selected for the final research.

Table 2: Keywords and criteria for data collection

	Keywords	No. of articles
Keywords	“Tourism development”	453
	“Tourism revenue”	250
	“Government” AND “Tourism revenue”	12
	“Policy” AND “Tourism revenue”	26
	“Tourism policy”	76
	“Tourism development in Vietnam”	210
	“Vietnam’ AND “Government” AND Tourism revenue”	70
	“Systematic literature review” AND “Tourism”	290
	“Systematic literature review” AND “Tourism development”	10
	“Systematic literature review” AND “Tourism revenue”	0
	"Tourism " AND " Government" AND "Systematic literature review”	0
"Tourism policy" AND “Systematic literature review"	0	
Search within	Topic, Title, Abstract	
Publication year	1975 to present	
Document style	Articles in the English	
Publisher	Elsevier, Springer Nature, Wiley, Sage, Taylor & Francis, Emerald	

2.2.3 Analysis

Data collection

In step (1), 1397 articles are collected. In step (2), titles, abstracts and keywords were thoroughly checked to remove duplicate and irrelevant articles. In step (3), the most relevant articles were selected after reading the entire article (with the main focus on government and tourism revenue). The final number of articles selected was 149. The steps for data collection followed the Prisma Diagram (Liberati et al., 2009) illustrated in **Figure 7**.

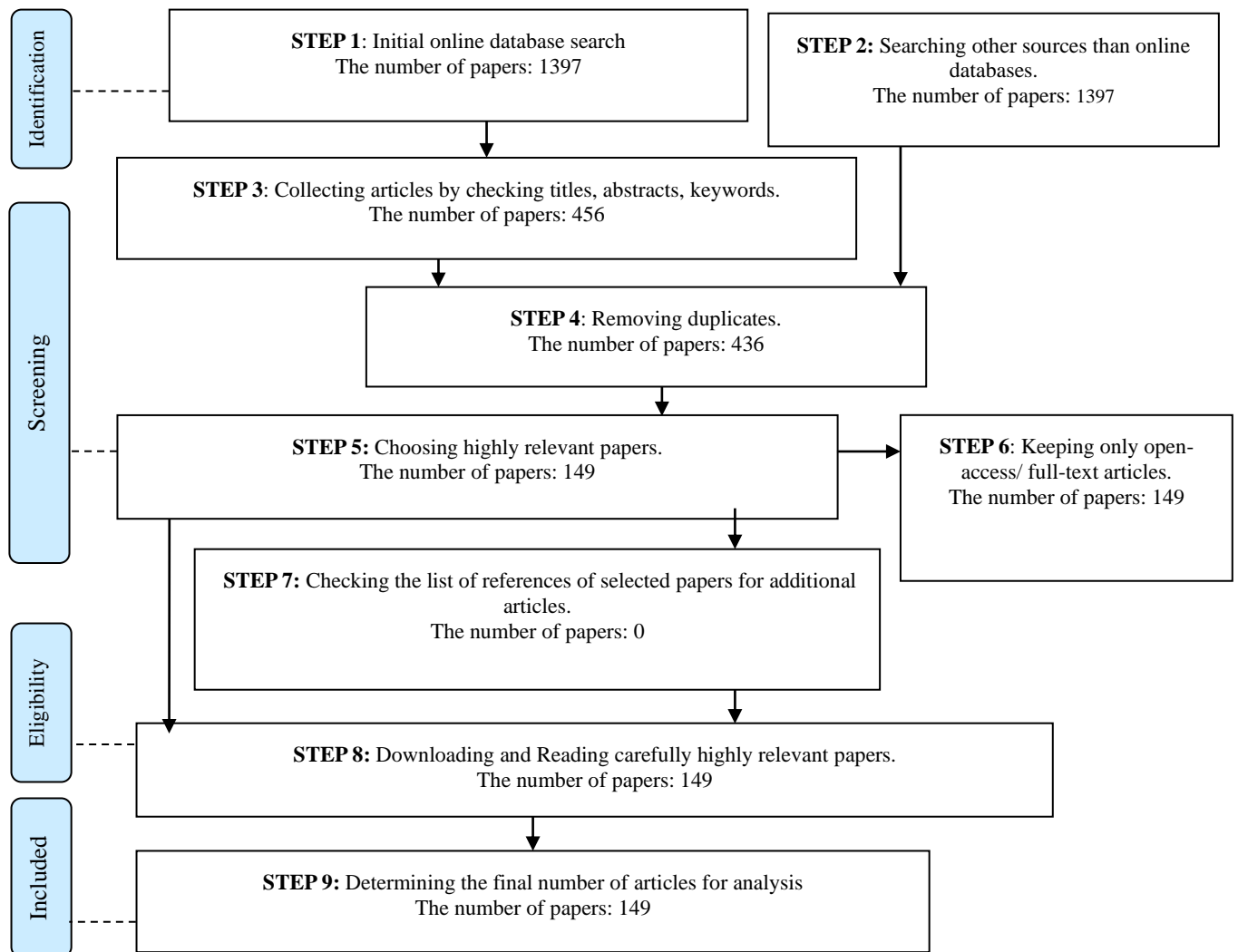


Figure 7: Prisma diagram

2.2.4 Data extraction

Data were extracted from papers selected following the steps as shown in the Prisma diagram (Figure 7). The analysis was based on the PICOC methodology (Booth, Sutton and Papaioannou, 2016). The criteria used were Population/ Problem, Intervention, Comparison, Outcomes and Context. The results of data extraction are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Building a search strategy based on the PICOC concept

Problem	<i>How have various governments worldwide been boosting the tourism industry?</i>
Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The crucial role/ efforts of government in tourism development (<i>Cluster 1</i>) - Making a tourism development strategy/ plan (<i>Cluster 2</i>) - Implementing a tourism promotion program (<i>Cluster 3</i>) - Selecting and developing tourism types that are suitable for natural resources (<i>Cluster 4</i>) - Launching policies related to tourism development (<i>Cluster 5</i>) - Researching to figure out factors that influence the decision-making of the government (<i>Cluster 6</i>) - Researching to figure out factors that boost tourism revenue (<i>Cluster 7</i>)
Comparison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing countries and developed countries - Countries in Europe and Asia
Outcomes	<i>Increase in tourism revenue</i>
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compilation of research on emerging, developing and developed nations for the tourist sector - Figuring out the research gaps for Vietnam: a developing country in Southeast Asia and at the early-stage of tourism development

2.3 Discussing problems-related governments and tourism development via articles collected

To keep the focus on the main objectives of the research, the articles were grouped into seven clusters. These clusters detail the areas that have been and are being studied while identifying research gaps in Vietnam.

Cluster 1. The efforts of government in boosting the tourism sector

It can be approved that the tourism industry succeeds or fails, it is essential to take into account first the government's orientation and strategy, and then the government's governance

capacity to set goals effectively. **Figure 8** provides an overview of the research conducted on this cluster.

Good governance has increased the efficiency of economic activity across nations. The tourism industry therefore also takes advantage of good governance. Good governance had a positive and significant impact on total tourism revenue and the number of visitors in 30 developing countries and 30 members from OECD countries in the period 1996-2009 (Daryaei *et al.*, 2012), in 14 Southwest Asian countries during the annual period 2011-2016 (Zabihi, Hoshmand and Salehnia, 2020) and in South Asian countries in the period 1996-2018 (Ullah *et al.*, 2023). The participation and consensus of all stakeholders in making plans and setting long-term targets, and better coordination at all levels of governance promoted innovation and development in rural tourism in Ontario, Canada (Joppe, Brooker and Thomas, 2014). Using governance indicators and tourism-industry statistics from 158 countries, from the period 2007-2014, (Steyn and Jansen van Vuuren, 2016) demonstrated that destinations with good governance attracted 18.7% more tourists than destinations with bad governance. Good governance played a vital role in increasing foreign tourist inflows and raising the tourism competitiveness index of the United States and India in the period 2008–2019 (Swamy and Lagesh, 2023). In contrast, less efficient governance, including incomplete and unclear planning, hindered sustainable development, thereby reducing the sharing of local benefits and obstructing the conservation of the ecosystem in Phong Nha-Ke Bang, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site in Vietnam (Hübner, Phong and Châu, 2014).

Akama (2002) discusses many interesting findings on the intervention of government in Kenya's tourism development, where the tourism industry is fully integrated with other economic sectors. In such a diverse socio-economic context, only the government has the capacity to create an attractive and fair playing field and to coordinate the activities of the parties involved in tourism. In the early stages of tourism development, the Kenyan government succeeded in playing the role of conductor and in uniting stakeholders (Dieke, 1991; Akama, 2002). However, since 1990, less efficient management and a lack of innovation by the government led to a significant decrease in tourism revenue.

Several similar studies in other countries also demonstrate the central role of government in tourism development. The government of the Northern Territory of Australian realized the benefits brought by the tourism economy, therefore they invested heavily in

infrastructure and mega projects related to the tourism sector (Schmallegger and Carson, 2010). These reasonable investments produced a great deal of jobs and significantly supported the rise of tourism in tandem.

Wang and Bramwell (2012) showed that government intervention was very important in ensuring the long-term sustainability of cultural tourism as opposed to simply prioritizing its economic benefits in China. The success of a tourism development policy requires a balance of stakeholder interests, timely government regulation and sustainability goals.

The structure of the government apparatus from the national to local level was directly related to the effectiveness of agritourism development strategies in Honduras (Kubickova and Campbell, 2018). Consequently, it was found that the structure of the government apparatus from the national to the local level had a direct impact on the effectiveness of agritourism development strategies in Honduras. This prompted the government to improve its administrative procedures and invest more in staff training.

During the early stages of tourism development policy implementation, there was significant disagreement between the local community and the Hurunui County government in New Zealand. The local government did not receive much support from the local community regarding regulations and implementation methods (Shone, Simmons and Dalziel, 2016). Although the tourism industry gradually brought positive changes to Hurunui County, these policies would have been more effective if the local government and the communities had come to the table and held more discussions. *Thus, the agreement between the government (both central and local) and all communities is crucial in determining the policy's effectiveness.* To reach this consensus, the government should play a central role in educating and supporting the locals to have a better understanding of these policies.

There is a dearth of similar studies in Vietnam. The Vietnamese government is gradually increasingly focusing on and developing policies to prioritize investment in tourism development. The presence of government-related research would aid decision-making in achieving the desired results.



Figure 8: The government and tourism industry
The author's construction, 2023

Cluster 2. Research related to proposing tourism development strategies/ plans

This is the research cluster that attracts the most authors in the collected data set. The research of Wang and Bramwell (2012), Ridderstaat, Croes and Nijkamp (2014), Brouder (2016) and Maxim (2017) focused on analyzing the potential of resources and proposing strategies for tourism development. Several studies have identified the factors that are crucial in enhancing the effectiveness of tourism development strategies, including the collaboration of stakeholders in development of tourist products (Nicholas, Thapa and Pennington-Gray, 2009; Gurung and Scholz, 2010; Kimbu and Ngoasong, 2013; Hardy and Pearson, 2018), discussion and agreement in the process of making tourism development decisions between stakeholders (Aas, Ladkin and Fletcher, 2005; Ladkin and Martinez Bertramini, 2010; Wondirad, Tolkach and King, 2020), locals' quality of life (Moscardo *et al.*, 2017; Lee *et al.*, 2020), empowerment of locals especially women in isolated-areas (Ferguson, 2010, 2011; Musavengane, Siakwah and Leonard, 2020), harmonization of the structure of economics (including income levels and structure of the labour market) in other economic sectors with those in the tourism industry (Bartholo *et al.*, 2008; Jeyacheya and Hampton, 2020; Baloch *et al.*, 2023) and the governance capacity of the government apparatus (Lewis and Jordan, 2008; Öztürk and Terhorst, 2012; Cao, 2015; Liasidou, 2018). In addition, there are numerous studies on policies for sustainable tourism development. With the rapid growth of the global tourism sector, the natural environment is affected by mass tourism, urban tourism,

urbanization and resource extraction without accounting for recovery, etc. leading to increased emissions and threatening ecosystem diversity (Law *et al.*, 2016; Zhang, 2017; Ocampo *et al.*, 2018; Grilli *et al.*, 2021). Some studies have found residents' dissatisfaction with the harm caused by tourism development (Moscardo *et al.*, 2017; Situmorang, Trilaksono and Japutra, 2019; Lee *et al.*, 2020), which is the reason why locals are less willing to participate in tourism development programs (Sinclair-Maragh, Gursoy and Vieregge, 2015; Lai and Hitchcock, 2016; Bimonte and D'Agostino, 2020). To date, studies on sustainable tourism development strategies and policies prioritising environmental protection are prevalent in both famous and emerging destinations (Michalena, Hills and Amat, 2009; Liu *et al.*, 2015; Clavé and Wilson, 2016; Maxim, 2017; Cheer *et al.*, 2018; Tafel and Szolnoki, 2020).

Within this cluster, Vietnam has conducted research on making sustainability an integral part of tourism development strategies (Ngo, Hales and Lohmann, 2018; Cong and Chi, 2020), developing tourism development policies for localities (Mai and Smith, 2018; Goh and Yeoman, 2020; Madigan and West, 2023) and studying inhabitants' awareness and attitudes towards tourism programs (Brickell, 2012; Nguyen, Pansuwong and McClelland, 2021; Nguyen, 2022).

Cluster 3. Research related to implementing tourism-promotion programs

These are studies related to the enhancement of governments' marketing activities for destinations. A large number of studies focus on improving destination competitiveness by improving product quality (Thompson *et al.*, 2017; Drakulić Kovačević *et al.*, 2018), creating a variety of services and products (Martin *et al.*, 2016; Pulido-Fernández, Cárdenas-García and Carrillo-Hidalgo, 2017; Ebejer, 2018), building a flexible pricing system (Falzon, 2012), spreading the image of the destination through Hollywood movie (Marafa, Chan and Li, 2020), facilitating partnering between accommodation and travel businesses (Nicholas, Thapa and Pennington-Gray, 2009; Gurung and Scholz, 2010; Hardy and Pearson, 2018) and upgrading the quality of infrastructure (Yang *et al.*, 2016; Yang, 2018; Yao *et al.*, 2021).

Cluster 4. Research related to selecting and developing types of tourism that match available resources

Different countries have different natural and cultural resources which enable them to develop different types of tourism. The types of tourism that attract the most research are rural tourism (Randelli, Romei and Tortora, 2014; Ristić, Vukoičić and Milinčić, 2019; Liu, 2020),

ecotourism (Romão *et al.*, 2014; Arsić, Nikolić and Živković, 2017), cultural tourism (Balslev Clausen and Gyimóthy, 2016; Tokarchuk, Gabriele and Maurer, 2017) and community-based tourism (Qian *et al.*, 2017; Sène-Harper and Séye, 2019). Based on the articles in this cluster, it is easy to identify the types of tourism that are most successful in a given country such as heritage tourism in European countries (Prokkola and Lois, 2016), religious tourism in Arab countries (Seyfi and Hall, 2019; Purwandani and Yusuf, 2021), nature tourism in Africa (Heath, 2014; Kimbu and Tichaawa, 2020) and educational tourism in Hong Kong (Chan *et al.*, 2022). In addition, there are studies related to new types of tourism that open new directions for future tourism trends such as volunteer tourism (Burrai, Mostafanezhad and Hannam, 2016), food tourism (Ellis *et al.*, 2018), shopping tourism (Leick, Schewe and Kivedal, 2020), medicinal tourism (Hadian *et al.*, 2019), etc.

These studies draw a vivid picture of the various tourism development paths and diverse human needs for improving the quality of spiritual life through recreational activities. They also discuss how governments analyze their strengths and weaknesses and identify their competitive advantage with respect to the various types of tourism in order to design sound tourism development strategies.

The articles on Vietnam that were included in this cluster focus on ecotourism (Nguyen, 2020), rural tourism (Trinh, Ryan and Bui, 2020), cultural tourism (Nguyen Phu and Nguyen Thi Thu, 2022), community-based tourism (Nguyen, d’Hauterres and Serrao-Neumann, 2021) and casino tourism (Lee *et al.*, 2020).

Cluster 5. Research on the success rate of tourism development policies during the early implementation phase

Several studies emphasized the importance of development policies (Bartholo *et al.*, 2008; d’Hauterres, 2010; Griffin and Stacey, 2011; Fazito, Scott and Russell, 2016; Petrevska and Collins-Kreiner, 2016; Alipour *et al.*, 2017; Salinas, Mundet and Salinas, 2018). The appearance of tourism policies reflects a serious interest of governments in planning and investing in tourism development methodically (Zhong, Wu and Morrison, 2015; Liu *et al.*, 2020). Tourism development policies set specific short-term and long-term goals and detail specific strategies and actions to achieve those goals (Nicholas, Thapa and Pennington-Gray, 2009; Antonson and Jacobsen, 2014; Ropret, Jakulin and Likar, 2014; Yang, Ryan and Zhang, 2014; Andrades and Dimanche, 2017; Musavengane, Siakwah and Leonard, 2020). These

policies served as a basic for other stakeholders to develop their own plans (Southern Africa and Saarinen, 2010; Zhang, Singh and Yu, 2013; Hingtgen *et al.*, 2015; Alipour *et al.*, 2017).

While governments play a decisive role in the growth of tourism, it is also important that they incorporate sustainability in their tourism policies. It can be affirmed that tourism policies need to be closely linked with ecological and environmental sustainability goals (for sustainable development) in the long term. Sheppard and Fennell (2019) synthesized 123 animal protection policies in tourism development across 73 countries and drew useful lessons which can serve as a foundation for the development of sustainable policies in the future. Bardolet and Sheldon (2008), Erkuş-Öztürk and Eraydin (2010) and Xu *et al.* (2017) proved that it is necessary to develop tourism but with sustainable goals in mind. Fatai Adedoyin, Erum and Victor Bekun (2021) demonstrated that tourism had made remarkable progress in Russia under the direction of the government, however, a few unfavourable environmental issues arose which would make sustainable development policies in the future.

As a great contribution to this cluster, Lewis and Jordan (2008), Ozturk and Van Niekerk (2014) and Liasidou (2018) studied the key factors that lead to the success of tourism development policy including timely launch and factoring in resource availability. Tseng and Huang (2017); Wanner, Seier and Pröbstl-Haider (2020); Romão, Domènech and Nijkamp (2021) emphasised that the effectiveness of a policy also depends on the support it gets from the local community and on the expected benefits to local tourism businesses. Furthermore, timely adjustments and continuous updating of these policies are also crucial for their success.

The nation with the most research on tourism development policy is China. Zhong, Wu and Morrison (2015) compiled a comprehensive report on 333 tourism policies that China has implemented. China's unique Golden Week Holiday Policy increased the number of domestic tourists significantly (Wu *et al.*, 2012). Liu *et al.* (2020) analyzed the success of the Chinese government in implementing reasonable tourism development policies. Obviously, tourism policies make China's tourism industry globally influential through success in increasing the number of domestic tourists and being highly successful in attracting international visitors. Moreover, the government launched a priority policy for infrastructure development to boost both visitor numbers and tourism revenue in all provinces (Bo and Ningqiao, 2018; Yao *et al.*, 2021a; Tian, Yang and Jiang, 2022).

Researching tourism policy has gradually attracted the attention of scholars in other countries, *however, there is no similar research in Vietnam.*

Cluster 6. Research on factors influencing government decision-making

This cluster discusses the vital factors that the government needs to consider when making policy decisions and strategies for tourism development.

The first (1) is that the policy or promotion program should derive from the results of a scientific plan, which includes a resources analysis and expectations of economic sectors in the context of general development. The careful calculation leads to feasible policies and strategies and effective action programs (Almeida-García, 2017; Dias-Sardinha, Ross and Calapez Gomes, 2017; Adu-Ampong, 2018).

The second (2) is that the policy should have broad support from stakeholders. To win their support, stakeholders' benefits are calculated to be reasonable compared to their investments and efforts in the process of participating in tourism development (Liasidou, 2017; Hussin and Buchmann, 2018; Nusantara, Volgger and Pforr, 2021). In particular, the support from locals attracts a lot of research. Bidwell and Murray, (2019) and Nazneen *et al.* (2021) affirmed that *educating locals to have a better awareness of the benefits of tourism development will earn their participation and generate more support for tourism activities.* In addition, understanding the damages caused by excessive tourism development or not paying attention to the protection of the natural and cultural environment helped stakeholders take action to protect the resources for sustainable development in the future (Lai and Hitchcock, 2016; Xing and Dangerfield, 2018).

The third factor (3) is that central government should have the final say on tourism policy while it should be implemented by provincial governments and other stakeholders. To ensure that there is general agreement on the final version of Tourism Policy and to guarantee that the goals are achieved as planned, it is necessary to have a management apparatus with equal capacity at all levels of government (expertise, number of staff, etc.) and work in a "team spirit" (Connell, Page and Bentley, 2009; Syssner and Hjerpe, 2017). Thus, the government needs to build an effective and competitive governance environment, in other words, one that is transparent, dynamic and effective (Kubickova and Lee, 2017; Sharpley, 2020). In addition, the government should increase investment in human resources, database

systems and initiatives in innovations (Torres-Delgado and Saarinen, 2014; Malik and Bhat, 2015; Chin, Thian and Lo, 2017; Yang, 2018).

Fourth (4) is that development policies or tourism promotion programs also should take into consideration the time they need to take effect and should be designed so that they can be easily extended. *Policy enactment and access to policies may vary in central and peripheral regions* (Tseng and Huang, 2017). The central and local governments should discuss policies and should have sub-strategies suitable to local conditions to ensure uniform effectiveness (Ruhanen, 2012; Liu *et al.*, 2020). It is vital that all levels of government work closely together throughout the decision-making process.

(5) Finally, policy evaluation should be sought from scientists (Akama, 2002; Wong, Mistilis and Dwyer, 2010). The government should consider contributions from independent parties who observe their intervention in economic activities and hence, can help in making appropriate and timely adjustments to policies.

On the topic discussed above, no studies have been found with respect to Vietnam so far. However, the Vietnamese government and other stakeholders can learn a lot from the international literature and can look to other countries for best practices.

Cluster 7. Research on factors that boost tourism revenue

The findings of all the studies are systematized in this cluster to identify the factors that increase tourism revenue. *Government-related factors include politics, governance capacity, tourism and sustainable development policy, goal setting, decision-making and unity among stakeholders.* The internal factors of the tourism industry include cultural and natural resources, infrastructure, products and services, complementary services, community support and participation, and cooperation between parties in the tourism sector. Moreover, the two vital factors belonging to the internal factors which support the tourism industry to have the development more effectively, to improve competitiveness with neighbouring countries and to expand the international market are human capital and innovation. Macro-environmental factors that also have a great impact on boosting tourism revenue are the national economic environment, foreign direct investment (FDI), trade openness, integration, entrepreneurship, etc. Regarding the economic environment in general, economic development is a factor that has many positive impacts on tourism revenue (Gwenhure and Odhiambo, 2017; Ahmad, Menegaki and Al-Muharrami, 2020). As discussed, tourism is an industry whose inputs are a

combination of the outputs of many other economic sectors. Thus, the dynamism of other economic sectors has a powerful influence on the success of tourism activities.

Figure 9 presents keywords related to tourism revenue research. China is still the country with the most research on this topic. In contrast, Vietnam has only 12 research articles focusing on community participation, sustainable development policy, livelihood framework and destination building. Hence, research related to government including policy enactment, political stability, governance capacity and government competitiveness in Vietnam are still lacking.

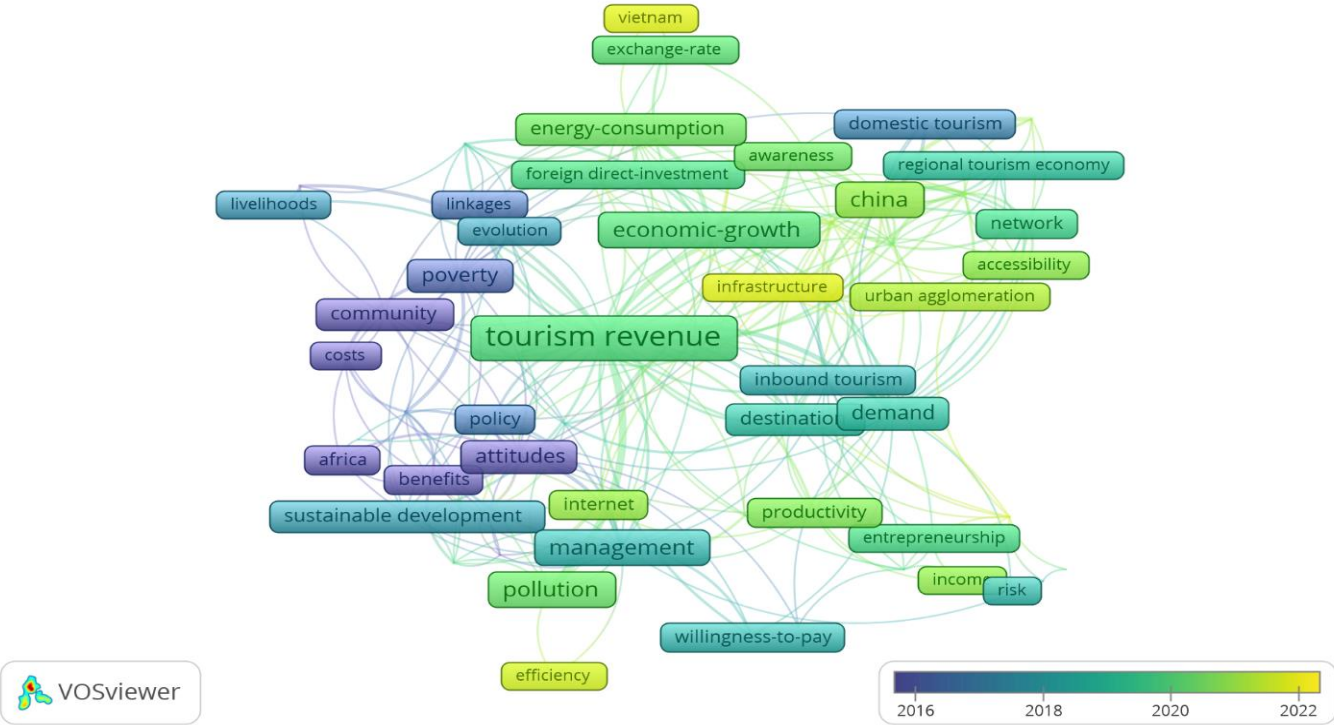


Figure 9: Factors related to tourism revenue
The author's construction using VOS viewer, 2023

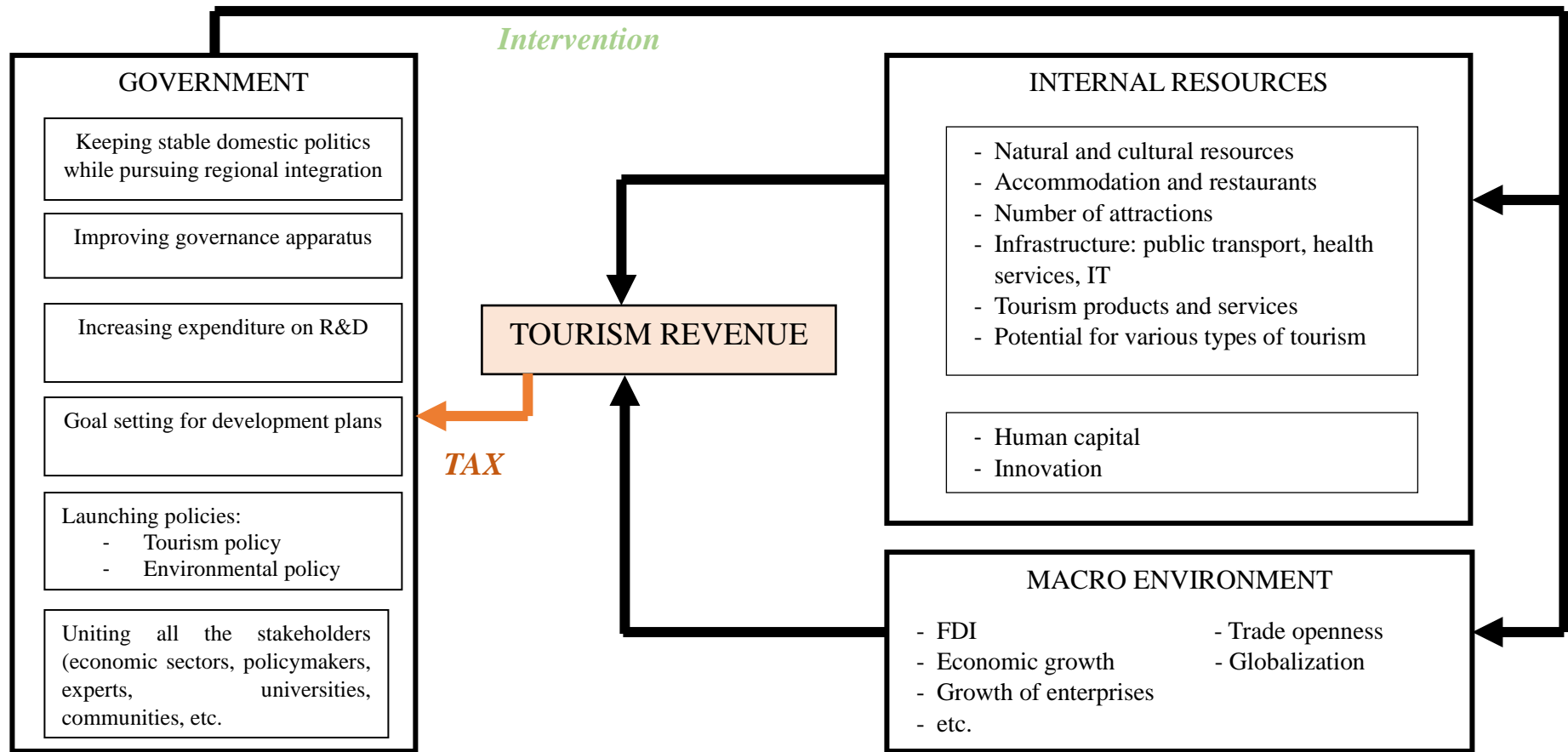


Figure 10: Government intervention in the tourism industry and factors influencing tourism revenue

Figure 10 above shows government intervention in the tourism industry and factors that influence tourism revenue from the author's analysis. This figure presents the factors related to boosting tourism revenue that have been studied worldwide. Comparing Vietnam's research history will reveal research gaps that need to be filled in the future.

2.4 Research gaps on Vietnam

2.4.1 The history of tourism industry and its contribution to the economy

The learning phrase (1960-1991)

In 1960, the government established the Tourism Company which belongs to the Ministry of Foreign Trade. This Tourism Company was born initially with its sole purpose being to cater to the needs of government officials on working visits to foreign countries and then later serving the vacation needs of officials, soldiers and tourists. At that time, the Tourism Company ran only 9 hotels around the northern provinces.

From 1971 to 1978, tourism activities were expanded with an increase in terms of accommodations and the number of travel agencies in some localities throughout the country. In 1986, Vietnam started a comprehensive economic transformation with the Doi Moi Policy² resulting in widespread global integration. Therefore, currently, there are more advantageous development conditions for the tourism sector.

In 1990, the government established the Ministry of Culture, Information, Sports and Tourism. To create more favourable conditions for tourism development and thus, creating a full-fledged, inter-regional and highly socialized economic sector, requiring interdisciplinary diverse professional backgrounds, the government established the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism in 1992. This led to a more efficient management apparatus, better planning, market expansion and international integration between 1992 and 2006.

The government's efforts start to bear fruit (2007-2019)

In 2007, the contribution of tourism industry was 3.26% to the GDP, which rose to 9.2% by 2019. Seeing this rapid progress, the government confirmed the priority investment to have the tourism industry develop as a key economic sector with the government-launched Tourism Policy 2017 making further investment in tourism.

In 2019, Vietnam boasted 2,656 international travel agencies and more than 26,000 standard tourist accommodations; welcomed and served 90 million domestic tourists and 18

² *Doi Moi Policy – 1986 (Renovation): “is a transition of Vietnam from a command economy to a socialist-oriented market economy. The main aim of this policy is to promote a multi-sector economic system, emphasising the state sector while encouraging the private sector. The government strengthens integration and increases economic openness while ensuring political stability” (Stern & Lewis, 1987)*

million international tourists, and it ranked 63rd out of 140 nations on the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) which now Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI).

A virtual standstill time (2020-2021) and a new era since 2022

Between 2020 and 2021, Vietnam's tourism industry experienced a significant decline due to the health crisis.

In February 2022, this sector officially re-opened to international visitors. The recovery of Vietnam’s tourism sector was considered impressive in Asia. In 2022, international visitors reached 3.5 million, which is 70% of the target. Meanwhile, domestic travelers exceeded 101.3 million, far surpassing 85 million domestic visitors in 2019. Total revenue from tourism was 495 trillion VND, 23% higher than the target.



Figure 11: Tourism revenue in Vietnam from 1990 to 2023
The author's construction using Excel, 2023

In general, the tourism industry has developed over the years (**Figure 11**) and the tourism sector's share of the GDP increased rapidly in the period 2015-2019. This interval is considered to have the most impressive development rate to date (**Figure 12**).

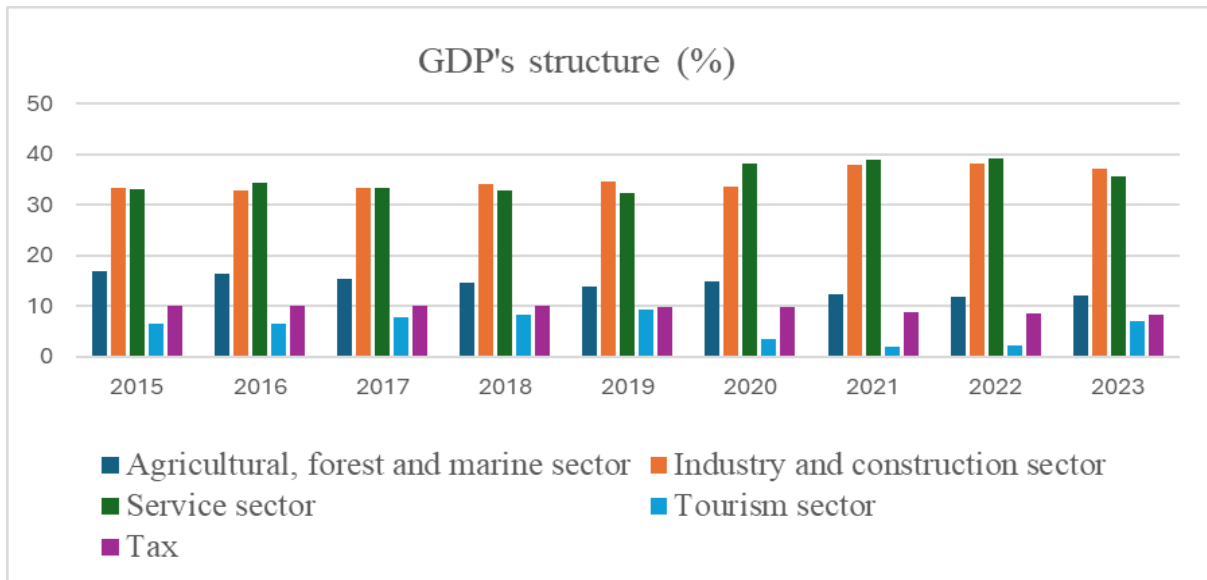


Figure 12: Structure of GDP in Vietnam
The author's construction using Excel, 2023

These remarkable achievements are the result of the government’s sound strategies and policies on innovation, market opening and economic integration. Vietnam’s destination image has become more impressive in the international arena, generating further momentum for tourism development. The efforts of the government and its close cooperation with the local communities proved to be the main driving force behind the tourism industry’s success.

2.4.2 Research gaps and research questions for future work on Vietnam

Figure 4 and the results analysis in section 2.3 indicate that research on Vietnam's tourism industry has gaps in terms of the effectiveness of the government in promoting tourism and boosting tourism revenue. There are no official studies evaluating the effectiveness of planning and implementation of tourism promotion, strategies and programs. Vietnam currently has a diverse collection of research mainly focus on the attitudes, perceptions and behaviour of communities toward tourism development. Parallel to this, research measuring the effectiveness of government policies is urgently called for as this would provide a valuable reference for policymakers.

In fact, the Vietnamese government has been implementing many solutions to improve governance capacity and competitiveness in economic activities in general. The Provincial

Competitiveness Index (PCI)³ and the Viet Nam Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI)⁴ are two data sets that measure the progress made so far. These indices also cover the entire tourism industry. Although Vietnam's tourism sector has a development history that dates back to 1990 and started to become prominent in 2010, *Tourism Policy 2017 is the first official policy that affirms the development of tourism as a spearhead economic sector besides agriculture and industry.*

Based on the main findings of this literature review and taking into consideration the realities of Vietnam, the following research questions need to be addressed:

- (1) *How has the government successfully promoted the tourism industry to become a key economic sector as stated in Tourism Policy 2017?*
- (2) *How was the spatial spillover in tourism revenue of the 63 provinces both pre- and post-Covid-19 pandemic?*
- (3) *To what extent have the Vietnamese government's efforts to practice good governance affected tourism revenue over the past three decades?*

2.4.3 Theoretical and practical implications

Sarangan, Hewege and Perera (2022) focused on analyzing the evolution of tourism industry legislation (regulations, laws, policy, rules and governance in many countries) over the past-near -50 years and their study is considered the first to delve into the institutions of this sector. Therefore, this systematic literature review is an extension that highlights the effectiveness of government (actions, interventions) in tourism development. Both studies found a predominance of studies from developing countries. Nations in Africa and Asia are making great efforts for tourism development. It is common to these countries that they increase investment in infrastructure, especially transport and IT systems, to strengthen connectivity between localities and provide premium services for visitors (Yang, 2018; Qiu *et al.*, 2021; Yao *et al.*, 2021b). European countries are in the process of re-evaluating policies and promoting innovation (Henrik, 2010; Bohlin, Brandt and Elbe, 2016). Many destinations heavily rely on cultural heritage tourism but struggle with over-tourism. Therefore, European

³ PCI (*The Provincial Competitiveness Index*) is “an assessment and ranking of the economic governance quality of provincial authorities in creating a favourable business environment for the development of the private sector.” Website: <https://pcivietnam.vn/en>

⁴ PAPI (*The Viet Nam Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index*) is “the largest sociological survey in Vietnam with the content of evaluating the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of policy and provision of public services.” Website: <https://papi.org.vn/eng/>

destinations are working closely together in order to limit the damage caused by over-tourism (Petronela, 2016; Adie, Falk and Savioli, 2019). *This is a useful lesson that countries in Southeast Asia, which have many cultural and natural similarities, can learn from, so strengthening cooperation, coordination and forging cross-border alliances to promote regional development in the future.*

On the one hand, this study encourages further conversations related to SLRs on the role of the government in the development of the tourism industry. On the other hand, the results highlight the urgent need for Vietnamese researchers to focus more on evaluating the success of the government's interventions in the tourism sector. To ensure that these government efforts are not in vain or to identify the factors impeding them, accurate and thorough assessments are required.

2.5 Conclusions

The history of research on tourism development shows that research on the role of government and government intervention is important for future strategic planning and has been studied quite widely in many countries. Analyzing and evaluating tourism development strategies or tourism development policies helps the government to identify resources, capacities, strengths and weaknesses, and thus to make appropriate adjustments. This systematic literature review aims to check how governments worldwide have attempted to boost tourism revenue, and then to identify gaps in research on Vietnam's tourism industry. Firstly, government intervention promotes the development of the tourism industry, specifically increasing tourism revenue through 149 research papers grouped into 7 clusters including the efforts of government in tourism development (*Cluster 1*), making a tourism development strategy/ plan (*Cluster 2*), implementing a tourism promotion program (*Cluster 3*), selecting and developing tourism types that are suitable for natural resources (*Cluster 4*), launching policies related to tourism development (*Cluster 5*), researching to determine factors that influence the decision-making of the government (*Cluster 6*) and researching to find out factors that boost tourism revenue (*Cluster 7*). Secondly, it revealed a pressing need to assess the effectiveness of the Vietnamese government's current efforts in tourism development. In order for the tourism industry to become in reality a key economic sector of Vietnam with sustainable growth, increasing contribution to GDP and a competitive edge over neighbouring countries, the government

needs to rethink its policies and strategies. Therefore, three research questions are laid out and discussed in the following chapters:

- (1) How has the government successfully promoted the tourism industry to become a key economic sector as stated in Tourism Policy 2017?*
- (2) How was the spatial spillover in tourism revenue of the 63 provinces both pre- and post-Covid-19 pandemic?*
- (3) To what extent have the Vietnamese government's efforts to practice good governance affected tourism revenue over the past three decades?*

The following chapters describe the practical operation of the tourism industry and make recommendations to support policymakers in future planning. In order for the Vietnamese tourism industry to truly become a key economic sector, have sustainable growth, increase its contribution to GDP and be able to compete with strong neighbours around, the recommendations focus on:

- (1) How to perfect the governance apparatus*
- (2) How to improve policy, development strategy and promotional activity*

Chapter 3: Understanding the Tourism Policy 2017 in Vietnam: an exploratory study using qualitative method

3.1 The urgency of measuring the effectiveness of Tourism Policy 2017

These days, not only governments of tourism-based economies are working hard to increase the efficiency of the tourism industry, but other nations are also starting to harness the full potential of tourism. Reports related to tourism performance use the annual growth rate of visitor number, the return rate of visitors and their contribution to the GDP as a measure of the effectiveness and competitiveness of the tourism sector. Improving the efficiency and competitiveness of the tourism industry is based on two vital factors, namely development strategy and a high-quality workforce. Obviously, a sound strategy from the early stage of development is key to the success of the tourism sector. The government's primary role is to develop sound strategies and realize them through effective tourism policies. In addition, all levels of government (from central to local) need to be in constant conversation with other stakeholders in order to fulfill targets set in tourism policy.

Key indexes including the growth rate of visitor numbers, duration of stay, visitor expenditure and tourism's contribution to GDP are used to estimate the efficacy of these tourism policies. The number of domestic and international visitors and the total revenue of Vietnam's tourism industry have achieved significant growth over the past three decades (**Table 4**). Looking at tourism revenue, it can be seen that Vietnam's tourism industry has achieved impressive growth. Compared to 1990, tourism revenue increased eightfold by 1995. It nearly doubled between 2000 and 2005. It was 3 times higher in 2010 than in 2005 and it was four times higher in 2015 than in 2010. Based on this rapid growth in revenue in 2017, the government decided to develop the tourism sector as a key economic sector. The period 2015-2019 is considered to be the peak of the tourism industry. By 2019, its contribution to Vietnam's GDP was 9.2% and that was forecast to increase to over 10% the following year. However, in 2020, the industry went into decline as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. The recovery of Vietnam's tourism industry began at the end of 2021, and in 2022, this sector already produced quite impressive results with remarkable growth in the number of domestic visitors and revenue reaching 70% compared to 2019.

Table 4: Tourism development from 1990 to 2023

Year	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2017	2019	2022	2023
Domestic tourists (thousands)	1,000	6,000	11,200	16,100	28,000	57,000	74,000	85,000	101,300	108,100
International tourists (thousands)	250	1,400	2,200	3,500	5,050	7,944	12,920	18,000	3,500	12,6
Contribution to GDP (%)	0.5	3.2	3.3	4.2	5	6.3	7.9	9.2	2.1	7
TR (thousand billion VND)	1,34	8,73	17,4	30	96	356	515	755	495	700
Source: Statistical office of Vietnam, https://www.gso.gov.vn/en										

In addition, Vietnam has become more and more attractive as a tourist destination. The number of attractions recognized by UNESCO as world cultural and natural sites are growing. Many locations have been voted by prestigious organizations⁵ as the favourite destinations of international tourists: Vietnam is Asia's Leading Nature Destination and Asia's Leading Destination (2023), Ho Chi Minh City is Asia's Leading Business Travel Destination and Asia's Leading Festival and Event Destination (2023), Hoi An is Asia's Leading Cultural City Destination (2023), Phu Quoc is Asia's Leading Luxury Island Destination (2023), Ha Giang is Asia's Leading Emerging Tourism Destination (2023), etc. (**Appendix 1**).

The above statement demonstrates that the efficiency of Vietnam's tourism activities is improving, which meets the goal set in Vietnam's Tourism Policy 2017: Vietnam uses all resources to their full potential in order to make the tourism industry develop as a key economic sector, to increase its contribution to GDP, and thus create a driving force to promote socio-economic development in general. The future tourism industry should be characterized by professionalism, modernity, attractiveness, competitiveness and a strong brand name. Furthermore, the development of the tourism industry depends to a great extent on the governance capacity at all levels of government; strong coordination of all stakeholders; support from domestic and international organizations through funds, training and promotional programs and knowledge-transfer projects; the positive dynamics of tourism

⁵ <https://www.visitourvietnam.com/guides/awards-for-tourist-destinations-in-vietnam.html>

businesses; empathy and participation of local communities; and feedback from travelers. All these issues are covered in Tourism Policy 2017.

Research on Vietnam's tourism activities is becoming increasingly exciting due to the industry's emergence and the task of seeking solutions for better future performance and higher revenue. Micro studies related to product quality, customer behaviour and strategic analysis of enterprises have become popular. However, macro studies related to government policy analysis are not yet available. As a result, the effectiveness of Tourism Policy 2017 in Vietnam has not been assessed, not even six years after its launch. The literature review shows that measuring the effectiveness of tourism development policy is essential because it provides important information insights for making future adjustments. In addition, *the success or failure of the tourism industry heavily relies on the governance capacity of the government and on sound government intervention (judicious and on-time policies)*. The purpose of the survey was to collect feedback from all stakeholders six years after the launch of Tourism Policy 2017 in Vietnam. Feedback from respondents relates to the benefits of the tourism policy and stakeholders' actions in their task to maximize their contribution. This qualitative research uses semi-structured questionnaires to collect data for the aggregation of results. This research is an initial assessment of the necessity and effectiveness of Tourism Policy 2017, thus it is a complement to the next chapter (quantitative research) in formulating policy recommendations for the future.

The chapter is organised as follows for the rest. A review of the policy analysis literature is included in *Section 3.2*. *Section 3.3* explains the research methodology and how data is collected. *Section 3.4* discusses the main findings. Finally, *section 3.5* presents the conclusions and limitations.

3.2 Policy analysis and its application in the tourism sector

3.2.1 Policy analysis

In the process of socio-economic development, the government's macro-managing role is extremely important. In order to have accurate databases and information for making policy decisions, policy analysis is crucial. *Policy analysis is a multidisciplinary, multi-dimensional inquiry process that provides results to assess the effectiveness of a given policy*. Then, the information and results of the assessment will serve to improve policy toward better outcomes in the future.

The steps of policy analysis (Weimer & Vining, 2017, p.62, 70, 78, 91, 590):

1. *Identifying problem areas that need a solution*
2. *Listing alternative actions to address these problems*
3. *Discussing the results of these actions*
4. *Measuring the effectiveness of these actions and their fitness for the purpose of this policy*
5. *Comparing with other options that are chosen (if yes) and discussing (better or worse)*

According to (Landy, 1981) “in many ways, the defining characteristics of the policy evaluation model correspond to the elements of rational thought in individual decisions. The four steps for the assessment include: (1) Specify the criteria against which policy outcomes are to be judged; (2) Identify a set of policy options; (3) Determine how well each option performs according to each criterion; (4) Choose the option that scores best according to some weighted sum of these criteria.”

Durning (1999) introduced “Q-methodology as a common tool for policy analysis, which is a research method popularly used in psychology and in social sciences to study respondents' "subjectivity" in order to collect their viewpoint”. According to Durning (1999), policy analysis is a comprehensive study (involving observation, comparison, evaluation and adjustment). In fact, studies often focus on different aspects with flexible modes of analysis (**Table 5**).

Table 5: The focus of analysis and the corresponding model

Analysis highlights/stresses	Model
Resolution of problem	1. Policy evaluation
Methods used for argument	2. Advocacy
Methods used for inquiry	3. Single framework
Political setting	4. Social choice
Values	5. Moral philosophy
Transformation and utilization of information (communication)	6. Hermeneutics

Source: Durning (1999)

Walker (2000) developed an important theoretical framework for policy analysis (**Figure 13**). This theoretical framework was formed based on a history of policy analysis, which also discusses the steps of the policy analysis process.

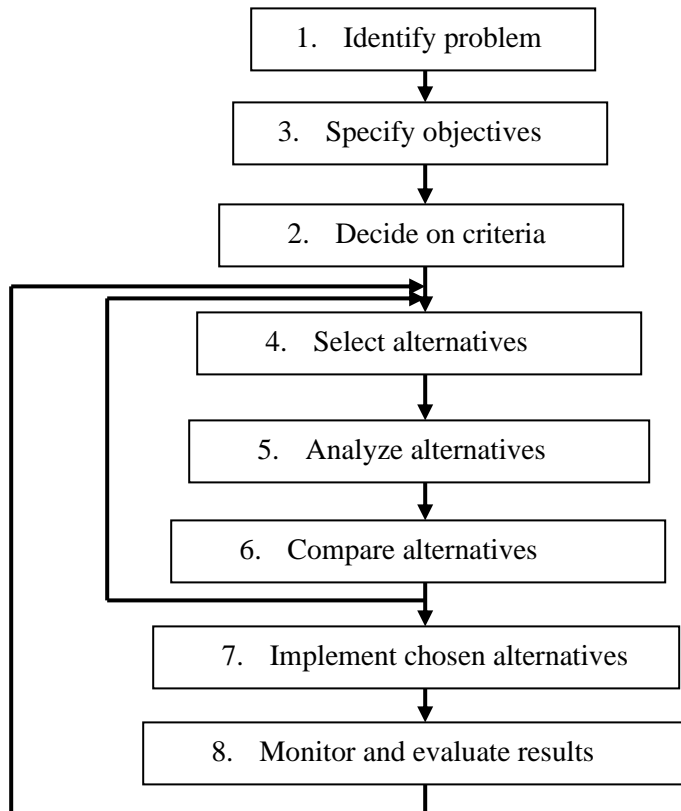


Figure 13: Framework for policy analysis
Source: Walker (2000)

3.2.2 Policy analysis in tourism development

Zhang, Chong and Ap (1999) discussed the crucial roles of the Chinese government in promoting domestic tourism. This is qualitative research developed by summarizing and analyzing the performance of the tourism sector at the conclusion of each policy cycle. Effects from policy, government intervention for each stage of implementation (1978 - 1985, 1986 - 1991 and 1992 - 1999) and policy output (the growth of tourism revenue and number of visitors) are also systematically considered.

The Australian government recognized that tourism-related activities became crucial to the survival of indigenous communities and that tourism-related revenue greatly enhanced their standard of living. Whitford and Ruhanen (2010) aggregated Australia's policies for indigenous tourism and especially highlighted the sustainable effectiveness of those policies. These authors confirmed "growing intervention from Australian federal and, more recently, State/Territory governments have sought to create tourism policies to facilitate market growth

and product development in the indigenous sector". However, based on the findings, these policies all included sustainable strategies, but their effectiveness was not much in practice. Policy development needs to be based on the characteristics of each indigenous community and requires the cooperation of stakeholders. A "one size fits all" approach for tourism development is not appropriate for every situation. This research serves as a useful reference for other nations that are pursuing the development of tourism.

Yang *et al.* (2020) observed the government's response to protect the tourism industry against the COVID-19 pandemic through related policies. The data from 117 countries were collected and revealed the vital role of government in regulating resources, providing solutions to support residents as well as economic sectors and minimizing the risks caused by a crisis. The government's acumen and timely promulgation of control and support policies have supported economic activities not only to develop more favorably in normal conditions but also to quickly protect the achievement in facing crises.

Niavis *et al.*, (2022) found important challenges in applying tourism development policy to territories that are composed of many smaller territories. To gain the desired results, it is necessary (1) to define the development needs of each small region and the overall goal for the large region, (2) to identify clusters that are prioritized for development and (3) to attract regional synergies. Therefore, analyzing the effectiveness of the policy and adjusting is an important step in formulating new policies in the future. This is a qualitative case study for the Mediterranean region and serves as an important theoretical finding for policy research.

China's Opening-up policy since 1978 has boosted the economy to achieve impressive growth. The tourism industry also benefited from those favourable conditions. Using the example of Xishuangbanna, Gao *et al.*, (2022) investigated the evolution of China's border tourist policies. The research presented a three-phase policy evolution: the 1990s saw bottom-up tourism promotion, the 2000s saw tourism inhibition and the 2010s saw tourism repositioned within broad national settings. Policies for each stage of development should be based on social characteristics, priorities and prior backgrounds. To date, China is also the country with the most research related to tourism policy analysis.

3.2.3 Tourism policy in Vietnam

The formation of Tourism Policy 2017

The tourism industry has advanced significantly and accomplished significant goals since the 2010s. The quantity and quality of tourism infrastructure are sufficient to meet the demands of the expanding tourism sector. The tourism industry has become more attractive to businesses, especially the private sector. “The development of the tourism industry has been contributing to promoting the shift in the economic structure and on-the-spot exports; preserving and promoting the values of cultural heritage and natural resources; creating more jobs and improving people's lives; speeding up the process of international integration, communicating and advertising the Vietnamese image and people” (**Appendix 2**).

As stated in the basis of Tourism Policy 2017 (**Appendix 2**), “the tourism industry, however, has several limitations and weaknesses. The tourism industry’s growth has yet to correspond to its potential, advantages and social expectations. The above-mentioned limitations and weaknesses are mainly attributed to the fact that regulatory authorities at all levels and sectoral administrations have not really considered tourism as an economy that is integrative, interdisciplinary and inter-regional. The fact that there is a shortage of appropriate national policies for tourism development is in line with the characteristics of an economic industry operating according to market rules. Effective interdisciplinary and inter-regional coordination remains low. Investments are still scattered and social resources that need to be pooled for tourism development are just a few. Therefore, Tourism Policy 2017 is launched as a solution for these issues”.

Tourism Policy 2017 has 4 main objectives: “(1) Development of the tourism industry into a key economic sector is an important strategic orientation for the country's development and creates a driving force for the development of other industries and sectors. (2) The tourism industry must be developed into a general service sector of the economy that has an interdisciplinary and inter-regional nature, strengthens domestic and international linkages, and pays attention to the linkage between the tourism industry and other branches and domains in the value chain forming tourism products. (3) Developing both international and domestic tourism at the same time. And (4) Leading to sustainable tourism development” (**Appendix 2**).

Tourism Policy 2017 focuses on 3 main activities:

(1) Mobilizing and prioritizing all resources for tourism activities to guarantee that the tourism sector develops in the most favourable conditions and becomes a key economic sector.

(2) Stakeholders taking part in the tourism sector, especially enterprises, are entitled to the highest level of investment incentives and support.

(3) Prioritize funding and experts for the following main activities:

- Research and development (R&D) activities for tourism development
- Building and promoting local and national tourism brands
- Building and perfecting infrastructure (especially public transportation, complex entertainment spots, IT systems, etc.) for tourism development
- Developing tourism human resources and providing more advanced training
- Creating brand-new tourism offerings or types of tourism that protect the environment including eco-tourism, sports, community-based, cultural and rural tourism, as well as tourism on islands and the sea
- Researching how to win the support and participation of communities and domestic enterprises.
- Researching and practicing innovation for tourism management and development.
- Building “complex and large-scale tourist service areas” and “a system of duty-free shops and shopping centers”
- Implementing sub-policies to facilitate travel, residence, “value-added tax refund” and ensure “other legitimate rights and interests for tourists”

This policy demonstrates the government's comprehensive efforts to develop the tourism industry as a key economic sector and increase its contribution to GDP. Observing and evaluating the effectiveness of this policy after 6 years of introduction, while considering future adjustments after the effects of the health crisis are essential for the development of the tourism sector and also fill the gap (empirical gap) in research on measuring the success of the policy. In light of the theoretical background, this chapter works on the questions below:

- (1) What advantages has the Tourism Policy 2017 supported the tourism sector in Vietnam to notably grow so far?*
- (2) Do the practical results reflect the effectiveness of the policy?*
- (3) How have the parties performed the tasks proposed in this tourism policy?*
- (4) What should the Vietnamese tourism industry improve to have better performance in the future?*

3.3 Approaching the implementation of Tourism Policy 2017 through a qualitative study using a semi-structured interview

3.3.1 Qualitative research

Through the process of gathering data and information in a "non-numeric" manner, qualitative research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis or in-depth evaluation of a research object. Typically, this data is gathered through group discussions using open-ended questions, direct observations and interviews (Marvasti, 2018).

3.3.2 In-depth interview for data collection

Researchers in a variety of professions frequently employ in-depth interviews as a means of gathering qualitative data. This approach is still regarded as one of the best ways to gather subjective opinions, which has been using for a very long period in scientific study generally (Malhotra N, 2020).

The strength of this method is collecting detailed information, experiences and opinions of the informants, and going into many aspects of research issues (Babbie et al., 2020). To implement this method, it needs a set of questions that are well built-up and stick to the aim of the research. In addition, for the same research purpose, the questionnaire is also designed flexibly to suit different data collection subjects.

The types of in-depth interviews that can be classified are semi-structured, unstructured and structured, depending on how the method of implementation is used (Marvasti, 2018).

3.3.3 Conducting semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are performed based on a list of questions designed to be flexible and open to gathering answers from respondents. The order and questions can be flexibly changed based on "the context and characteristics of the respondents" (Marvasti, 2018).

Types of semi-structured interviews include in-depth interviews, case studies and history of issues. The type of interview in this study is a "case study or a problem" in order to collect comprehensive, systematic and in-depth information on the issues to be researched. "A case study or a problem" can relate to an individual, an event, a community issue, or a program/strategy/policy. A case study/ problem is used when the researcher needs deep knowledge of a particular problem. Insightful information and complete and thorough

knowledge about the studied problem from respondents will be aggregated and answered for research purposes.

The questions for a semi-structured interview are presented in **Appendix 3**. The set of questions is developed based on the theoretical background and the research questions. The content of the questions was discussed and adjusted after consulting the research experts. The number of responses used for the analysis of the results was 20 (**Appendix 4**). Due to the geographical distance of respondents, interviews were conducted in person (10 respondents), via email (6 respondents) and by phone (4 respondents). Experts, managers, government officials and tourists were carefully selected based on criteria of academic popularity, success in the business environment, keeping an important role in the management apparatus and visitors with a dense travel history (travel enthusiasts), respectively. The selected provinces include the provinces with strong development in tourism and the provinces that lagged.

3.4 The result analysis of the interviews

3.4.1 The importance of the Tourism Policy 2017

Tourism Policy 2017 is a set of goals and actions of the State to promote tourism development by affecting the supply and prices of input factors (land, labour, capital, infrastructure); the price of tourism products; tourist numbers; tourism human resources; the transfer of tourism technology, etc. Two important aspects of the policy are goal and action, sound goals and effective actions with "passion" will ensure the success of the policy.

The policy shows the government's interest and determination in investing and promoting the tourism industry. Policy promulgation is a testament to the careful study of resources, past achievements and potential for future development. The policy helps businesses add "wings" and "energy" to expand business opportunities. In addition, businesses can attract heavy investment to promote local promotion activities as well as participate in international fairs (R12, R13).

Tourism development policy from the government appeared quite late (2017) in comparison to other neighbouring countries and Vietnam is also slower to develop than famous destinations in Southeast Asia such as Thailand and Singapore. The transition from an agricultural-based economy to a service-based economy requires "sensitivity, bravery" and a long-term strategic vision from the government. *If the government had investment policies for the tourism industry together with the formation of the Vietnam National Administration of*

Tourism (regarded as the direct operating center for all tourism activities, 2010), up to now, Vietnam would have better infrastructure (traffic, accommodation, attractions) and would gain more opportunities to compete with other countries. In terms of tourist resources, Vietnam is a farmer who has many large and fertile land but lacks methods and advanced production tools, and tourism activities in general in each province are still "spontaneous" and "develop independently". Thus, the Tourism Policy 2017 with full orientations, objectives and specific regulations has been helping "this farmer who has a lot of farms to reap the profits from those farms in the most effective way (R8, R15, R20).

All 63 provinces of Vietnam have unique natural and cultural beauties. To 2010, there were 45/63 provinces with purely agricultural development and 18/63 provinces were industrial production. By 2019, only 19/45 provinces were purely agricultural, the remaining provinces combined agriculture and tourism, and almost all of those 18 industrial-development provinces took participation in the tourism economy. Due to the increasing number of domestic and international tourists over the years, each province realized benefits from tourism activities both in the short and long term. Thence, these provinces develop their own development strategies to meet this growing tourism demand. Compared with neighbouring countries, Vietnam's tourism development policy is in the form of "late arrival". However, we have completely learned from the experience of our friends and implemented the strategy of "slowly but sustainably". In a positive way, the Tourism Policy 2017 helps the sectors involved in the tourism economy to reach quality, attractive and professional products and services. Moreover, we also see a high level of business development day by day. On the one hand, we see the dynamism of Vietnamese businesses in approaching the needs and quickly responding to the diverse needs of customers. On the other hand, the government also needs to have sanctions to protect enterprises as well as reduce the unfair competition of these enterprises (R1, R3, R7, R11, R16, R18).

Thai Nguyen used to be a province developed based on agriculture and some assembly industries. Compared to the northern provinces, Thai Nguyen's economy was underdeveloped in the 2010s. *Facing the development trend of tourism and along with support from the Tourism Policy 2017, Thai Nguyen currently becomes an attractive destination in the Northeast region. Residents have access to a modern transport system, easily connecting with neighbouring provinces. The tourist attractions are put into operation methodically and have*

impressive attractions based on the unique natural background. Businesses come more and in general, the province's GDP rises to the top of the North (R18, R20).

3.4.2 The widespread level of Tourism Policy 2017

Based on synthesizing the answers from all stakeholders, in general, the documents related to the implementation of Tourism Policy 2017 are fully communicated to the staff in charge of the local tourism sector. However, the actualization process encounters some problems as follows:

Due to the structure of the governance system and the difference in the level of development between localities, the spread of policy information is also uneven. The administrative structure of Vietnam is in the following order: central, province/city, district and commune (**Figure 14**). In rural areas, there are also village and commune levels. It is easier for officials at provincial and city levels to introduce policy information to businesses, universities and communities than officials at smaller levels (district, sub-district, village, hamlet).

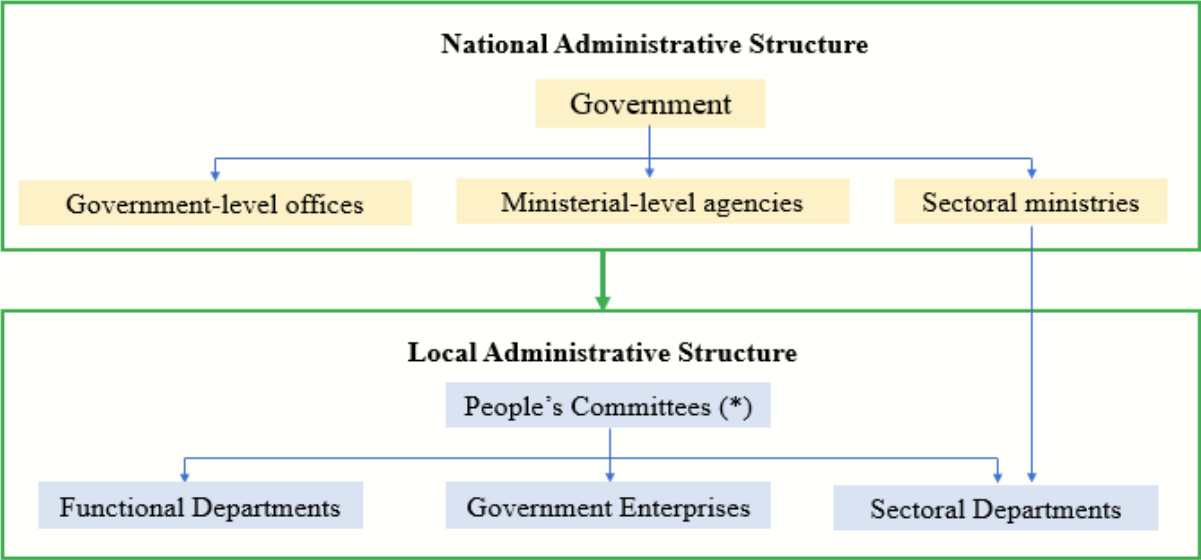


Figure 14: The Vietnam Government’s administrative structure according to geopolitical allocation

Source: National Administrative Institute (Vietnam), 2023

* Peoples' Committees exist at three different levels-province, district and commune.

This tourism policy is more effective in provinces that have not yet developed strong tourism. In the provinces that are already the centers of tourism development, businesses daily improve their competitiveness by investing in human resources, services and products while continuously innovating. Therefore, tourism-related activities in these provinces have ensured their existence and sustainable development in the past time and in the future, therefore they have not benefited much from the Tourism Policy 2017.

In addition, some provinces are not equipped with basic infrastructure and information technology, which is also necessary to benefit from the policy. Investors always need to balance costs and profits, therefore, an available and good basic infrastructure will be more attractive to them. Moreover, the formation of tourism programs must first be based on the transportation system, accommodation and entertainment service providers. *Therefore, the government needs to have special policies for these localities that lagged behind to ensure they have the basic foundations for tourism development and access to the most favourable policies.*

The survey does not reach the entire population, but the results reflect that not 100% of residents know about tourism development policy and related information. Many studies have discussed attracting public support for tourism activities by educating and introducing people to tourism policy. By that way, they can understand the benefits of tourism development, as well as their important tasks, goals and role in the tourism economy.

3.4.3 The interaction of stakeholders with related content in tourism policy

The interaction between university and enterprise in human resource training

To have the labour force well-equipped with both professional knowledge and practical skills, almost every institution in Vietnam is currently developing training programs including 60% time's study in class and 40% at enterprises. In addition, institutions regularly hold competitions focusing on entrepreneurship and innovation. This is a playground for students to demonstrate analytical thinking, problem-solving skills, critical thinking and negotiation. Observing these competitions, enterprises can recruit the labour force they need. Based on this training strategy, students can put their knowledge into practice and become accustomed to their future workplace. Students can also set personal development goals that are consistent with their chosen profession and challenge themselves to be consistent with those goals.

Positively, institutions are making a lot of effort to achieve the objectives of the tourism policy and to guarantee the availability of high-quality human resources as needed by the policy.

Enterprise's efforts in supporting training and increasing competitiveness in the market.

Enterprises also build closer relationships with universities. University products are the most important input for enterprises. Enterprises are ready to provide experts for training and hands-on positions that directly serve customers. Enterprises also regularly take part in university seminars and workshops to discuss and to perfect training programs.

Enterprises always update the government's policies and regulations to ensure smooth operations and benefit from incentives. In particular, businesses in rural areas and lagging localities also become more active because of favourable conditions of Tourism Policy 2017 (administrative procedures, investment capital).

Enterprises pay more attention to conducting customer surveys to measure their satisfaction and demand for R&D activities. Work-related to market research is invested more in order to improve competitiveness and meet the requirements of an unpredictable market. Tourists now experience the diversity and high quality of products and services. In other words, tourists have many choices for their vacations and their demand is easy to raise due to the attractiveness of suppliers.

In order to increase competitiveness with international enterprises and increase market penetration in other countries, enterprises also allied with each other to connect resources and form value chains. Business associations in the provinces are increasingly promoting their role in connecting, supporting and goal-setting. Young businesses receive much support from long-established enterprises to improve themselves and operate more effectively. In addition, these young enterprises also easily find opportunities for development and linkages with other enterprises in business associations.

The interaction between the provincial government with universities, enterprises and residents in the implementation of the Tourism Policy 2017

Tourism activities work based on unity, coordination and smooth support among provincial governments, enterprises, institutions (universities) and residents. Stakeholder perform their function and communicate with each other to discuss the most effective solutions for achieving the development goals of Tourism Policy 2017.

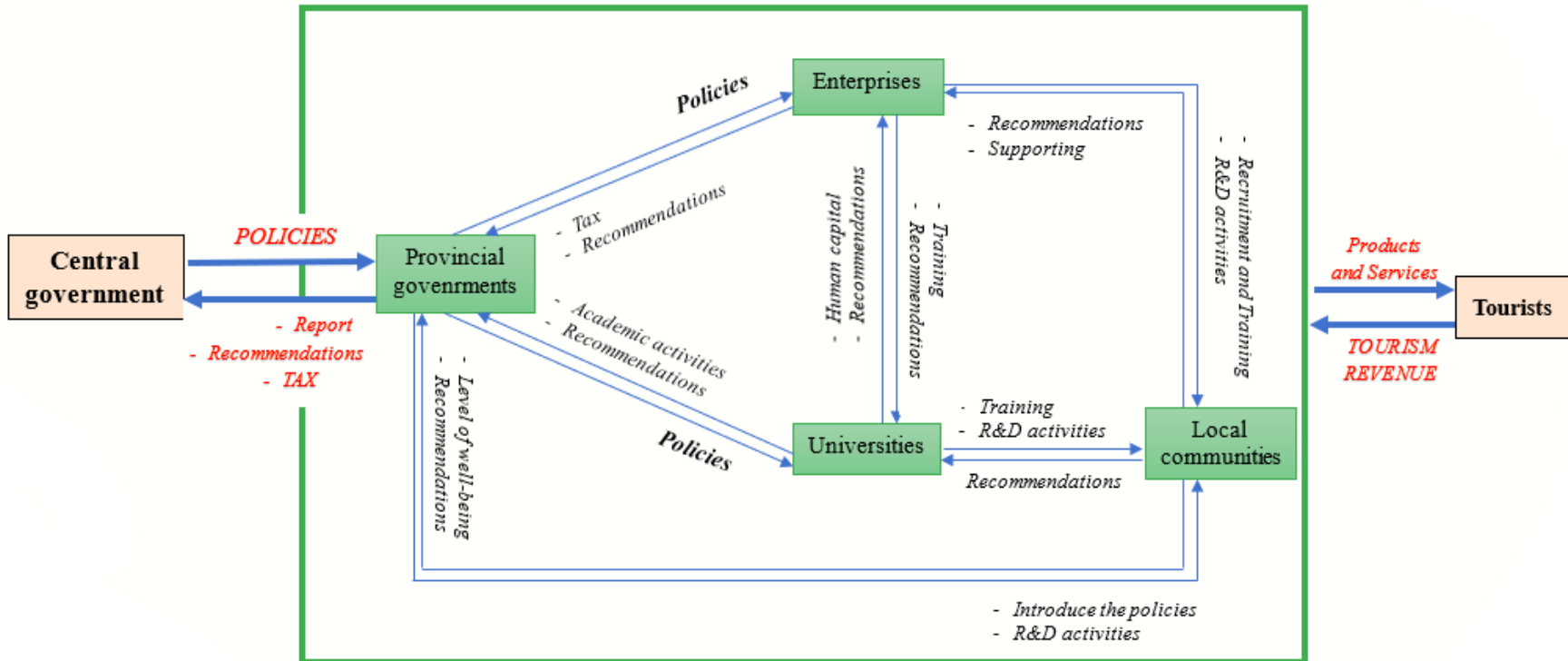


Figure 15: The interaction between all stakeholders
The author's own construction derived from stakeholders

The provincial government has an important responsibility to fully introduce the Tourism Policy 2017 to all stakeholders and to assist them in accessing the benefits of this policy. In addition, provincial governments must also regularly observe, evaluate and collect comments from stakeholders to report to the central government. Aggregating information quickly leads to timely adjustments and makes policy implementation more effective. **Figure 15** above describes the interaction between all stakeholders in the implementation of Tourism Policy 2017.

3.4.4 Policy effectiveness: comparison of government directives with actual results

Up to the point of this study, the policy has been issued for 6 years. However, Covid-19 froze the entire tourism industry (globally) for 2 years (2020-2021). The recovery takes time and huge costs. Moreover, the pandemic also changed the mindset of tourists and the tourism development strategy of countries. Thus, the previous tourism policy also needs to be observed, evaluated and adjusted to fit the new context (Thao, 2023).

The direct beneficiaries of tourism policies are communities, enterprises and the province's economy where the policy is most widely communicated to all stakeholders. The positive changes (achievements) due to the Tourism Policy 2017 as well as limitations (requirements not yet reaching the targets of this policy) are discussed based on the practical experiences of all stakeholders.

In terms of Universities

Achievements

- The training program is periodically reviewed and revised every 2 years to suit the changing requirements of the workforce.
- Lecturers and officers are more motivated and encouraged to higher study to improve their professional qualifications.
- The relationship between universities and enterprises has become close in the exchange of labour force needs and cooperation in training practical subjects.
- Enterprises are satisfied and highly appreciate graduates who are able to integrate into their work immediately. In addition, these graduated students have good skills in handling real-life situations/complex problem-solving, teamwork, negotiation and flexibility to work in different parts of the enterprise.

- Expanding links with international universities for internship exchange and recruitment
- Organizing many scientific conferences to exchange experiences in teaching and improve training programs

Limitations

- Universities have not yet attracted a large number of students, therefore they have not provided enough labour force for this industry. The reason is related to the characteristics of the industry such as the labour of the tourism industry requires good physical and mental, as well as multi-skills; the income depends heavily on the flow of visitors/seasonal; the growth of the tourism industry is sensitive to economic development, political security and pandemic.

In terms of Managers in Hotels or Travel agencies

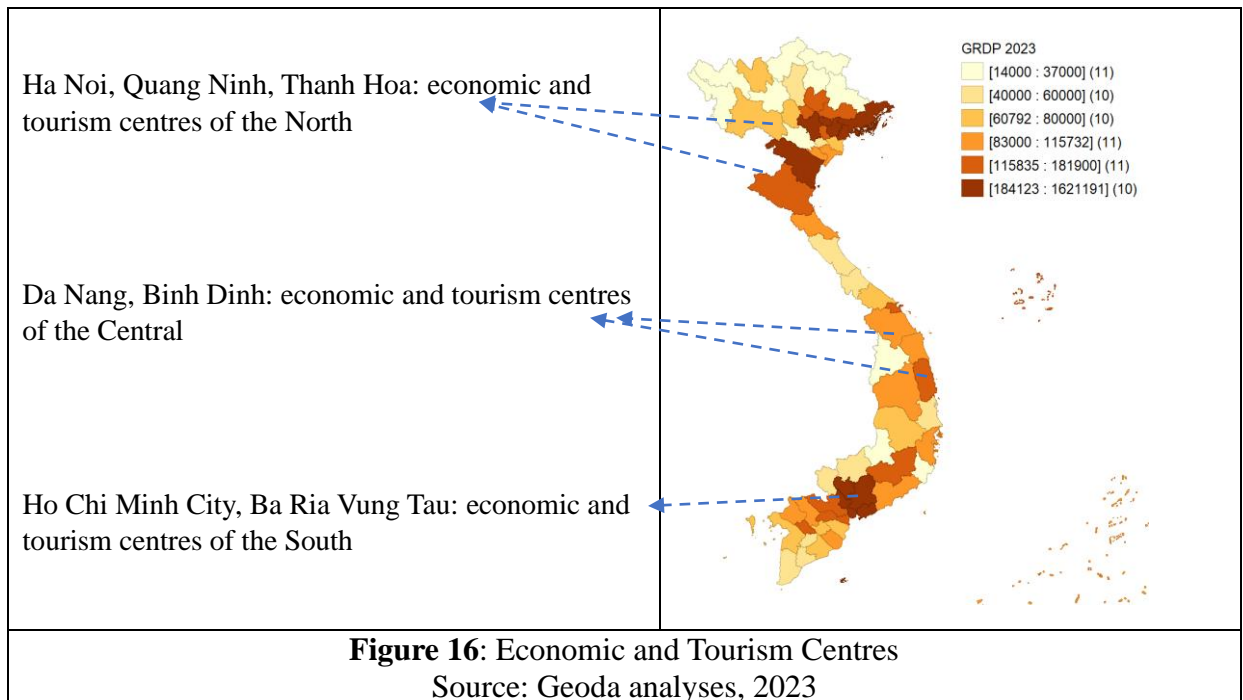
Achievement

- Enterprises found it more advantageous in carrying out administrative procedures in establishing, calling for investment, upgrading infrastructure and launching new products/ services.
- Enterprises have better quality human resources from training facilities (in both skills and attitude)
- Businesses have additional opportunities to communicate with the government, educational institutions and other companies about issues including workforce requirements, development collaboration and tourism promotion initiatives.
- The employees' income is increased year by year; therefore, their organizational commitment is also ensured.

Limitations

- The maintenance of the operation and development of enterprises also depends a lot on the government's scientific planning on types of tourism and tourism products (to avoid duplication and unfair competition) and stability in investment and tax incentives.
- In some provinces (far from the economic centres of the north, central and south, and where the agricultural economy is dominant, **Figure 16**), they found difficulties in accessing tourism development policies. The reasons are (1) officials lack experience in managing tourism activities, (2) these provinces lack basic infrastructure for tourism

development and (3) residents may not be fully aware of the benefits of tourism development which explains why they have not been proactive and cooperating with businesses as well as with government agencies.



- The procedures to receive incentives as outlined in the tourism policy (investment, tax) require a long and complicated process. As a result, provinces lacking in human resources and infrastructure will provide the benefits of this policy later and lose many development opportunities.

In terms of Provincial governments

Achievements

- Attain a close connection with businesses from the information dissemination process of tourism policies and support businesses to benefit from the tourism policy.
- There is greater participation of tourism-related businesses and those providing services and products to support the tourism sector.
- The discussion between the administrative apparatus among the provinces has also intensified to better improve the regional linkage in tourism product development.
- The government apparatus has also become more dynamic, enthusiastic and motivated in working from the promulgation of tourism policies.

Limitations

- Provincial governments have not yet succeeded in linking enterprises to form a value chain (especially in young enterprises).
- The development strategy of enterprises has emphasized sustainability; however, the implementation of sustainability criteria has not been effective in practice.

In terms of Tourists/ Residents

Achievements

- *To have tourism development in particular and socio-economic in general, the government is more interested in investing in public services such as health, education, infrastructure, etc. These strategies strongly improve the everyday life of inhabitants and satisfy tourism demand.*
- *Travelers feel more motivated for trips due to these conveniences:* there are more holidays due to the government's flexibility to combine national holidays into long series of vacations for the labour; newer highway and road systems connecting localities; hot and new attractions; attractive packages from tour operators; promotion strategies from accommodation establishments for families or large groups of guests, etc.
- Vietnam is making the most of natural and cultural resources, thereby exploiting a variety of tourism types: natural tourism, cultural tourism, community-based tourism, rural tourism, sports tourism and medicinal tourism. Other strengths of Vietnam are its flexibility in creating products and services, and its young and hard-working workforce.
- The quality of products and services, in general, is higher and meets the needs of customers.
- Almost all destinations have a new look in terms of infrastructure, number of attractions, types of products and services.
- The application of IT in tourism activities results in higher satisfaction among tourists: online booking, portals providing free tourist information at destinations and e-government.

Limitations

- There has been massive development in the economic centers (Ho Chi Minh City, Ha Noi, Can Tho, Da Nang), however, the remote provinces have not had many positive changes.
- Due to revenue goals, long-term benefits are neglected such as calculating the destination's capacity/environmental capacity, ensuring service quality and employee engagement.
- Biodiversity and natural environment have not been protected from large-scale exploitation for tourism activities, leading to the loss of features in some destinations, such as morning fog in Da Lat, the "forest in the city" in the Central Highlands provinces, traditional villages in the north, traditional craft villages in the north and central, unspoiled pristine beaches without garbage, etc.
- The tour operators provide similar products but not the same quality. On the other hand, there are many tour operators within a province that publish the same tour information, resulting in customers not realizing the difference or the uniqueness of the destination. Therefore, marketing activities need to be invested more to increase the attractiveness of spreading destination information to tourists.

3.4.5 Stakeholders' contributions to increase the effectiveness of tourism policy

Proposals by experts in universities

It calls for scientific seminars with representatives of stakeholders periodically (6 months or 1 year) to report results, difficulties, adjustments and future goals related to Tourism Policy 2017.

The government should pay more attention to the participation of the local community in tourism development. The government's opinion is to encourage the local community to legally participate and benefit from tourism. Therefore, the provincial government needs to communicate this point of view to each citizen. Specifically, the first is to raise awareness and responsibility to protect tourism resources and the local cultural identity of the community, maintaining order, security, social safety and environmental sanitation to create tourist attractions. The second is to support the residential community to invest in tourism development, to restore and promote traditional cultures, arts and crafts. The third is, that businesses are encouraged to use local labour and raw materials to produce services for tourism, which promotes first the tourism industry and then the province's economy.

Community consensus is not high due to income inequalities between the tourism industry and local traditional economic sectors (especially in the peak season of tourism). To illustrate, although there are a large number of traditional handicraft villages⁶, their designs are not diverse and lack uniqueness. In addition, the dissemination of information and connection between craft villages to tourists is not effective and the infrastructure in many craft villages is not up to standard to serve tourists. Therefore, the level of consumption of these products is still limited and not commensurate with the potential. Provincial governments should promote R&D activities to support the development of craft villages while integrating with tourism activities to increase revenue from on-site exports of these products. This creates more income for locals, and then, they have the motivation to maintain traditional craft villages which enrich products and services for the tourism industry. The central government, in its turn, should find solutions to harmonize and balance the growth of economic sectors, to ensure the interests of all communities and sustainable development in the future.

Vietnam is working hard on all resources to improve the operational quality of the tourism industry while diversifying types of tourism. However, it is necessary to identify one or two types that are most typical and become the "exclusive" offer of Vietnam. This increases competitiveness and the ability to attract international visitors. Based on the strength of Vietnam's resources compared to other countries in Southeast Asia, cultural tourism and rural tourism are the two most potential types.

Proposals by hotel managers and travel agency managers

The government needs to systematise and simplify procedures related to business operations and visa procedures for international visitors.

Attracting investment is an opportunity for development and technology transfer, however, governments and local authorities need to prioritize domestic enterprises and local communities first to reduce income inequality and create jobs for locals.

Foreign enterprises often have huge capital and advanced technology. Therefore, their competition with Vietnamese enterprises is somewhat better. In order to support the local

⁶ Vietnam has 2,000 traditional craft villages and their revenues contributed to GDP in 2023 is 0.2% (<https://baodantoc.vn/huong-di-moi-trong-bao-ton-va-phat-trien-lang-nghe-truyen-thong-1698895876181.htm>)

labour and economy, the government needs to calculate the ratio of foreign enterprises to local enterprises at a reasonable and harmonious level.

The government should build funds for some special issues such as building digital technology, supporting and connecting enterprises in underdeveloped provinces and tax incentives for the early stages of new types of tourism.

The provincial governments should carefully study the market and practical needs for the decision of new business establishment due to long-term feasibility requirements. Tourism is an unpredictable industry and is represented by fierce competition. Therefore, the stable health of tourism businesses helps workers have stable incomes and the operation of other economic sectors is also favourable.

Proposals by provincial governance

The government needs to issue additional documents to clarify the guidelines for implementing Tourism Policy 2017, such as regulations on who is eligible for investment incentives, taxes, validity period, etc.

The government should finalize its budget allocation policy. Tourism Policy 2017's objectives are (1) to prioritize planning work; (2) to increase investment in the construction of tourism urban infrastructure and attractions; (3) to support tourism promotion, (4) to protect and embellish tourism resources and environment, (5) to conduct research, apply science and technology, and improve human resources for the tourism industry. Therefore, the budget for the above activities should be ready and liquidated quickly when businesses meet all the requirements. In other words, it is necessary to consider transparently, simplify the funding decision procedure for the above priorities, and not less importantly, to provide a sufficient and fast budget according to the roadmap.

It is necessary to have a specific plan for tourism products and services for each province to create uniqueness and increase regional linkages (**Figure 17**). Once the government has determined which areas to prioritize for tourism development, it needs to provide documents for guidance as well as funding of experts and capital on time. Some provinces got stuck due to the regulations in the administration and a lack of experts with enough experience to practice these policies effectively.

Staff in the provincial government also need to be updated with information, adjustments and innovations through periodic training courses, and in addition, they can share

and learn from the experiences of other neighbouring provinces through seminars and conferences.



Figure 17: Map of the most attractive destinations in Vietnam

Source: <https://absoluteasiatravel.com/vietnam/travel-guide-travel-to-vietnam/>, 2023

Proposals by tourists

The entertainment centers currently only operate during the day and are located far away from residential areas. As a result, nightlife activities are now concentrated on walking, dining and shopping streets. The demand for entertainment after working days is currently increasing, therefore the appearance of complex entertainment centers in the evening with central locations is necessary to improve mental life and restore mental health without having to wait until the weekend.

The government needs to invest more in the formation of bus routes not only within the center but also connecting them to suburban areas. The popularity of bus routes will reduce travel costs for low-income ones and at the same time protect the environment.

Sports tourism and rural tourism now attract more domestic tourists (especially after the serious impact of Covid-19, as people are more concerned about the environment and health). However, local hiking activities need to be equipped with additional information on the routes, car parks, garbage collection areas, rest areas and "related exciting stories about history, tradition and culture". In addition, the exploitation of hiking routes should be combined with surrounding residential areas where cultural - historical - architectural values are still preserved. Primary and High schools can also incorporate hiking programs with experience in these cultural and historic villages into practical classes.

Some islands are now becoming "hot" destinations, but the cost of transportation and services is too high in relation to their actual quality⁷. The government at all levels needs to take control to ensure easier access for 100 million residents (population of Vietnam) to these products first, then to international tourists. Some proposed solutions are as follows: attracting the participation of many service providers to avoid monopolies and requiring local officials to be serious about managing prices and service quality. Governments in these areas should stick to the goal of sustainable development, not for short-term profit.

⁷ Vietnam's transportation includes roads, railways, sea routes and aviation. Road systems have a high density of private vehicles and the public transportation system is underdeveloped. In addition, the quality of roads is not even across provinces. The system of highways has only been built since the 2010s, but in short distances and not in wide connection with provinces. The coastline is 3,260 km long, mainly exploited for the transportation of goods in large quantities. The railway only has a few fixed- routes and does not have much innovation, mainly serving the transport of north-south goods. Air routes were provided monopoly by the government until 2015 with the appearance of private providers, but costs are high and services are inflexible so far.

An issue discussed by visitors is the "passivity" of the management unit in creating the attraction for the destination, especially the destination with historical and cultural characteristics. For instance, Vietnam has many war museums and traditional culture museums, but the attraction of these museums is not high. Apart from museums, other products are also not the priority of the majority such as historical sites and traditional craft villages. Managers of cultural-historical attractions should not only focus on preserving artifacts but should revive stories related to cultural history through interpretation, integrating them into films and souvenir products.

3.5 Conclusions

The government plays a crucial role in determining the success of the tourism industry. Vietnam's tourism industry is making impressive progress and the government is also giving special priority to promoting tourism to become a key economic sector together with agriculture and industry. To do this, the government introduced Tourism Policy 2017 providing lists of development goals and responsibilities of stakeholders.

This qualitative study uses semi-structured questionnaires to collect the assessments of stakeholders (universities, enterprises, local governance and tourists) about the launching of the Tourism Policy 2017 initially by the government. This policy appeared based on the advantage of resources, great potential for socio-economic benefits and previous achievements. The tourism industry has been strengthened with the emergence of Tourism Policy 2017. Those benefits include the priority of investment, the convenience of administrative procedures and especially, the close cooperation and support of each other among stakeholders as the policy's goals set out. *This is the first official policy for the development of the tourism industry.* However, the policy was in the process of reaching out to stakeholders when facing a 2-year freeze due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to this study, Vietnam as well as the global tourism industry had 2 years to recover. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate the validity of Tourism Policy 2017 in order to make adjustments to suit the new era. The responses from 20 interviewees, leading experts in training, prominent tourism businesses, local authorities and travel enthusiasts provided a synthesis of information, perspectives and contributions in order to have a higher effectiveness of Tourism Policy 2017 in the future. Some of the most important recommendations regarding (1) central government should perfect the governance apparatus from central to local (expertise, working

spirit), support provinces in resource planning and develop strengths to become "unique destinations", support lagging- provinces in tourism in improving basic infrastructure to be able to cooperate with neighbouring provinces in developing tourism products and perfect regulations related to international visitors (visa) to warmly welcome EU countries and The Americas; (2) provincial government on the one hand quickly and fully announces the tourism policy to local communities and closely connects with businesses and universities to have the benefits of the Tourism Policy 2017 widely spread. On the other hand, the provincial government also always updates the local situation to the central government to ask for funds and timely support from the government, and lastly (3) all stakeholders must always be in a supportive and cooperative relationship to provide the best and most highly competitive products leading to stable revenue growth for provinces and Vietnam in general.

The study has some limitations related to its small sample size and not much access to residents due to the limited time. In addition, there is no comparison with previous studies due to no available research on tourism policy in Vietnam so far. These limitations may become the future research direction to perfect this chapter.

Chapter 4: Estimating the effectiveness of tourism policy pre- and post-Covid-19 pandemic in Vietnam: an in-depth investigation using spatial regression

4.1 The motivation for considering the success of Tourism Policy 2017 at important moments

The tourism industry is slowly recovering from the devastation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic (Robina-Ramírez *et al.*, 2021; Burbano *et al.*, 2022). From a different perspective, the Covid-19 pandemic was a "necessary break" for the tourism sector to reflect on its shortcomings, find new opportunities and come up with sustainable development strategies in the new era (Shrestha and L'Espoir Decosta, 2021; Seshadri *et al.*, 2023).

As was the case in other countries of Europe and worldwide, the year 2022 marked the revival of Vietnam's tourism sector post-pandemic with a boom in the number of domestic tourists, which surpassed the peak of 2019 and demonstrated the miraculous resilience of the industry (**Table 6**). In general, tourism revenue in provinces with a developed tourism industry has almost recovered to 2019 levels by 2022. In some localities, it even exceeded 2019 figures (**Figure 18**).

Table 6: Vietnam's tourism industry during the health crisis (Covid 19)

	2019	2020	2021	2022
International tourists (millions)	18	3.7	0.149	3.66
Domestic tourists (millions)	85	56	40	102
Total tourism revenue (billions of VND)	755000	312000	180000	495000
Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI)	60/117		52/117	
<i>Source: Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, https://www.vietnamtourism.gov.vn</i>				

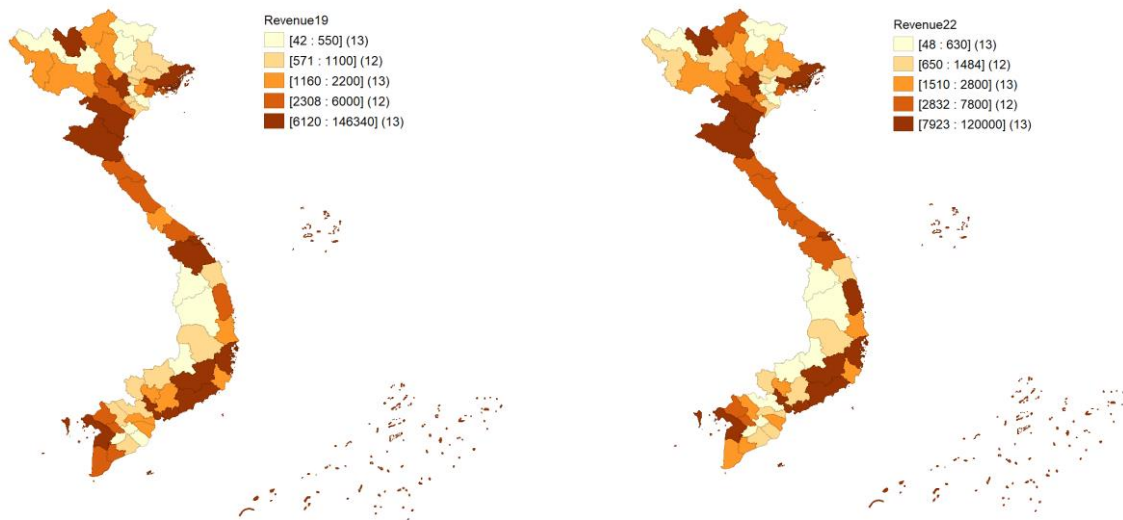


Figure 18: Tourism revenue in the 63 provinces in 2019 and 2022

Source: Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, <https://www.vietnamtourism.gov.vn>
GeoDa analysis

Looking at the development of the tourism industry globally, in both pre-and post-pandemic, the following factors are considered extremely important in terms of the speed of recovery: a rapid and effective response from national to local government bodies in line with the theory of policy implementation and a strong connection between localities (Chen, Huang and Li, 2020; Vaishar and Šťastná, 2020). The theory of policy implementation focuses on turning goals into results. Implementing policies necessitates competent leadership, a robust team, and suitable governance arrangements that align with applicable national laws and international standards, including the rules and regulations governing the operation of the organization. Drawing on this theory, many studies have been conducted to evaluate government policies that aimed to develop infrastructure and improve the standard of public services in order to improve residents' quality of life, but which also enhanced the country's destination image (Lewis and Jordan, 2008; Suryandaru, 2020; Škare, Soriano and Porada-Rochoń, 2021).

To demonstrate the Vietnamese government's unremitting efforts in building a dynamic and efficient government, the Viet Nam Provincial Governance and Public Administration

Performance Index (PAPI)⁸ and the Provincial Competitiveness Capacities Index (PCI)⁹ are two datasets that fully describe their policies and strategies. In particular, PAPI focuses on policies related to the residents, such as government portal quality, public services, quality of life, etc. PCI is related to government competitiveness, such as transparency, the effectiveness of government policies to support enterprises and labour force, especially the effectiveness of Tourism Policy 2017 to officially promote the tourism industry and transform it into a key economic sector. However, there have been no independent studies so far measuring the effectiveness of these policies. Building on the theory of policy implementation and based on preliminary research on the subject, this study seeks to answer the question of *whether the government of Vietnam has been successful in increasing tourism revenue in neighbouring provinces by improving regional connectivity*. In addition, this study assesses whether:

- (a) *government policies related to improving quality of life, for example, ‘developing infrastructure’, ‘improving health systems’ and ‘safe living spaces for the residents and tourists’ have had a positive effect on tourism revenue*
- (b) *government policies aimed at improving government competitiveness, for example, ‘business support policy’, ‘the level of proactive and creative provincial leadership in solving problems for enterprises’, and ‘a transparent business environment and equitable business information’ have had a positive impact on tourism revenue*
- (c) *‘a larger and better-trained workforce’, ‘a dynamic economic environment’ and ‘higher income levels’ positively affect tourism revenue.*
- (d) *‘agriculture resources’ also positively affect tourism revenue*

This study uses a spatial regression model to specifically explore the spatial correlation of tourism revenue between the 63 provinces, which is one of the main objectives of Tourism Policy 2017. The spatial regression model is an effective tool to analyse and test the spatial dependence between area units. In many cases, *the traditional ordinary least square (OLS) regression method is not effective because it does not take into consideration the spatial distribution of the data* as discussed by Paci and Marrocu (2014), Shi, Cheng and Xu (2021),

⁸ PAPI (The Viet Nam Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index) “is the largest sociological survey in Vietnam with the content of evaluating the formulation, implementation and monitoring of policy and provision of public services” Website: <https://papi.org.vn/eng/>

⁹ PCI (The Provincial Competitiveness Index) “is an assessment and ranking of the economic governance quality of provincial authorities in creating a favourable business environment for the development of the private sector” Website: <https://pcivietnam.vn/en>

Zhao and Yu (2021), and Ouchen and Montargot (2021). *The main purpose of this study is to look at the state of the tourism industry in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era, thence assist the government in thoroughly evaluating the policies and plans being implemented and making appropriate modifications where necessary.* In addition, this study examines the effectiveness of the policy both pre- and post-pandemic in order to investigate the impact of a markedly different environmental and social setting. Therefore, the study compares data from 2019 which marked the peak of the tourism industry pre-pandemic and data from 2022 which was the first recovery year post-pandemic.

This study is structured into 5 main parts. *Section 4.2* covers the ground theory in which the hypotheses are formulated. *Section 4.3* describes the research methodology to achieve the stated objectives. *Section 4.4* presents the research findings and discusses policy implications. Lastly, *section 4.5* comes to conclusions.

4.2 Theoretical background and hypotheses developed

4.2.1 Policy implementation theory

Policy implementation is the process of implementing government decisions through programs, procedures, regulations and practices aimed at improving society (Montjoy and O'Toole, 1979; DeGroff and Cargo, 2009). To have policies with high performance, nations need effective leadership, a cohesive team, and appropriate governance mechanisms that adhere to both national laws and international standards. Additionally, well-defined and practical project planning and implementation requirements must be in place to manage time and cost constraints. Policy implementation theories can be categorized into three basic types: top-down, bottom-up, and hybrid. These models rely on the rational, managerial, and organizational development of an organization, as well as bureaucratic and backward-looking issues control, which provide more detailed guidance and procedures for implementing policies (O'Toole, 2004; Howlett, 2019).

4.2.2 The history of policy implementation theory in the tourism sector

Research in the tourism sector developed through the lens of the policy implementation theory is quite popular. Combining the findings in each region provides important ground for conducting research in Vietnam.

In the context of developing countries in Asia, Wang and Ap (2013) examined the factors affecting the launch of tourism policies and how much communities benefit from policies related to community development in China. This study also confirmed that an understanding of tourism policy planning and implementation is crucial to achieving quick and lasting success. Research in the Philippines on the critical success factors of tourism policy implementation shows that policies that meet the core values of government officials are implemented faster as they are more motivated and are more likely to work together. In addition, the expertise and commitment of local government officials, local governance capacity and equal access to resources are also important success factors in policy implementation (Dela Santa, 2013).

Some prominent studies in Europe and Africa also provide insightful discussions, which are considered notable research directions for emerging countries. To start, Hall (2009) demonstrated that launching sound public policy strongly boosted tourism development due to its direct effect on the quality of life. Consequently, government officials and other stakeholders should have paid more attention to gaps between planning and execution, which arose partly due to the discordant interests of the parties involved in tourism activities. Therefore, measuring the effectiveness of these policies is essential and should be carried out periodically. One of the three main theoretical models of policy implementation theory is hybrid top-down bottom-up collaboration. Research in Spain delved into this model, to assess its applicability and to make recommendations for the optimization of policy implementation practices (Rodríguez, Williams and Hall, 2014). The study provides important suggestions for improving the effectiveness of tourism development policies in a country with a long history in the tourism sector. The European Tourism Agenda 2030 is the result of lengthy and intense negotiations between Member States. More importantly, stakeholder consultations formed an integral part of this process, facilitating balanced participation and sound quality planning (Guix and Font, 2022). Clearly, stakeholder involvement and consultations with expert committees are critical for sound policymaking, both for effective planning and for effective implementation. Moreover, building a new governance structure is now thought to be fundamental to the post-pandemic revival and long-term resilience of Africa's aviation industry and tourism sector. Observations from key industry leaders show that the level of focus and enthusiasm of managers, strategic goals that align with policy objectives and

coherent priorities at every level of management are extremely important. Therefore, building effective knowledge-management systems and boosting managerial commitment should be considered top priorities by the tourism industry (Ania Ayiine-Etigo and Amankwah-Amoah, 2021). In addition, improving public services in localities striving to become tourist destinations in the future is equally important.

In Vietnam, there has not been any study measuring the success or effectiveness of policy implementation in the tourism sector. The primary reason is that Vietnam's first tourism policy was launched in 2017, that is, two years before the COVID-19 pandemic of 2019-2021 which brought the tourism industry to a standstill worldwide and only two years have elapsed since the end of the global health crisis. However, it is important to assess the feasibility of Tourism Policy 2017 and make recommendations for improvements in order to speed up the recovery process.

4.2.3 The application of spatial regression analysis in the tourism industry

The use of spatial models in tourism research is becoming popular. Chhetri, Corcoran and Hall (2008) conducted a study on the spatial distribution of tourism and the part played by the underlying geography in urban economic areas of Southeast Queensland, Australia, between 1991 and 2001. The results confirmed that areas with a high concentration of tourism activities and a strong spatial dependence will have "neighbours" with similar characteristics.

Zhang (2009) used the spatial regression model to demonstrate *a positive spatial spillover of international arrivals in 31 provinces and municipalities in mainland China* during the period 1989-2005. In addition, the driving factors that contributed to the tourism development of these provinces were development level, openness, tourism resources, the number of tourism facilities and tourism agencies.

Research by Yang and Wong (2012) confirmed that factors including the improvement of infrastructure, the number of tourist attractions, the level of community friendliness and disease control ability were significant determinants of the volume of domestic and foreign tourists in China in 2002 and 2009. In particular, the authors then used spatial econometric models to estimate *the spillover effects of inbound and outbound tourism flows in 341 cities and towns in the country and a positive correlation was found.*

Spatial-autocorrelation is a useful tool in order to identify and explain why large numbers of tourists tend to flock to certain areas. Romão and Saito (2017) confirmed *there*

was the existence of positive spatial effects in the case of 46 Japanese Prefectures, which pushed tourism activities in these places to progress. In addition, the length of stay, the higher tourism specialization and the qualifications of the workforce are keys to the efficiency of the tourism industry in the studied regions.

Santos and Vieira (2020) measured the contribution of several factors to the development of the tourism industry in Portugal. In addition, the authors discovered convincing evidence of positive spatial autocorrelation of tourism activities in 278 municipalities of this country. The authors reinforce the effectiveness of spatial econometric models in highlighting spatial spillovers across regions.

Apart from observing the application of spatial regression models in the field of tourism, the results of the above studies also indicate the significant factors that affect tourism development including infrastructure, quality of services and products, the number of tourism businesses, the quality of the workforce, the health care systems, etc. These findings also laid the foundation for the research in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, using panel data from the interval 2013-2017, Si and Bang (2018) found evidence of a province's tourism development having positive spillover effects on the tourism industry of neighbouring provinces in Vietnam. *To the best of the author's knowledge, no other study using spatial modelling has since revisited this relationship up to the end of 2023.* Therefore, building on the work of Si and Bang (2018), the present study uses data from the years 2019 and 2022 and introduces additional variables related to economic development and quality of life into the spatial econometric model in order to investigate how these affect spatial autocorrelation of tourism revenue and visitor numbers across the 63 provinces of Vietnam in comparison to the findings of Si and Bang (2018). The results will hopefully call attention to the shortcomings of Tourism Policy 2017 and aid decision-makers in updating Vietnam's sustainable tourism development strategy.

4.2.4 Tourism policy in Vietnam

The main objective of Tourism Policy 2017 is to transform the tourism industry into a key economic sector and thus create a driving force for the development of other industries. Therefore, Tourism Policy 2017 focuses on the following activities:

- 1) *Investing in tourism infrastructure and technical facilities meeting the tourism industry's needs*
- 2) *Creating favourable conditions for corporate and social involvement in tourism development*

- 3) *Strengthening regional linkages for learning, support and value-chain creation*
- 4) *Developing tourism human resources*
- 5) *Strengthening tourism-related governance capacity and effectiveness*

4.2.5 Hypothesis development

Developed from the theory of policy implementation and practical need in Vietnam, the main objective of this study is to examine the effectiveness of regional linkage in the government's tourism development policy. Therefore, a hypothesis is posed:

H1: *Tourism Policy 2017 produced positive spillover effects on the tourism revenue of the 63 provinces in 2019 and reproduced similar results in post-pandemic 2022.*

The observed variables in the regression model are closely related to government policies aimed at improving government competitiveness (using Provincial Competitiveness Index - PCI) and public policies focusing on improving quality of life (using Public Administration Performance Index - PAPI).

In Vietnam, the PCI has been formulated and revised by the Vietnam Federation of Trade and Industry (VCCI) with the backing of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) since 2006 until now. This index gauges and evaluates the quality of economic governance, the convenience and friendliness of the business environment, and the provincial-level government's administrative reform efforts, all of which encourage the growth of the private sector. The PCI, which is a comprehensive index, comprises ten sub-indices. This chapter picked three from the ten¹⁰ and used them in the analysis as explanatory variables, which are closely related to the government's service system and responsiveness feature. In this sense, a given province is considered to have good governance when it has:

- (1) *the capability of developing high-quality business support services (business support policy)*
- (2) *innovative and forward-thinking provincial leaders play a crucial role in addressing challenges faced by businesses (proactive leaders)*
- (3) *an equitable business information as well as a transparent business environment (transparency)*

¹⁰ The ten dimensions of PCI: “(1) Low costs for businesses to enter the market, (2) Access to and use of land (from the government) is easy and stable, (3) Transparent business environment and public business information, (4) Low informal costs, (5) Time to inspect, check and implement regulations and administrative procedures is quick, (6) Fair competitive environment, (7) The provincial government leader is dynamic and creative in solving problems for businesses, (8) Quick and efficiency business support services, (9) Many quality labour training policies and (10) Dispute resolution procedures are fair and effective, and security and order are maintained”.

The PAPI dataset is the product of a research collaboration between the Centre for Community Support and Development Studies (CECODES) under the Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Associations and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) since 2009. The PAPI is a combination of eight key dimensions¹¹ for government performance. Based on the research objectives, PAPI dimension related to quality of life is taken into account in the analysis. Specifically, public service delivery dimensions look at the quality of four public services that support daily life related to healthcare, primary education, basic infrastructure and law and security. Based on the sufficiency of data in the 63 provinces, three sub-dimensions are chosen for analysis:

- (1) health, which demonstrates the ability to provide healthcare services at the provincial level (public healthcare)*
- (2) infrastructure, which demonstrates the ability to improve infrastructure in order to raise the quality of life and serve tourists at the provincial level (basic infrastructure)*
- (3) law and order, which demonstrates the ability to ensure a safe living space for the residents and tourists (safety)*

In order to assess the effectiveness of Tourism Policy 2017 in creating a favourable business environment and in promoting stakeholder involvement in the tourism sector, additional variables are also introduced into the regression model, namely, income levels, the availability of skilled labour and the number of active enterprises in Vietnam's economy. In particular, Tourism Policy 2017 emphasizes developing unique tourism products based on the strengths of natural resources and long-standing agricultural production. Therefore, the integration of agriculture in developing tourism products and services is also included in the analysis. Accordingly, *in the process of identifying and measuring regional connectivity characteristics, the spatial models also simultaneously examine the relationship between the number of enterprises, skilled workers, income levels, public healthcare, basic infrastructure, safety, business support policy, proactive leaders, transparency, agricultural resources and tourism revenue both by 2019 and (post-Covid) by 2022.*

¹¹ The eight dimensions of PAPI: “(1) participation at local levels, (2) transparency in local decision-making, (3) vertical accountability towards citizens, (4) control of corruption in the public sector, (5) public administrative procedures, (6) public service delivery, (7) environmental governance and (8) e-Governance”.

4.3 Spatial econometric modeling approach

4.3.1 Spatial regression

“Spatial modelling is a systematic approach to understanding the spatial configuration of economic activity from a local to a global scale” (Ploeckl, 2019). Spatial modelling is an important tool that provides a wealth of information about spatial interactions (LeSage, 2004). The results of the spatial regression model support economists in formulating effective inter-regional economic development strategies. The spatial regression model used in this analysis is as follows:

$$y = \rho W_1 y + X\beta + u$$

$$u = W_2 u + \varepsilon$$

$$\varepsilon \sim N(\delta^2 I)$$

where:

y : the response variable vector with dimensions $n \times 1$

X : the predictor variable matrix of size $n \times (k+1)$

β : the parameter vector of the regression coefficient with dimensions $(k+1) \times 1$

ρ : the spatial lag coefficient parameter of the predictor variable

u : the error vector with dimensions $n \times 1$

ε : the error vector with dimensions $n \times 1$

$W_1 W_2$: the weight matrix of size $n \times n$

I : the identity matrix of size $n \times n$

Spatial Weight Matrix

The spatial weights matrix is a crucial component in spatial econometric analysis, as it integrates spatial dependence into the statistical model. In this study, the spatial weights matrix employed (W) is asymmetric and consists of dimensions $n \times n$, where n signifies the number of spatial units within the examined area.

$$W = \begin{pmatrix} w_{11} & w_{12} & \dots & w_{1n} \\ w_{21} & w_{22} & \dots & w_{2n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \dots & \vdots \\ w_{n1} & w_{n2} & \dots & w_{nn} \end{pmatrix}$$

Element w_{ij} in row i , column j above denotes the spatial weight for a given pair of localities (i,j) . By convention, the elements lying on the principal diagonal of the weights matrix are set to zero, i.e. $w_{ij} = 0$, where $i=j$.

In the present study, queen-contiguity-based spatial weights were used. The same criterion has previously been applied to determine the neighbour structure of the study area by Vo, Tran and Nguyen (2020), Santos and Vieira (2020), Esiyok and Ugur (2017), Hoang and Goujon (2014), Shi, Cheng and Xu (2021), Yang and Wong (2012), Ouchen and Montargot (2021). Thus, the elements of the spatial weights matrix are determined as follows:

$$W = \begin{cases} 1 & i, j \text{ have a same border} \\ 0 & i, j \text{ do not have a same border} \end{cases}$$

$w_{ij} = 0$ if locality i and locality j do not share a common border
 $w_{ij} = 1$ if locality i and locality j have a common border of non-zero length, including edges and vertices
 Where: $i \neq j$

Step by step for conducting a spatial model

Initially, an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis was performed. Subsequently, Moran's I test was carried out to assess for spatial autocorrelation in the regression residuals. Following this, a Lagrange Multiplier test for spatial error dependence and a Lagrange Multiplier test for spatial lag dependence were executed to determine the appropriate spatial regression model.

Moran's I

For Moran's I statistic, the null hypothesis states that "H0: there is no spatial correlation in the data structure". Thus, when hypothesis H0 is rejected, the results of the test initially prove the existence of spatial autocorrelation in the observed data. Moran's I is a correlation coefficient that measures the overall spatial autocorrelation in the dataset. Research by Rüttenauer (2019) indicates that Moran's I statistic is asymptotically normally distributed and takes values in the range of [-1,1].

Moran's I statistic for an observed variable (x) is determined as follows:

$$I = \frac{n}{\sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^n w_{ij}} * \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^n x_{ij}(x_i - \bar{x})(x_j - \bar{x})}{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - \bar{x})^2}$$

where:

- x_i is the value of the observed variable in the i spatial unit
- x_j is the value of the observed variable in the j spatial unit
- \bar{x} is the overall mean of the observed variable
- n is the number of spatial units
- w_{ij} is the value in row i , column j of the spatial weights matrix W

So, the value of Moran's I depends on the spatial weights matrix (W) in which individual elements reflect the strength of the geographical relationship between spatial units in the study area.

The spatial lag model (SLM) SLM accounts for the impact of unmeasured independent variables and also considers the spatially lagged values of the dependent variable, which are the attribute values of neighbouring areas. The spatial lag model is represented by the equation:

$$y = \rho W_y + X\beta + \varepsilon$$

where:

W_y is an $N \times 1$ vector of spatial lags for dependent variables.

ρ (Rho) is a scalar parameter that functions as a spatial autoregressive coefficient, reflecting the spatial dependence inherent in the sample data and measuring the average influence of neighbouring observations on the dependent variable in the focal area.

$X\beta$ is an $N \times K$ matrix comprised of observation data on exogenous explanatory variables that have been multiplied by a $K \times 1$ vector of regression coefficients B for each X .

ε is a $N \times 1$ vector of the normally distributed random error.

The spatial lag model is designed to eliminate the potential confounding effects of spatial autocorrelation on the variable being considered. This model is particularly useful for gaining precise insights into the coefficients of other variables in the model. Moreover, it is well-suited for typical conceptions of diffusion processes because it takes into account the impact of neighbouring attribute values rather than merely being an artifact of measured or unmeasured independent variables. The likelihood of the outcome variable in one location enhancing the likelihood of the outcome variable in neighbouring locations is more probable.

The spatial error model (SEM) assesses the degree to which unexplained variations in the outcome variable can be attributed to the clustering of error terms, rather than the dependent variable. In essence, this model accounts for spatial dependence in the error terms, as opposed to the dependent variable. By incorporating spatial dependence in the errors, it captures the impact of unmeasured independent variables, as described by Matthews (2006) and Darmofal (2015). The SEM is expressed as:

$$\begin{aligned} y &= X\beta + \varepsilon \\ \varepsilon &= \lambda W_\varepsilon + u \end{aligned}$$

Where:

y is an $N \times 1$ vector of observations on the dependent variable

X is an $N \times K$ matrix of observations on the explanatory variable

β is a $K \times 1$ vector of regression coefficient

ε is an $N \times 1$ vector of spatially autocorrelated error term

W_ε is a spatial lag for the errors

λ (lambda) is the autoregressive coefficient. Instead of Rho, the lag error parameter is lambda, which is a lag on the error.

u is another error term

4.3.2 The dataset

Secondary data were collected from the Statistical Yearbooks of the General Statistics Office, PAPI and PCI databases for the years 2019 and 2022 for all of the 63 provinces of Vietnam. The observed variables are presented in **Table 7** below.

Table 7: Data information

Variable	Definition	Source
<i>Dependent variable</i>		
Tourism revenue	Tourism revenue of each province in million VND	https://www.gso.gov.vn/en/statistical-data/
<i>Explanatory variables</i>		
<i>Economic factors</i>		
Number of enterprises	The number of active enterprises in all economic sectors of each province	https://www.gso.gov.vn/en/statistical-data/
General skill level of the labour force	The number of skilled workers in all economic sectors of each province	https://www.gso.gov.vn/en/statistical-data/
Income levels	The annual income of residents in each province in million VND	https://www.gso.gov.vn/en/statistical-data/
<i>Public service delivery-related factors at the provincial level</i>		
Public healthcare	This is the ‘health’ sub-dimension of PAPI, which serves as a measure of the standard of healthcare services at the provincial level	https://www.gso.gov.vn/en/statistical-data/
Basic infrastructure	This is the ‘infrastructure’ sub-dimension of PAPI, which is a measure of the standard of basic infrastructure which affects quality of life and the ability to serve tourists at the provincial level.	https://papi.org.vn/eng/du-lieu-papi/
Safety	This is the ‘law and order’ sub-dimension of PAPI, which is a measure of how safe each province is both for residents and visitors alike.	https://papi.org.vn/eng/du-lieu-papi/
<i>Provincial competitiveness-related factors</i>		
Business support policy	This is one of the sub-indices of PCI, which is a measure of the capability to develop high-quality business support services	https://pcivietnam.vn/en
Proactive leaders	This is one of the sub-indices of PCI, which is a measure of the level of proactive and creative provincial leadership in support the private sector development.	https://pcivietnam.vn/en
Transparency	This is one of the sub-indices of PCI, which is a measure of how transparent the business environment is, and the predictability of the regulatory framework and the availability and reliability of related information.	https://pcivietnam.vn/en
<i>The level of integration of the agriculture sector with the tourism industry</i>		
Agriculture resources	The number of farms serving both agriculture and tourism (rural tourism, ecotourism)	https://www.gso.gov.vn/en/statistical-data/

4.4 Spatial correlations found among 63 provinces

Weights characteristics

The primary objective of this study is to examine whether the rate of tourism revenue growth is dependent on geographical location. To this end, spatial autocorrelation analysis was conducted using GeoDa. According to the queen-contiguity matrix provinces in Vietnam have between two to eight neighbours (**Figure 19**).

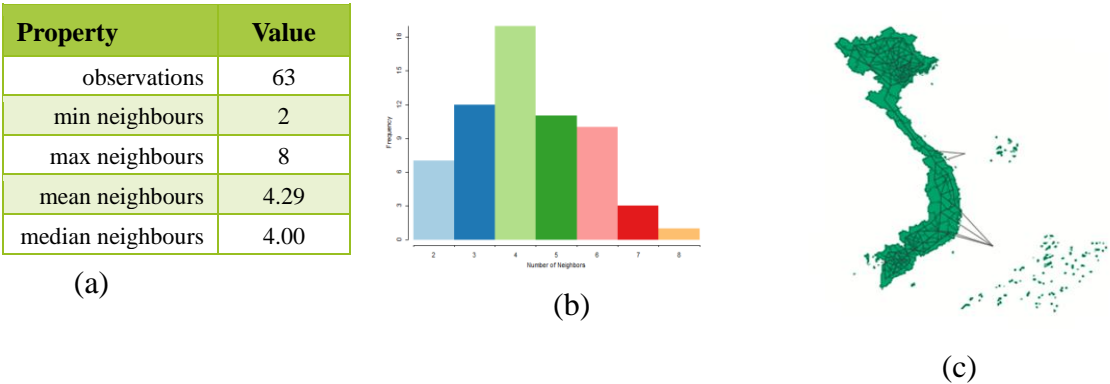


Figure 19: The neighbour structure of the dataset: (a) summary table, (b) connectivity histogram (queen weights), (c) the connectivity graph
Source: GeoDa analyses

Overview

In general, clusters of provinces at higher level of tourism development which develop their tourism sectors in tandem are located in the central and southern regions of Vietnam (**Figure 20 and 21**). However, two of the three provinces with the highest tourism revenue, Ha Noi (the capital) and Quang Ninh (which is famous for Ha Long Bay – a natural World Heritage site), are situated in the north. The third province is Ho Chi Minh City (the largest economic center) and it is located in the south. Ha Noi and Quang Ninh, however, do not seem to have any positive impact on the tourism industries of surrounding provinces. One of the reasons is that the historical, cultural and natural heritage is unique to these two provinces and they have a long history as an international destination. Also, surrounding provinces have not yet created a range of tourism products and services that are attractive enough to tourists.

Tourism revenue in 2022 was 80% that of 2019, demonstrating the great efforts of the tourism industry and the Vietnamese government. Notably, the provinces that already have a developed tourism industry maintained their positions, while some provinces in the northern and central regions started to develop their tourism sector. However, there are a large number

of provinces whose tourism revenue is not high and not commensurate with their potential. The Vietnamese government believes that all of these provinces have valuable tourism resources, but they are lacking plans and sound strategies. Therefore, provinces need to promote tourism research and put in place more effective development policies.

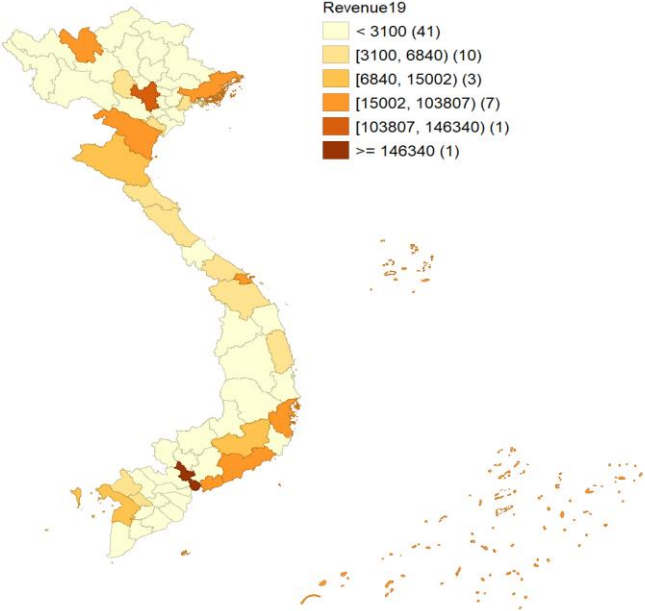


Figure 20: Tourism revenue of the 63 provinces in 2019
Source: GeoDa analyses

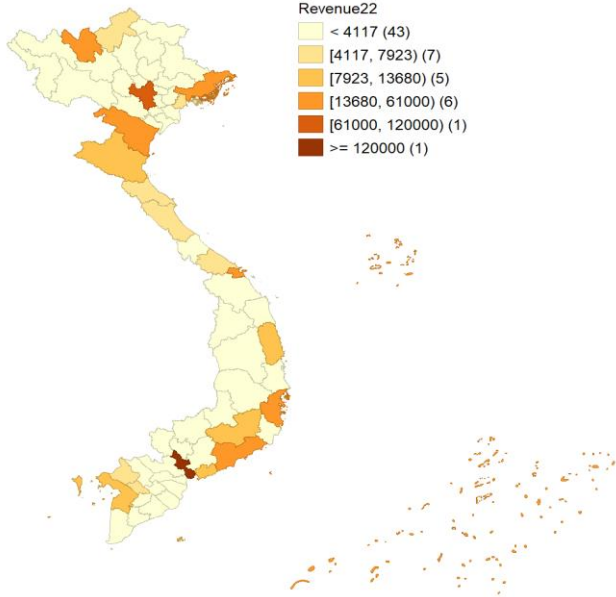


Figure 21: Tourism revenue of the 63 provinces in 2022
Source: GeoDa analyses

Moran's I test

The association between the value of the selected characteristic (i.e., of tourism revenue) at each site and the mean of the values of the same attribute at nearby locations is depicted by the Moran scatterplot. The Moran scatterplot is divided into four quadrants 'by the horizontal line at $y = 0$ and the vertical line at $x = 0$ '. The connection between the upper right and lower left quadrants is positive, as the values in these areas are greater and smaller than the sample mean, respectively. In contrast, the lower right and upper left quadrants exhibit a negative spatial association, which implies that the observed values in these quadrants are dissimilar to their neighbouring value (Kelejian and Prucha, 2001).

Moran's coefficient, which is the slope derived from the Moran scatterplot, indicates positive spatial clustering when high values are found in close proximity to other high values and low values cluster near other low values. Conversely, a negative Moran's coefficient suggests that high values tend to be situated near low values and repel other high values. These findings are supported by research of Kelejian and Prucha (2001).

The Moran scatter plots for the 63 provinces' tourism revenue in 2019 and 2022 are presented in **Figures 22 and 23** below.

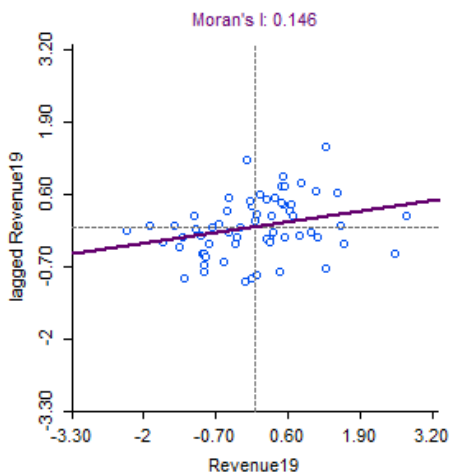


Figure 22: The Moran scatter plot and Moran's I coefficient for tourism revenue at a provincial level in 2019

Source: GeoDa analyses

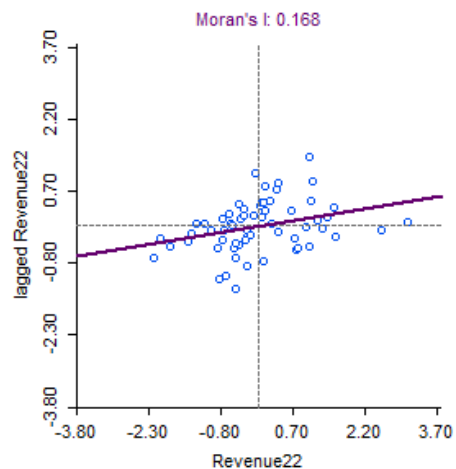


Figure 23: The Moran scatter plot and Moran's I coefficient for tourism revenue at a provincial level in 2022

Source: GeoDa analyses

Moran's I coefficient indicates positive spatial autocorrelation in tourism revenue at the provincial level with values of 0.146 for 2019 and 0.168 for 2022.

The six tests in **Table 8** are used to evaluate spatial dependence in the model. Moran's I score is a measure of spatial autocorrelation in the residuals. The function also provides estimates for five linear model tests for spatial dependence. These tests include (1) the simple LM test for a missing spatially lagged dependent variable (Lagrange Multiplier (lag)), (2) the simple LM test for error dependence (Lagrange Multiplier (error)), and two variants of these robust to the presence of the other are (3) Robust LM (lag) and (4) Robust LM (error). In which, Robust LM (error) tests for error dependence in the possible presence of a missing lagged dependent variable and Robust LM (lag) is vice versa. Lastly, (5) the SARMA portmanteau test expertly combines Lagrange Multiplier (error) and Robust LM (lag).

Table 8: Diagnostics for spatial dependence

Test	2019			2022		
	MI/DF	Value	Prob	MI/DF	Value	Prob
Moran's I (error)	0.2516	3.5799	0.0003	0.2782	3.8902	0.0001
Lagrange Multiplier (lag)	1	4.9067	0.0267	1	3.6607	0.0557
Robust LM (lag)	1	0.0316	0.8589	1	1.7140	0.1904
Lagrange Multiplier (error)	1	7.8606	0.0050	1	9.6219	0.0019
Robust LM (error)	1	2.9854	0.0842	1	7.6752	0.0056
Lagrange Multiplier (SARMA)	2	7.9822	0.0192	2	11.3358	0.0034
Source: GeoDa analyses						

The study found Moran's I coefficient was statistically significant at the 1% level for both 2019 and 2022, confirming the presence of spatial autocorrelation in the dataset. This means that the OLS model gives inaccurate results.

Table 8 demonstrates that both the straightforward lag and error tests are statistically significant, implying the presence of spatial dependence. Moreover, the robustness tests provide insights into the nature of spatial dependence. Upon examining the Lagrange Multiplier tests for both 2019 and 2022, it is evident that the spatial error model is a more suitable option than the OLS model, as the LM(error) statistics are highly significant at the 1% level, whereas the LM(lag) statistics are not. By allowing the error components to exhibit geographic correlation, the model fit was improved, although this did not eliminate the spatial effects entirely.

Next, details of spatial relationships are presented in **Table 9** below.

Table 9: OLS and spatial regression

Variable	2019		2022	
	OLS	Spatial error model	OLS	Spatial error model
Number of enterprises	0.007*** (0.001)	0.007*** (0.002)	0.006*** (0.002)	0.006*** (0.001)
Skilled workers	0.04*** (0.010)	0.050*** (0.009)	0.020** (0.008)	0.030*** (0.008)
Income levels	0.003 (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)	0.002 (0.003)	0.003 (0.002)
Public healthcare	0.338 (0.666)	0.295 (0.560)	-0.285 (0.750)	0.361 (0.565)
Basic infrastructure	1.135*** (0.352)	1.082*** (0.294)	0.937** (0.395)	1.018*** (0.309)
Safety	0.204** (0.092)	0.183** (0.082)	0.062 (0.113)	0.152* (0.089)
Business support policy	0.501** (0.222)	0.399** (0.174)	0.158 (0.104)	0.160** (0.076)
Proactive leaders	-0.477 (0.422)	-0.580 (0.356)	-0.177 (0.371)	-0.396 (0.326)
Transparency	0.513 (1.819)	1.506 (1.651)	-0.991 (1.656)	-2.810** (1.298)
Agriculture resources	0.0001** (0.0001)	0.0001*** (0.0001)	0.0001 (0.0002)	0.0003** (0.0001)
Lambda		0.481*** (0.129)		0.570*** (0.114)
Log-likelihood	-29.265	-24.996	-23.160	-17.020
AIC	80.530	71.992	68.320	56.040
SC	104.105	95.566	91.894	79.615

legend: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. The number in parentheses is a standard error.
Source: GeoDa analyses

In the spatial regression model of 2019, positive spatial dependence between provinces in tourism revenue is found. The Spatial-Lambda value is 0.481 at the 99% confidence level, which is explained as a 100% increase in the revenue of a given province resulting in a 48,1 % increase in the revenue of the neighbouring provinces. Factors that positively affect tourism

revenue include, in order of decreasing level, basic infrastructure, business support policy, safety, the general skill level of labour force, the number of enterprises and agriculture resources. The role of infrastructure, skilled workers and the number of enterprises in boosting tourism revenue are also highlighted by Lee and Chang (2008); Wang, Ayres and Huyton (2013); Bilen, Yilanci and Eryüzlü (2015); León-Gómez *et al.* (2021); and Darsana and Sudjana (2022). *Among the factors considered in this study, the quality of basic infrastructure had by far the largest impact on tourism revenue at the provincial level.* Allocating more investment to infrastructure development in the provinces, as stated in the government's general development strategy, is appropriate and meaningful. The business support policy, which seems to be the second most impactful factor, aims to “encourage the formation and development of businesses in the private sector”¹² which in turn, increases both the supply of and the demand for a broader range of products and services, including travel services. The remaining four factors have only a very small positive impact on tourism revenue, although the government also has policies in place to develop these assets. This leads to discussion in the next section as well as calls for more research in the future to confirm or refute these findings.

In 2022, the level of positive spillover effect in tourism revenue among 63 provinces in 2022 increased slightly compared to 2019, the spillover effect among provinces was 57% and was significant at 1% (the Spatial-Lambda value is 0.57 at the 99% confidence level, which is explained as a 100% increase in the revenue of a given province resulting in a 57 % increase in the revenue of the neighbouring provinces). So, the government of Vietnam was successful in increasing tourism revenue in neighbouring provinces by improving regional connectivity up to the point of this study. The factors that positively influence tourism revenue are similar to those found in 2019, which are basic infrastructure, business support policy, safety, skilled workers, the number of enterprises and agriculture resources. Nevertheless, a factor related to provincial competitiveness showed a negative influence on tourism revenue with a high impact is transparency. The year 2022 meant the start of a new era when many businesses also took their new departures. ‘A transparent business environment and equitable business information’ aims to create fair competition and create opportunities for all enterprises that plan to join the

¹² By the end of 2023, there are 4069 travel agencies and 38,000 accommodations. Only 15% of enterprises are state-owned enterprises, the remaining have the participation of the private sector in the form of shareholding, partnership and limited liability.

market. This may result in getting cut off from informal relationships, losing access to informal benefits and thus losing the opportunity of gaining a head start by taking shortcuts. However, this relationship between ‘transparency’ and ‘tourism revenue’ does not hold true for the data from 2019 when all businesses were on a stable development path. Previous studies (Haseeb and Azam, 2021; Maria, Ioanna and Salomi, 2022) also arrived at the same conclusion.

4.5 Theoretical and practical implications, and policy recommendations

4.5.1 Theoretical implications

As the field of policy implementation continues to evolve through further research, the government can use them as reliable documents and develop increasingly sophisticated strategies and policies. This highlights the need for scholars to dedicate greater attention to this topic, as it offers significant potential for enhancing the effectiveness of government operations. This study is the first attempt to quantify the impact of the tourism policy 2017 using provincial data for 2019 and 2022. Preliminarily, the Vietnamese government has been successful in increasing tourism revenue in neighbouring provinces by improving regional connectivity. Furthermore, government policies related to improving human resources, the economic environment, administrative procedures and the quality of life also demonstrated a positive effect on tourism revenue. In order to have an accurate and adequate assessment of the effectiveness of this policy, it is essential to combine observations with time series. Consequently, these findings serve as a starting point for further research in this field.

The application of spatial regression models in Vietnam tourism research has been relatively limited, despite their widespread apply in economic section. In addition to providing correlation relationships, spatial regression enables the description of observations in the form of maps, thereby demonstrating the capacity of localities to cooperate and link to gain economic development as a whole. This study hopes to provide supplementary data for previous studies on the spatial spread of tourism revenue in 63 provinces, thereby establishing a basis for comparison and improvement in future research. The description of the diffusion in spatial areas becomes more detailed and adequate when the data reaches the corresponding level (province level, ward level, village level, etc.). Therefore, the more complete the data listing at the local level, the more effective the application of spatial modelling will be and meet the research goals of scholars. However, as Vietnam is in the process of completing the

national database, local-level data in Vietnam is still lacking. This is a significant limitation, as it restricts the number of variables that can be included in the research.

4.5.2 Practical implications

The empirical findings from the regression model for the two years, 2019 and 2022, demonstrate that the government's efforts to boost tourism activities start bearing fruit. Firstly, in terms of the government's economic policy which is aimed at creating a more favourable business environment in all sectors of the economy and at improving the general skill level of the labour force. Secondly, in terms of the government's policy aimed at improving public-service delivery at the provincial level, including infrastructure development and enhancing public safety both of which serve residents and tourists alike. Thirdly, in terms of government policies targeted at improving provincial competitiveness through building capacity for high-quality business-support services. Fourthly, provincial governments are keeping an eye on their neighbouring provinces and are investing in tourism activities so as not to fall behind. Thus, preliminary findings indicate that Vietnam's Tourism Policy 2017 has potential which can be turned into success.

The analysis yielded an apparently counterintuitive relationship between 'a transparent business environment and equitable business information' on the one hand and tourism revenue on the other for the year 2022. However, 2022 marked the start of economic recovery in post-pandemic. To ensure sustainable economic development, the Vietnamese government introduced new policies to improve public administration with the aim of eliminating corruption, reducing red tape, creating a favourable business environment, facilitating fair and effective competition and then involving stakeholders from the private sector as well. This openness and transparency of information and procedures in public administration also increased residents' satisfaction in the long term. Yet, in the short term, this negatively affected income levels as it became more difficult to obtain insider information and get informal support from government officials and hence, informal benefits diminished. Similarly, other studies also found that a transparent public administrative environment hinders rapid ground in some economic sectors (Haseeb and Azam, 2021; Maria, Ioanna and Salomi, 2022).

'The standard of healthcare services at the provincial level' and 'the level of proactive and creative provincial leadership' in facilitating private sector development do not seem to influence tourism revenue. In terms of healthcare services, this requires the government and

provincial government to re-measure the level of integration, in other words, the level of cooperation and consensus in building infrastructure for the purpose of caring for residents' health together with the tourism industry's products and services. This shows the willingness in the case to develop a type of tourism industry (in both infrastructure and labour force), for example, medical tourism (treatment, elderly caring) and beauty tourism (cosmetic surgery, yoga, detox). There is a paradox, although a higher level of 'proactive and creative provincial leadership in solving problems for enterprises' does not show a significant influence on tourism revenue. Due to the characteristics of the tourism industry, which is an integrated and unpredictable sector, therefore, besides proactiveness, expertise and engagement also affect effectiveness. Accordingly, government leaders in the tourism sector should have high qualifications and be rich in experience, thence, the connection between central government, local governments and enterprises will be closely tied and policy implementation can be effective. As an illustration, the development of tourism in China can be further supported by local government leaders who possess greater expertise and experience in the tourism sector (Deng et al., 2021).

The tourism industry needs to be highly adaptable due to rapidly changing market needs and a complicated post-pandemic environment. Gaining a holistic picture of this industry requires a lot of research using multiple regression models, explanatory variables and various study periods. Furthermore, *it is necessary to observe the factors that directly affect tourism revenue, both in a period of development and during a crisis*. Studies using spatial models for tourism are not prevalent in Vietnam. Observing spatial interdependence between provinces aims to assist policymakers in making appropriate adjustments or incentives. In addition, the spatial model visualizes data in a hierarchical way. This helps to consolidate the regression results with spatial maps. In addition, assessing the effectiveness of policies helps provinces understand the meaning and role of each factor (observed variables in this study) in tourism activities. Moreover, government bodies may develop plans and solutions to change the influence of these factors in a positive way to maximize benefits from these policies, including increasing opportunities for tourism development in provinces.

Spatial maps of tourism revenue for 2019 and 2022 show that there is positive spatial clustering in tourism revenue in the central and southern regions (**Figure 20 and 21**). The tourism industries of some provinces situated in the central and southern regions of the country are performing well. All of them are located along the coast and boast natural heritage sites recognized by UNESCO. In contrast, provinces in the north can 'only' rely on their

cultural heritage, but their tourism industries are lagging behind. This means that while natural and marine tourism are very successful in Vietnam, policymakers would need to do more to promote cultural tourism which also has huge potential.

In summary, the application of policy implementation theory and spatial regression analysis to PAPI and PCI data bridges the gap between the theory of policy implementation, methodology and knowledge of tourism policy and public policy in Vietnam. Consequently, the main findings of this research may provide valuable insights to policymakers.

4.5.3 Policy implications

Vietnam is striving to transform into a knowledge-based economy by 2030 and thus to achieve its sustainable development goals and make its presence felt on the international market. However, there was a statistically significant relationship detected ($\alpha=1\%$) both for 2019 and 2022, the skill level of the workforce had only a minor impact on tourism revenue. Therefore, the efficiency of the labour force needs to be improved both in the tourism industry and the rest of the economy due to tourism sector is an integrated economy of many other economic sectors. To do that, provincial governments with developed tourism industries as well as emerging provinces first need to improve human resources with advanced training programs annually and good compensation for their productivity. Individual provinces should design their own human resource development strategies together with the sustainable development goals of the country. *All levels of government, from provincial to national need to allocate more resources for human-resource development, simplify application procedures and make related information readily available for knowledge-economy-related and R&D&I.* In fact, R&D&I activities are now especially emphasized by most developing countries to accelerate development rate and competitive capability while ensuring sustainability (Klein & Şener, 2023; Malamud & Zucchi, 2019). Therefore, policies that are aimed at developing a knowledge-based economy need to be better funded in order to win the support of young and talented professionals. In addition, provincial governments should create a more favourable environment for innovation and technology transfer and promote a company culture that rewards life-long learning. “Workers mental health recovery” policies also should be paid more attention to for the aim to ensure long-term productivity. Lastly, due to the fact that digital technology is now becoming widely applied in all areas of life globally, especially in administrative procedures to have the best services for residents (Bekbergeneva, 2020),

provincial officials in Vietnam should regularly keep up to date with the latest developments in digital technology and adopt new solutions where appropriate to improve the efficiency of the government apparatus. Some references from other countries are valuable to study. In order to improve the labour force, apart from improving expertise, four- and five-star hotels in Turkey provide digital transformation and innovation programs to raise their employees' efficiency in producing services (Demir et al., 2023). Human resource development policy including advanced training classes annually in order to increase individual development opportunities (multi-skills, multitasking skills) and improve compensation are the most critical factors in maintaining the efficiency of restaurants in Sweden (Carlbäck et al., 2023). Updating employee training programs annually and increasing empowerment gain a faster growth rate in eighty-four nations (that have the tourism sector developing) from the years 2000 to 2021 (Al Saba et al., 2023). Furthermore, to increase the effectiveness of leaders, crucial requirements are expertise and enthusiasm. Value and long-term commitment of the organization are the motivation for the managers to keep constantly learning, developing themselves and then increasing sustainable competitive advantage in hospitality and tourism companies of Spain and South Korea (Gil-Cordero et al., 2023).

The government needs to rethink its policies that are targeted at increasing the productivity of active enterprises. With the appropriate rules in place, increased competition which creates an incentive for businesses to improve product quality and lower prices, however, unfair competition can threaten the survival of start-ups and smaller enterprises and can, ultimately, be disadvantageous to consumers as well. Therefore, the government should conduct thorough analyses of supply and demand and launch policies that support businesses that prioritise their customers and have long-term potential. Practically, the success in economic development of many governments comes from the right market orientation and having wise policies to support enterprises in taking advantage and resources (Öztürk *et al.*, 2019; Rasool, Maqbool and Tarique, 2021; Su *et al.*, 2021). The government should revise licensing rules, build a system of expert consultants and allocate more funding for data analysis that supports judicious decision-making. Furthermore, the government should allocate funds to building business ecosystems, where companies share information and make joint investments. These ecosystems also support enterprises in researching market demand, participating in the supply chain, competing and developing sustainably, and designing a

sound development and risk management strategy. The benefits from ecosystems for all economic sectors are one of the driving forces that help developed economies, especially EU countries, maintain their growth rate and achieve outstanding achievements in recent years (Foghani, Mahadi and Omar, 2017; Acs *et al.*, 2021).

The 63 provinces of Vietnam are making great efforts to improve their destination image through improving infrastructure and health services, safer living environments and increasing the number of accommodations¹³ and entertainment facilities serving residents and visitors alike. The attractiveness of a destination is the driving force behind travel motivation, especially today when people tend to spend more on experiential activities and mental health recovery. In order to make public service delivery-related policies more meaningful, the government should constantly improve the expertise of the central administrative apparatus, support provinces in building and perfecting their administrative apparatus and encourage R&D and benchmarking activities among local businesses. Furthermore, tourism needs are diverse and rapidly changing, therefore, on the one hand, provinces need to preserve and promote their unique cultural and natural heritage, on the other, they need to implement public policies aimed at improving quality of life and pursue such policies with determination. European countries are typical models for implementing public policies that aim to provide high-quality public services and improve the quality of life. This is also the vital factor that attracts global tourists to visit and experience (Joppe, 2018; Aguinis *et al.*, 2023).

In terms of raising provincial competitiveness, provincial governments are focusing on business support activities. The effectiveness of these policies depends mostly on officials at all levels of government. Hence, strengthening their expertise and commitment is of the utmost importance. It is also essential that government officials are familiar with the latest office administration tools and that their work is supported by upgraded IT systems in all of the 63 provinces. Therefore, the central government should allocate more funds to infrastructure and human resource development and should distribute equally in 63 provinces to ensure that public policies are addressing pertinent issues and are implemented effectively. Both the central government and provincial governments need to closely monitor implementation and conduct regular surveys to make sure that policies remain relevant.

¹³ The number of accommodations in 2015 was 19 thousand. This number increases to 38 thousand in 2023. The number of 4 - 5 star hotels and resorts are 600 (2%). Appendix 1 provides more detail.

Evaluating how accessible these policies are to businesses and assessing the actual number of businesses taking advantage of the benefits can also be revealing as to how successful these policies are.

Vietnam's biodiversity resources rank among the 16 in the world. Preserving natural biodiversity and maintaining local agricultural ecosystems are crucial for sustainable development, which can greatly benefit the tourism sector. According to the results of this empirical research, agricultural resources seem to have a small impact on tourism revenue (**Table 9**). This is in agreement with the central government's own assessment¹⁴. However, rural tourism and eco-tourism are typical products, which could make Vietnam one of the most attractive destinations in Asia. Therefore, agricultural activities associated with tourism are given priority in funding and experts for research and development. In the future, local governments will need to integrate the concept of a “green economy” into their development strategies. Government officials should promote green practices and support businesses in adopting green criteria, especially in the case of products and services that would need to meet international standards. Running a green economy has been implemented by European countries very early and serves as a good sample for developing countries to refer to (Shah, Arjoon and Rambocas, 2016; Barbier, 2020).

To spread out the positive magnitude of spatial autocorrelation in tourism revenue among provinces, the Vietnamese government first needs an effective administrative apparatus, especially officials for the tourism industry with expertise and commitment. Thus, a generous investment in human resource training would help meet the demand for committed, highly-skilled experts in the tourism industry. Secondly, the government should regularly organize scientific conferences and advanced training programs to keep the tourism industry up to date and support provinces in overcoming obstacles. Thirdly, the government should develop its national tourism programs in provinces that have not yet had an impression on visitors. These programs support planning and marketing, including spreading information widely to travelers. businesses also would have opportunities for consultations with senior government experts and for receiving funding from the government. This program should be implemented sequentially in provinces that are lagging behind in order to assist them in

¹⁴ This issue was discussed in a report by Vietnam National Administration of Tourism in 2023 related to Sustainable strategies for agri-tourism development to 2025 (<https://vietnamtourism.gov.vn>)

catching up with provinces that have developed tourism industries. Lastly, the government should support provinces (through organising stakeholders for an expert panel) in R&D activities, technology transfer and innovation in building tourism products and service systems to ensure high quality while maintaining the unique cultural values of these provinces.

In fact, Vietnam is an emerging economy with a fast-growing tourism industry. Breakthrough policies targeting key economic sectors (agriculture, industry and tourism) as well as overall economic growth, were only launched between 2015 and 2019. In addition to the government's efforts to identify and promote key economic sectors, transitioning to a knowledge-based economy and pursuing green growth are sound forward-looking policy decisions. This study provides some evidence of the success of the government's strategy. Studies with a variety of observed variables and longer study periods would provide further insights to policymakers in improving development strategies and policies.

4.6 Conclusions

To simultaneously boost tourism revenue across provinces, the Vietnamese government places an emphasis on strengthening the connectivity and cooperation between regions in Tourism Policy 2017. In order to improve the quality of life for residents and serve tourists, and level up the weight of Vietnam, the government also introduced public policies and policies to strengthen provincial competitiveness. Moreover, Vietnam is converging many factors to become a dynamic and fast-growing economy, in part, has a positive impact on the tourism industry. An in-depth understanding of the variation of tourism revenue under the influence of the economic environment and repeated government interventions to make on-time adjustments is necessary in terms of revising industry policy and in terms of filling gaps in related academic research.

This study was conducted based on the theory of policy implementation, aimed at observing the effectiveness of tourism development policy, public policy and provincial competitiveness policy in Vietnam. *The magnitude of positive spillover effects between provinces increased significantly sharply from 2019 to 2022. This indicates that the policy of regional integration had a positive impact, especially in the post-pandemic recovery period. Results suggest that factors that positively affect tourism revenue include basic infrastructure, business support policy, safety, the skill level of the labour force, the number of enterprises*

and agriculture resources. Therefore, improving the qualification of human resources, the productivity of active businesses and the effectiveness of public-service delivery can significantly enhance the attractiveness of destinations, provincial competitiveness and the value of agricultural resources in tourism activities.

Numerous studies concentrate on evaluating the impact of the pandemic on the tourism sector and proposing strategies for post-pandemic recovery. However, studies using econometric tools to assess the effectiveness of policies for development or recovery are not widely used in Vietnam. Due to the novelty of the method used in this chapter (the applying of spatial models in Vietnam is not widely found) and the limited size of the currently available dataset, the model only ran on cross-sectional data. For that reason, the results of this study call for more studies with diverse observed variables for comparison. As more data becomes available, panel data should also be analysed. The study only used the queen matrix for spatial regression. Other spatial matrices such as haversine or inverse-distance spatial-weighting matrices should also be applied to check for differences and find the most efficient model.

Chapter 5: Good governance and tourism development in Vietnam: looking back at the past three decades (1990-2023)

5.1 Effective institutions and good governance are crucial for sustainable development

In an age of great changes, effective institutions and good governance are crucial for sustainable development (Mansoor, 2021; Omri & Ben Mabrouk, 2020). Governments need to strike a balance between taking advantage of globalization and integration on the one hand and ensuring a safe and stable domestic economic and social environment on the other. However, both globalization and sustainability necessitate that governments introduce more effective economic development policies which in turn requires them to improve their governance apparatus and to follow developments in the world economy (Avdulaj, Merko and Muço, 2021).

“Good governance is an essential complement to sound economic policies and is central to creating and sustaining an environment which fosters strong and equitable development” - World Bank, Governance and Development, 1992

Good governance has increased the efficiency of economic activity in many countries. Government efficiency, rule of law and reduction of corruption led to an increase in GDP per capita in 22 Eastern European countries with economics in transition from 1996 to 2018 (Avdulaj, Merko and Muço, 2021). Political stability and government effectiveness both had a positive impact on the economic growth of 14 countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region in the long term from 2002 to 2018 (Azam, 2022). Likewise, the significant direct impact of the rule of law, control of corruption, voice and accountability, and the indirect impact of government effectiveness and political stability contributed to the growth of the world's 31 most developed economies (Zhuo *et al.*, 2021).

The tourism industry across nations also takes advantage of good governance. Good governance had a positive and significant impact on total tourism revenue and the number of visitors in 30 developing countries and 30 members from OECD countries in the period 1996-2009 (Daryaei *et al.*, 2012), in 14 Southwest Asian countries during the annual period 2011-2016 (Zabihi, Hoshmand and Salehnia, 2020) and in South Asian countries in the period 1996-2018 (Ullah *et al.*, 2023). The participation of all stakeholders in making plans and setting long-term targets, and better coordination at all levels of governance promoted innovation and

development in rural tourism in Ontario, Canada (Joppe, Brooker and Thomas, 2014). Using governance indicators and tourism-industry statistics from 158 countries, from the period 2007-2014, (Steyn and Jansen van Vuuren, 2016) demonstrated that destinations with good governance attracted 18.7% more tourists than destinations with bad governance. Good governance played a vital role in increasing foreign tourist inflows and raising the tourism competitiveness index of the United States and India in the period 2008–2019 (Swamy and Lagesh, 2023).

Since the launching of Doi Moi policy in 1986 in Vietnam, the tourism sector, alongside other economic domains, has undergone substantial reforms to align with the global trajectory of development. Presently, the tourism industry stands as a progressively pivotal catalyst in propelling Vietnam's comprehensive economic advancement. In contrast, less efficient governance, including incomplete and unclear planning, hindered sustainable development, thereby reducing the sharing of local benefits and obstructing the conservation of the ecosystem in Phong Nha-Ke Bang in Vietnam, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site (Hübner, Phong and Châu, 2014). This necessitates an insightful investigation into government intervention in the tourism industry's development over the past three decades.

The main aim of this chapter is to describe the relationship between government intervention and changes in the tourism industry in the short and long term through an Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) regression model, thereby becoming a valuable reference for policymakers to improve future development policies. The preliminary stages of this research identified research gaps in the domain of public sector institutional quality. In addition, it revealed a dearth of studies applying time series methodologies to analyse governance practices in Vietnam. Thus, while the primary aim of the present study is to investigate the relationship between government intervention and changes in Vietnam's tourism industry for 34 years (1990-2023) and hence, provide input for policymakers, it also introduces novel analytical methods that, to the best of the author's knowledge, have not yet been applied in this field.

The study is structured as follows. The background theories for conducting this research are discussed in *section 5.2*. This qualitative discussion forms the basis for formulating the research hypothesis and the formal research model. *Section 5.3* explains the research methodology and data collection. *Section 5.4* presents the process and results of the

quantitative analysis. *Section 5.5* includes discussions of the theoretical, practical and policy implications of the regression results. Limitations of the present study and directions for future research are presented in the closing section.

5.2 Good governance and the performance of the tourism sector

5.2.1 Institutional theory

Institutional theory is introduced in order to better understand how organisations and nations interact with, react to and are shaped by their societal, national and international contexts. This theory focuses on explaining the roles of social, political and economic systems that support nations to operate legitimately and effectively. Institutions provide the rules of the game and make adjustments/interventions by discouraging, constraining, or encouraging to follow given behavioural patterns (Fligstein, 1997; Chang, 2011; Willmott, 2015).

The institutional approach emphasizes the importance of building an institutional environment that leads to a favourable and attractive economic environment for stakeholders, supporting organizations to join the network and develop in an environment characterised by political and legal stability (Nunkoo and Gursoy, 2017; Bhat, Majumdar and Mishra, 2022). Thus, the institutional theory posits that the institutional environment greatly contributes to productivity by facilitating firms/organizations' activities and helping them achieve greater efficiency and ultimately, success.

5.2.2 Theories related to good governance

Governance is the process of operating organizational activities through decision-making, rule-setting and enforcement mechanisms. Governance, as the United Nations discusses, is “the system of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political and social affairs through interactions within and among the state, civil society and private sector” (United Nations, 2014).

The European Union, the World Bank, the OECD, the United Nations, as well as a number of academic papers, provide normative guidance to good governance (**Figure 24 and 25**) (Van Doeveren, 2011). More and more governments are taking steps to adopt good governance practices in order to improve the efficiency of the state apparatus and the qualifications of public employees. Popularly, “good governance is participatory, consensus-

oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive, and respects the rule of law” (Nations, U. 2015).



Figure 24: Good Governance and its Role in Sustainable Development
Source: World Economic Forum, 2022

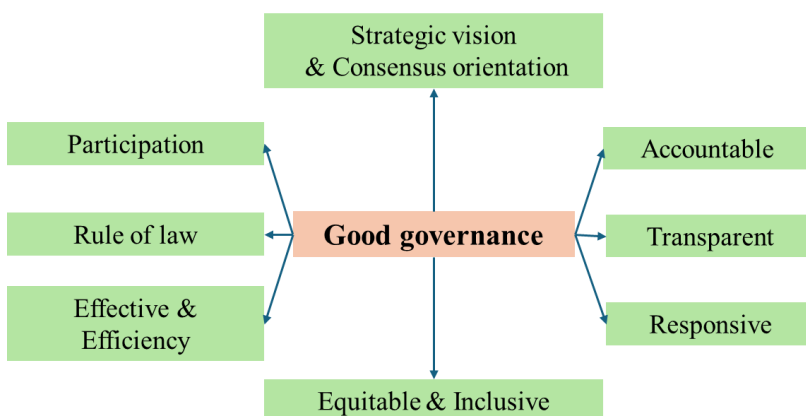


Figure 25: Indicators of good governance
Source: UNDP, 1977

Practicing good state governance is a long path with a great internal effort in each nation, which includes the encouragement of scientific activities and taking advantage of resources and international experience to ensure the effectiveness of the set goals. Nations practicing good governance rely on local resources and international experience for effective goal-setting, invest in human capital, make great efforts to encourage scientific activities, promote economic growth and strengthen social cohesion (Talmaciu, 2014). **Figure 26** below also emphasizes the strong relationship between institutional qualities and governance principles. Effective institutions i.e. high-performing, adaptable, stable and good governance i.e. that is participatory, equitable, respecting the rule of law, etc. are crucial for the success or full development of nations.

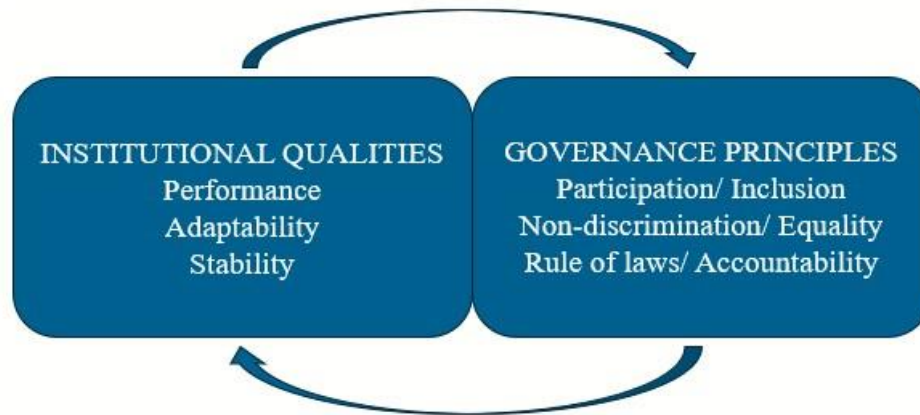


Figure 26: Linkages between institutional qualities and key governance principles
 Source: Governance Principles, Institutional Capacity and Quality, United Nations Development Program, 2011

5.2.3 The vital role of good governance in tourism development

Tourism is currently being praised as a catalyst for economic and social development in various regions. However, sustainable tourism development has certain prerequisites, namely, a highly reliable institutional environment with great leadership and effective governance capacity (Jamal and Higham, 2021; Restrepo and Anton Clavé, 2023). There is a dearth of research on the relationship between good governance and the performance of the tourism sector worldwide (Detotto, Giannoni and Goavec, 2021; Ofori, Dossou and Akadiri, 2023). Certain aspects of good governance indicators include: “government effectiveness, political stability, regulatory quality, rule of law, voice/stakeholder involvement and accountability” positively influencing tourism development. Whereas, terrorism, environmental degradation and high levels of corruption hindered the development of the tourism industry (Ejaz *et al.*, 2021). This limited body of extant research substantiates the significance of sound governance in fostering the advancement of the tourism sector, though.

Detotto, Giannoni and Goavec (2021) emphasized the role of good governance in the observed differences in tourism performance among 100 countries between 2002 and 2012, with its impact being even higher in countries with low openness. Using data from 48 African countries, Ofori, Dossou and Akadiri (2023) show that enhancing government governance capacity in controlling corruption and maintaining political stability impressively reduced income inequality in the region between 1996 and 2020. In addition, the tourism industry experienced significant growth as a result of the region's economic development and political

and institutional stability (Ofori, Dossou and Akadiri, 2023). Topcu, Denaux and Crews (2023) confirmed that tourism demand in the US significantly increased due to the high government effectiveness in maintaining political stability and the absence of violence in the period 1999 to 2020.

5.2.4 Research question and the related hypothesis concerning Good Governance

Vietnam's economy has changed positively due to the Doi Moi Policy 1986. Since then, the government has focused on improving the government apparatus, introducing sound policies and gradually increasing openness via cooperation and integration. Over the years, the openness of Vietnam's economy has increased considerably, reflected not only in the ratio of exports and imports to GDP but also in foreign investment, which has become an important part of the economic sectors. To recognize whether this strategic vision supported the development of the tourism sector over the past three decades, it calls for in-depth research. In addition, as discussed in the previous section, the government can also promote tourism development via sound development policies and by maintaining peace, security and political stability. In general, to have a better understanding of the impact of good governance on the tourism industry in Vietnam, *the main research question of this chapter (chapter 5) is posed:*

To what extent have the Vietnamese government's efforts to practice good governance (strategic vision, effectiveness & efficiency and rule of law) affected tourism revenue over the past three decades?

Therefore, aiming for a sufficient answer, a complex hypothesis is laid out:

H2: *A higher exports-to-GDP ratio, the share of FDI in total annual investments in the economy, Human Development Index, Government Effectiveness Index, score of 'Political stability and absence of violence/terrorism' indicator and score of 'Rule of Law' indicator had a positive influence on Vietnam's tourism revenue for the period 1990 to 2023.*

In this hypothesis, 'the exports-to-GDP ratio' and 'the share of FDI in total annual investments in the economy' are used as proxies for the strategic vision of the government (which is related to economic openness). The Human Development Index (HDI) is used as a proxy for equitable and inclusive governance. The Government Effectiveness Index is used as a proxy for government effectiveness. Due to the nature of tourism, political stability and a stable institutional environment are key to building a destination. Therefore, two of the World

Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators, namely, 'Rule of Law' and 'Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism' are also included in the analysis.

5.3 An approach to time series dataset

5.3.1 The ARDL model

In econometrics, auto-regressive distributed lag (ARDL) models are linear time series models, in which, the dependent variable is assumed to be a function of both the past values of itself and the current and the lagged values of other independent variables. The ARDL procedure can be used to test for cointegration and for making dynamic inferences regarding short-term and long-term relationships between variables.

In the present study, tourism revenue is considered to be a function of the exports-to-GDP ratio, the share of foreign direct investment in total annual investments in economic activity, the Human Development Index, the Government Effectiveness Index, the 'Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism' indicator and the 'Rule of Law' indicator:

$$TR = f(Export, FDI, HDI, GovEff, PS, RL)$$

where

- TR = tourism revenue (in billion VND)
- $Export$ = exports- to- GDP ratio (%)
- FDI = the share of foreign direct investment in total annual investments in economic activity in Vietnam (%)
- HDI : Human Development Index
- $GovEff$ = Government Effectiveness Index
- PS = 'Political Stability and Absence of violence/Terrorism' indicator
- RL = 'Rule of law' indicator

Thus, the following ARDL model is constructed for the purposes of this analysis:

$$\Delta TR_t = \alpha_0 + \sum_{i=1}^n \beta_i \Delta Export_{t-i} + \sum_{i=1}^n \gamma_i \Delta FDI_{t-i} + \sum_{i=1}^n \delta_i \Delta HDI_{t-i} + \sum_{i=1}^n \varepsilon_i \Delta GovEff_{t-i} + \sum_{i=1}^n \theta_i \Delta PS_{t-i} + \sum_{i=1}^n \mu_i \Delta RL_{t-i} + \phi_1 Export_{t-i} + \phi_2 FDI_{t-i} + \phi_3 HDI_{t-i} + \phi_4 GovEff_{t-i} + \phi_5 PS_{t-i} + \phi_6 RL_{t-i} + \partial_t$$

where

- Δ is the difference operator
- $\beta_i, \gamma_i, \delta_i, \varepsilon_i, \theta_i, \mu_i$ are long-term coefficient
- α_0 is a constant
- $\phi_{1,2,3,4,5,6}$ are the short-term coefficients
- ∂_t is the white noise error term
- t indicates time
- n is the maximum number of lags

To ensure reliability, the ARDL model needs to meet certain criteria, including stationarity of time series data, optimal lag length, no autocorrelation and no heteroscedasticity. The extended Dickey-Fuller test (ADF) was used to test for the stationarity of variables. The optimal lag length was chosen by minimizing either the Bayes Information Criterion (BIC) or the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC).

The present analysis builds on previous studies in applying the ARDL procedure to investigate the relationships among factors that have positive and even negative to the economy (Khoshnevis Yazdi, Nateghian and Sheikh Rezaie, 2017; Manuel A. Rivera, 2017; Ohlan, 2017; Shahbaz *et al.*, 2017; Mushtaq, Thoker and Bhat, 2020; Suryandaru, 2020; Aydin, 2022; Liu *et al.*, 2022; Hussain, 2023). ARDL models represent dynamic relationships between factors in a single-equation framework (Nkoro and Uko, 2016; Ohlan, 2017; Tecel *et al.*, 2020; Joshua, Güngör and Bekun, 2022; Olorogun, Salami and Bekun, 2022). The advantages of the ARDL method are that it produces consistent estimates of long-term and short-term coefficients that deliver good results no matter how many variables there are (i.e., it works well with small datasets/short-time series) and it can be applied to time series that are stationary at $I(0)$ or at $I(1)$.

5.3.2 Data collection

The variables were selected based on the findings of earlier studies and their applicability in the case of Vietnam (**Table 10**). Time series data from 1990 to 2023 were obtained from Vietnamese government databases, the World Bank and CountryRisk.io. The data used for analysis are the original values and were processed by EViews 12 and Stata 17. EViews 12 was used to check the stability of data, analyse short-term and long-term relationships and test for co-integration among variables, while Stata 17 was used to generate improved figures illustrating correlations between variables.

Table 10: Description of variables

Phenomenon	Variable/ Proxy		Relevant studies	Data source
<i>Dependent variables</i>				
Tourism development	<i>TR</i>	Annual tourism revenue	Jayaraman <i>et al.</i> , (2011); Lisi and Zhenzhi (2017); Deng, Veiga and Wiper (2019); van der Schyff, Meyer and Ferreira (2019)	The General Statistics Office of Vietnam https://www.gso.gov.vn/
<i>Independent variables</i>				
Good governance dimensions	<i>Export</i>	Export to GDP ratio (%)	Jayaraman <i>et al.</i> (2011); Tang, Cheam and Ong (2017); Eyuboglu and Eyuboglu (2019); Öztürk, Ihtiyar and Aras (2019)	World Bank https://data.worldbank.org
	<i>FDI</i>	FDI's share in the country's total annual investments in economic activity (%)	Kontgis <i>et al.</i> (2014); Arfaoui, Ziadi and Manai (2016); Khoshnevis Yazdi, Nateghian and Sheikh Rezaie (2017); Latief and Lefen (2019); Tecel <i>et al.</i> (2020); (Appiah <i>et al.</i> , 2023)	CountryRisk.io https://app.countryrisk.io/
	<i>HDI</i>	“The Human Development Index is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living” (United Nations, 2020)	Biagi, Ladu and Royuela (2017), Croes, Ridderstaat and Shapoval (2020), Andi Auliya Hakim, Suryantoro and Rahardjo (2021)	The United Nations https://hdr.undp.org/

	<i>GovEff</i>	“The government effectiveness index is an index elaborated by the World Bank which measures the quality of public services, civil service, policy formulation, policy implementation and credibility of a government's commitment to raise these qualities or keeping them high” (World Bank, 2022)	Di Matteo (2019b); Chisadza, Clance and Gupta (2021); Mishra, Rout and Chaini (2021)	CountryRisk.io https://app.countryrisk.io/
	<i>PS</i>	This score represents “the level of political stability and absence of violence/terrorism” (World Bank, 2022)	Ejaz <i>et al.</i> (2021)	World Bank https://data.worldbank.org
	<i>RL</i>	The rule of law score represents the level of restriction of arbitrary exercise of power, the extent to which all individuals or organizations are subject to the law, and the degree to which laws are applied equally and fairly.	Ejaz <i>et al.</i> (2021) and Topcu, Denaux and Crews (2023)	World Bank https://data.worldbank.org

5.4 Dynamic relationships in the development of the tourism industry from 1990 to 2023

Before moving onto discussing the main findings, the summary statistics of the dataset are checked. **Table 11** shows the mean, median and standard deviation of individual datasets.

Table 11: Summary statistics

	TR	Export	FDI	HDI	GovEff	PS	RL
Mean	161316.1	60.68	5.4	0.62	43.81	0.23	-0.36
Median	38289	61.9	4.8	0.64	44.49	0.25	-0.38
Maximum	755000	94	11.9	0.71	59.46	0.53	0.07
Minimum	1340	28.7	2.8	0.48	30.56	-0.12	-0.68
Std. Dev.	215400.6	18.8	2.16	0.07	8.78	0.16	0.20
Source: EViews 12 analysis							

As the first step, correlation tests were run in order to identify any sign of multicollinearity early in the analysis (**Table 12 and Figure 27**). The results indicate that the variables correlated to different degrees. Certain pairs of variables, such as government effectiveness and export, and HDI and export, show a strong correlation ($\rho > 0.9$).

Table 12: Correlation statistics

	TR	Export	FDI	HDI	GovEff	PS	RL
TR	1						
Export	0.7	1					
FDI	-0.2	-0.2	1				
HDI	0.6	0.9	-0.2	1			
GovEff	0.7	0.9	-0.3	0.9	1		
PS	0.4	-0.5	0.3	-0.5	-0.6	1	
RL	0.6	0.5	0.1	0.3	0.4	-0.2	1
Source: EViews 12 analysis							

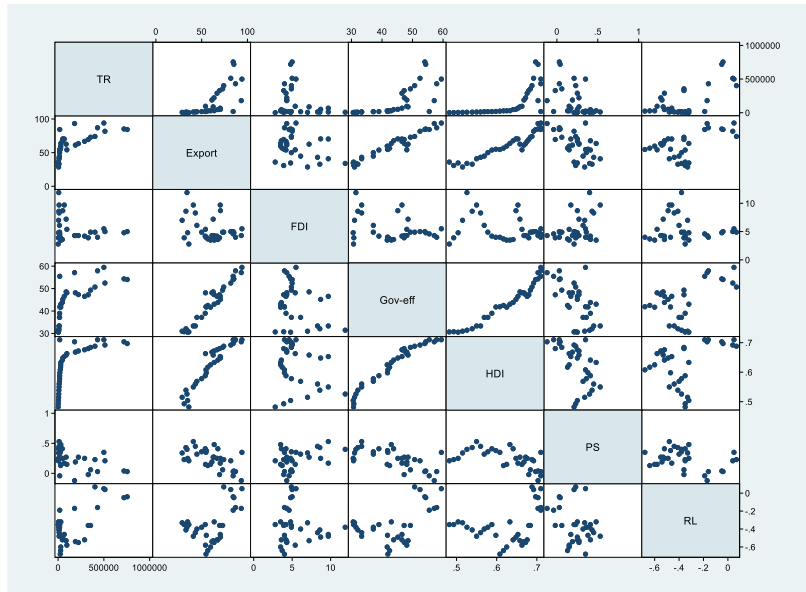


Figure 27: Graph correlation matrix
The author calculates by Stata 17

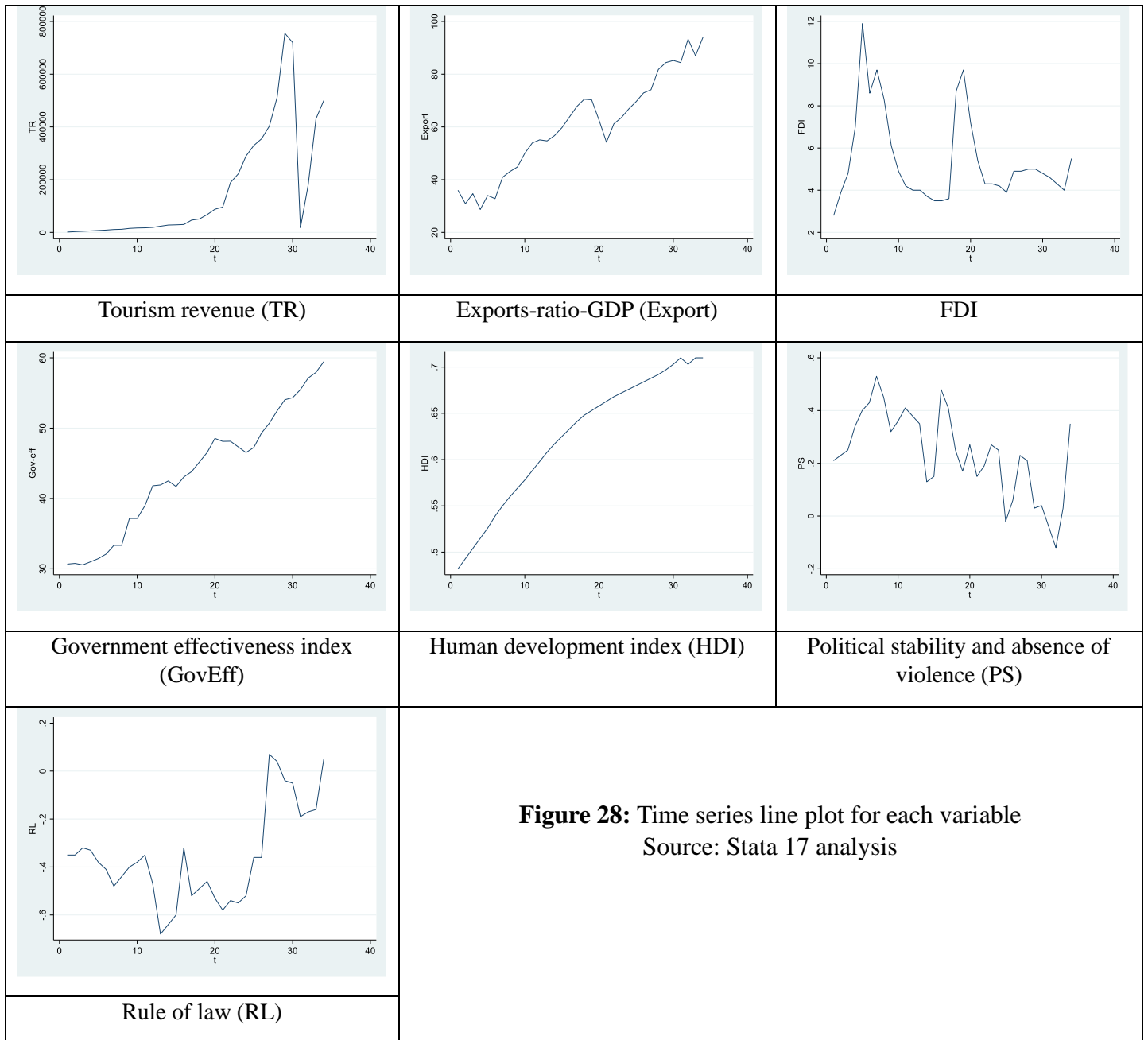
As a next step, time-series data were tested for unit roots using the Augmented Dickey–Fuller test (ADF) to make sure that no time series is integrated of order 2 or higher (Table 13). The TR and HDI time series were found to be stationary at $I(0)$, while the remaining time series were found to be stationary at $I(1)$. Thus, the dataset meets the stationary criterion of the ARDL cointegration procedure.

Table 13: Unit root test

Variable with Intercept	Augmented Dickey-Fuller test (ADF)				Decision
	Level		1st difference		
	t-statistic	p-value	t-statistic	p-value	
TR	-5.884867	0.0001	-	-	I (0)
Export	-0.117870	0.9393	-6.778189	0.0000	I (1)
FDI	-2.912619	0.0550	-4.799611	0.0003	I (1)
HDI	-6.190005	0.0000	-	-	I (0)
GovEff	0.382000	0.9791	-5.276459	0.0001	I (1)
PS	-0.119719	0.9378	-4.527634	0.0013	I (1)
RL	-1.182860	0.6700	-5.723696	0.0000	I (1)

Source: EViews 12 analysis

The time series plot of individual variables is also observed in **Figure 28** below.



Next, in order to minimise autocorrelation in the residual, a set of VAR models were run and an optimal lag of $n = 2$ was chosen based on the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) (**Table 14**).

Table 14: Results of optimal lag selection

Lag	LogL	Sequential modified LR test statistic	Final Prediction Error	Akaike information criterion	Schwarz information criterion	Hannan-Quinn information criterion
0	-562.4336	NA	6746983	35.5896	35.91023	35.69588
1	-372.2195	285.3213	1068.869	26.76327	29.32875	27.61395
2	-273.6912	104.6883*	78.18679*	23.66820*	28.47765*	25.26240*

Source: EViews 12 analysis

In the next step, the ARDL cointegration technique was used to check the long-run relationship between the variables. **Table 15** shows that both the value of the F-Bounds test and t-Bound test are higher than the upper bound at 99% confidence level, thus there is a long-run relationship between the observed variables.

Table 15: Results of ARDL – cointegration testing

Test	Value	Lag structure selected using AIC	Bound critical values								Decision
			1%		2.5%		5%		10%		
			I(0)	I(1)	I(0)	I(1)	I(0)	I(1)	I(0)	I(1)	
F-Bounds test	14.68501	(2,1,2,2,1,1,2)	4.27	6.21			2.97	4.49	2.45	3.79	Co-integrated
t-Bound test	-6.42724		-3.43	-4.99	-3.13	-4.66	-2.86	-4.38	-2.57	-4.04	

Source: EViews 12 analysis

In the long term (**Table 16**), a higher level of development (HDI) and the strengthening of the rule of law (RL) had a positive impact on tourism revenue (TR). In contrast, an increase in ‘political stability and the absence of violence/terrorism score’ (PS), ‘government effectiveness score’ (GovEff) and in ‘FDI's share in total annual investments in economic activities’ (FDI), a higher ‘exports-to-GDP ratio’ (Export) tended to go together with lower

tourism revenue (TR). In practice, although there is a decline in ‘political stability and the absence of violence/terrorism’ scores over the years (the time series of this indicator tended to go down annually), there is a rise in tourism revenue.

Table 16: Long-run estimate from the ARDL model

Variable	Coefficient and Prob.
Export	-4453.626** (2065.006)
FDI	-13997.52** (5088.191)
HDI	6288858*** (762015.9)
GovEff	-40793.99*** (7225.241)
PS	-385279*** (93085.75)
RL	896700.4*** (61091.4)
EC = TR - (-4453.6258*Export -13997.5222*FDI + 6288857.8843*HDI - 40793.9931*GovEff -385279.0056*PS + 896700.3653*RL Note: Values in parenthesis are standard errors and, ** and *** indicate 5% and 1% significance levels, respectively. Source: EViews 12 analysis	

In the short run, the effects of independent variables show the same characteristics as in the long run (**Table 17**). In addition, the first-lagged values of tourism revenue (TR_{t-1}), HDI (HDI_{t-1}) and the rule of law indicator (RL_{t-1}) are positively related to the current value of tourism revenue (TR_t). The achievements of the tourism industry are the result of a cumulative process. Furthermore, the value of the error correction term, $CointEq(-1) = -2.16$ at a 1% significant, which implies that about 216% of any movement into disequilibrium is corrected within one period, that is, about 100% of any movement into disequilibrium is corrected for within less than half a period. This is an impressive pace, demonstrating that the economy fluctuated in the short term but quickly adjusted and ran well in the long term (the long-term relationship is quite robust and there are only short-lived deviations from that). The model has an R-squared at 89.6% indicating the robustness of the ARDL model.

Table 17: Results of ECM- short-term relationship

Variable	Coefficient
$\Delta TR(-1)$	1.709*** (0.174)
ΔFDI	-37836.45*** (7310.762)
ΔHDI	30380943*** (5092876)
$\Delta HDI (-1)$	13641800*** (4969055)
$\Delta GovEff$	-55572.48*** (11459.09)
ΔPS	-333317.1*** (96458.60)
$\Delta RL (-1)$	1076900*** (1368901.1)
CointEq(-1)*	-2.16*** (0.178469)
R-squared	89.6%
Note: Values in parenthesis are standard errors and, ** and *** indicate 5% and 1% significance levels, respectively. Source: EViews 12 analysis	

In the next step, Granger causality was run to determine whether any of the time series can be used to forecast the variation of others. For the purposes of this analysis, a significant level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$) was chosen. When the p-value was less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) that X is a Granger-causal factor of Y was accepted. **Table 18** demonstrates that future changes in tourism revenue can be predicted based on changes in HDI and ‘the government effectiveness index’; variation in the ‘political stability and absence of violence/terrorism’ indicator can be predicted based on changes in tourism revenue, ‘the exports-to-GDP ratio’, HDI and ‘the government effectiveness index’; variation in ‘the exports-to-GDP ratio’ can be predicted using HDI; variation in ‘the government effectiveness index’ can be predicted using ‘the exports-to-GDP’

ratio; and variation in the ‘rule of law’ indicator can be predicted using the ‘political stability and absence of violence/terrorism’ indicator.

Table 18: Granger causality

Null hypothesis (H0)	F-statistic	Prob.	Decision
HDI does not Granger Cause TR	4.630	0.010	Reject H0 at 1%
TR does not Granger Cause HDI	10.366	0.000	Reject H0 at 1%
GovEff does not Granger Cause TR	3.625	0.040	Reject H0 at 5%
TR does not Granger Cause PS	7.480	0.002	Reject H0 at 1%
HDI does not Granger Cause Export	4.595	0.019	Reject H0 at 1%
Export does not Granger Cause GovEff	8.523	0.001	Reject H0 at 5%
Export does not Granger Cause PS	4.751	0.017	Reject H0 at 5%
HDI does not Granger Cause PS	4.634	0.018	Reject H0 at 5%
GovEff does not Granger Cause PS	5.692	0.008	Reject H0 at 1%
PS does not Granger Cause RL	4.609	0.019	Reject H0 at 5%
Source: EViews 12 analysis			

Diagnostic tests for model

The model passes the Breusch-Pagan-Godfrey (BPG) test for heteroskedasticity and the Breusch-Godfrey (BG) test for serial correlation (**Table 19**). The Jarque-Bera test has a P-value > 0.05 and the hypothesis "no evidence that the model is not normally distributed" is rejected, so the data have a normal distribution (**Figure 29**). Next, the CUSUM test is used to assess the stability of the coefficients in a multiple linear regression model. It checks for coefficient constancy under the null hypothesis and identifies any structural changes in the model over time when values of the sequence fall outside the expected range. In this model, cumulative sums of residuals plot within the boundaries of the 5% significance level, which confirms this model's stability (**Figure 30**). Furthermore, an actual-fitted-residual graph is tested to detect non-linearity, unequal error variances and outliers (**Figure 31**). The residuals "bounce randomly" around line 0. The statement implies that a linear relationship is plausible. To conclude, the model passes the relevant tests which confirms the robustness of the results.

Table 19: Diagnostic test for the model

Test	F-statistic	Prob
Heteroskedasticity (Breush-Pagan-Godfrey)	0.735	0.7293
Serial correlation LM test (Breusch-Godfrey)	0.164	0.8505

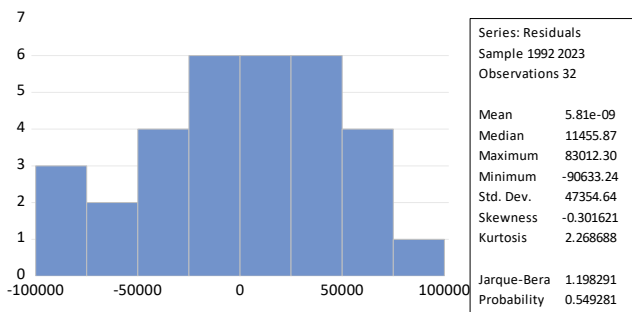


Figure 29: Histogram Normality test

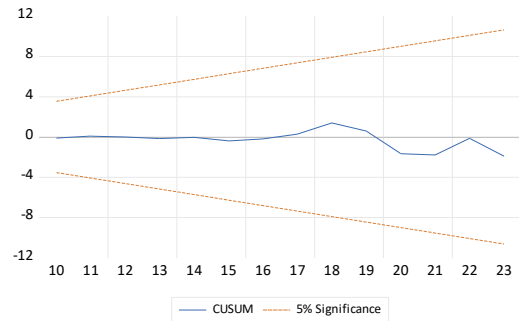


Figure 30: CUSUM test

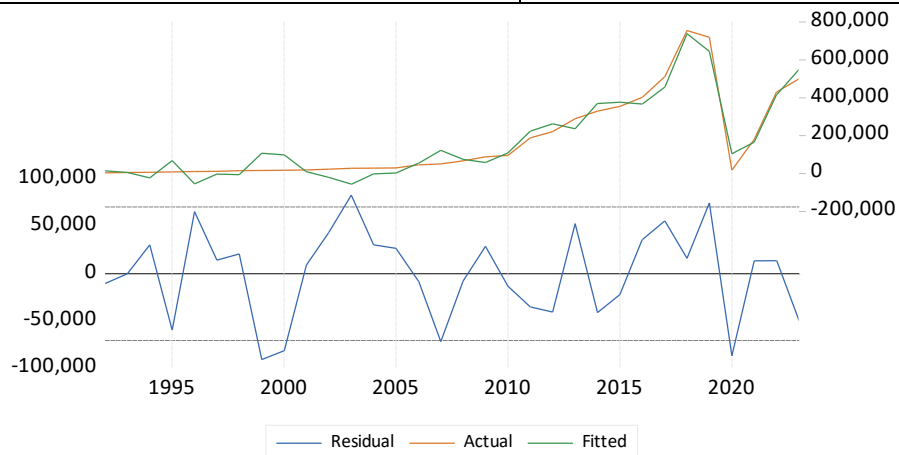


Figure 31: Actual-fitted-residual graph
Source: EViews 12 analysis

5.5 Theoretical and practical implications, and policy recommendations

5.5.1 Theoretical implications

Institutions are one of the few factors that play a decisive role in each area of society and the economy, and in the development of a country in general. Appropriate institutions will create motivation for development, and vice versa, while inappropriate institutions will become obstacles. Year by year, the Vietnamese government focuses its efforts on improving institutions to facilitate sustainable development in all economic sectors. The findings of this

chapter provide insights on the government's role in promoting the development of Vietnam's tourism industry. *Notably, the values of HDI and the 'rule of law' indicator increase annually and that has a positive impact on tourism revenue. Thus, one of the main goals of the Vietnamese government, that is, to build strong institutions and promote human development in all respects, has successfully contributed to the development of the tourism industry.*

This study supplements references for studies on good governance in Vietnam, especially for the tourism industry. Good governance promotes sustainable economic development, equitable society and improved quality of life. Nonetheless, there are variations in the impact of good governance across industry sectors. The different attributes of good governance seem to have influenced the performance of Vietnam's tourism industry to different degrees over the 34 years of the study (1990-2023). This is partly due to the priorities of the central government in formulating its strategy and the peculiarities of the tourism industry. It is also influenced by domestic and world events. Efforts to improve the government's governance capacity are aimed at facilitating comprehensive and long-term national development and promoting a favourable environment for all sectors of the economy. Tourism is considered a trend-setting industry, sensitive to crises and related to many other economic sectors. Therefore, the tourism industry requires sector-specific policies. While the present study provides an initial assessment of the relationship between good governance and the performance of the tourism industry, further studies are needed, using different analytical models, a broader range of Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGIs) and data from different intervals, to corroborate the above findings.

Furthermore, this study aimed to enrich the application of the ARDL model by exploring the short-run and long-run relationships between governance indicators and the performance of Vietnam's tourism sector. *To the best of the author's knowledge, these observed variables are first used in an econometric model with a long time series (1990-2023).*

5.5.2 Practical implications

In the long term, an increase in the HDI and 'rule of law' scores positively affects tourism revenue. Unexpectedly, the increase in 'government effectiveness', 'FDI's share in total annual investments in economic activities' and 'export-to-GDP ratio' reduces tourism revenue. Furthermore, tourism revenue tended to increase annually correlated with the decrease in the

score of ‘political stability and absence of violence/terrorism’. The relationships of the variables are similar even in the short term.

The HDI serves as a composite metric encompassing dimensions such as knowledge attainment, longevity and the attainment of a satisfactory standard of living. The government’s efforts to continuously improve Vietnam’s HDI ranking are in line with its overarching goal of fostering sustainable economic development. *This investigation provides evidence that a higher HDI score correlates with higher tourism revenue.* This is in agreement with the findings of earlier studies, such as Kubickova et al. (2017) and Ridderstaat, Fu and Lin (2022).

Likewise, an increase in the ‘rule of law’ score correlates with a rise in tourism revenue. Similar results are found in Gozgor *et al.* (2019) and Ejaz *et al.* (2021). Vietnam's legal system is just and rigorous. Since everyone's rights are upheld, everyone has equal access to education, healthcare and tourism services, and has opportunities for personal growth.

‘Political stability and the absence of violence/terrorism’ have been the foundation for economic development since the Declaration of Independence. For the purpose of maintaining stability, the government has introduced more stringent regulations related to security, immigration, official documents, etc., in all activities. However, it must be noted that Vietnam’s ‘political stability and absence of violence/terrorism’ score has decreased slightly over the years as a result of greater economic openness, regional integration and globalization. In addition, the anti-corruption campaigns have been vibrant and resulted in changes in the list of government staff annually. However, Vietnam's tourism industry has taken advantage of resource diversity and human capital and has developed impressively to date. As a piece of evidence, *although there is a decrease in 'political stability and the absence of violence/terrorism' scores over the years, tourism revenue keeps growing up.*

Economic openness leads to increased exports and flows of FDI capital. In Vietnam, the main export products are garments, electronic components, seafood and agricultural products. In line with the government’s development strategy, Vietnam has allocated the most government subsidies and FDI capital to these fields. As a result, ‘the exports-to-GDP ratio’ has increased over the years and ‘FDI capital’ also flows into industrial hubs, attracting a large labour force. However, ‘the exports-to-GDP ratio’ and ‘flows of FDI capital’ did not support Vietnam’s tourism industry. Although traditional products associated with tourism activities

(souvenirs, tailor-made garments, hand-made products) are quite diverse and unique, they do not attract FDI for product expansion and quality improvement. Therefore, their access to tourists is limited, leading to insignificant revenue from this activity. In addition, workers in the tourism industry face many challenges: physical appearance is overrated, there is a high demand for multi-skilled workers and the market is very volatile. The findings of the present study on Vietnam are contrary to that of many other studies (Menyah, Nazlioglu and Wolde-Rufael, 2014; Brueckner and Lederman, 2015; Tahir and Azid, 2015; Kong *et al.*, 2021). The governments in these countries (China, Indonesia, Japan and some African countries) took advantage of economic openness, balanced the development of all economic sectors, actively worked to attract more FDI capital into the tourism sector and launched sound policies that integrate tourism and export activities. These are strategies that the Vietnamese government should consider.

While the efficacy rating of the Vietnamese government has improved over the past three decades, it did not result in a commensurate development in the tourism sector. Vietnam's tourism industry showed considerable growth from the early 2010s onwards, but the introduction of the country's first official tourism policy in 2017, which aims to transform tourism into a key economic sector, further accelerated the industry's development. Prior to that, the tourism industry received less attention from the central government and it developed independently in different localities. Its volatility, seasonality and dependence on other sectors of the economy, make it all the more important that the central government works out and implements a coherent national strategy for the long-term development of Vietnam's tourism industry. In addition, measures that aim to improve the efficiency of public policies and the quality of public services need to take into account their impact on related tourism products and services.

5.5.3 Policy recommendations

In the literature, several recommendations have been put forward on good governance structure in the tourism sector. Connecting with the empirical results of the present chapter, some policy recommendations are discussed. Firstly, it is crucial to prioritize the establishment and maintenance of a standardized governance infrastructure that is uniform across central and local levels. Such a governance system would facilitate the transparent dissemination of

information and documentation pertaining to tourism activities, ensuring equitable access for all 63 provinces in Vietnam. Secondly, the central government should promote a culture of collaboration and accountability among provinces. This would motivate local governments to expeditiously review materials disseminated by the central government and pose inquiries, and hence ensure that they promptly receive support. Thirdly, capitalizing on economic openness and integration is essential, as these open up opportunities for the government to engage in extensive consultations with preeminent experts in the field. This engagement can facilitate the formulation of more efficacious policies, strategies and promotional programs within the tourism industry.

In 2017, the Vietnamese government identified tourism as a key economic sector due to its great potential. To support the industry's development, policies have been introduced to improve tourism management, tourism infrastructure and related public services. In order to fully exploit the potential of both domestic and international markets, the government needs to use funds more effectively, allocate more funds for innovation and ensure that the quality of tourism products and services meets international standards. In addition, the government should set up expert panels that are trusted with working out e.g., do research, learn from others (larger countries with a successful tourism sector in the region) and plan solutions to promote Vietnam's strengths. The government also should make the most of digital technology, assess short-term and long-term market needs, and work out solutions to promote Vietnam's strengths. This would enable the development of effective tourism promotion programs.

The government needs to develop human resources as this industry demands a high level of expertise, proactiveness and engagement. In addition, government employees also need to be provided with adequate means to implement policies and programs effectively. Furthermore, it is necessary to promote the rule of law within the tourism industry, while ensuring a certain degree of flexibility to facilitate international tourism operations. As suggested below (**Figure 32**), the central government should also improve the compensation for the industry's workforce, taking into consideration reducing tensions and increasing dedication. As discussed in chapters 3 and 4, workers in the tourism sector are asked for a high-pressure capability on working longer hours and be in good physical condition, especially in high season. A favourable compensation is a vital policy for recruitment as well

as maintaining long-term dedication (Kostakis and Theodoropoulou, 2017; Kozic, 2019). Furthermore, *local governments should also build leadership capacity, proactively develop policies appropriate to actual conditions and make use of local resources in order to improve the quality of tourism products and services, and hence increase their competitiveness both domestically and internationally.*

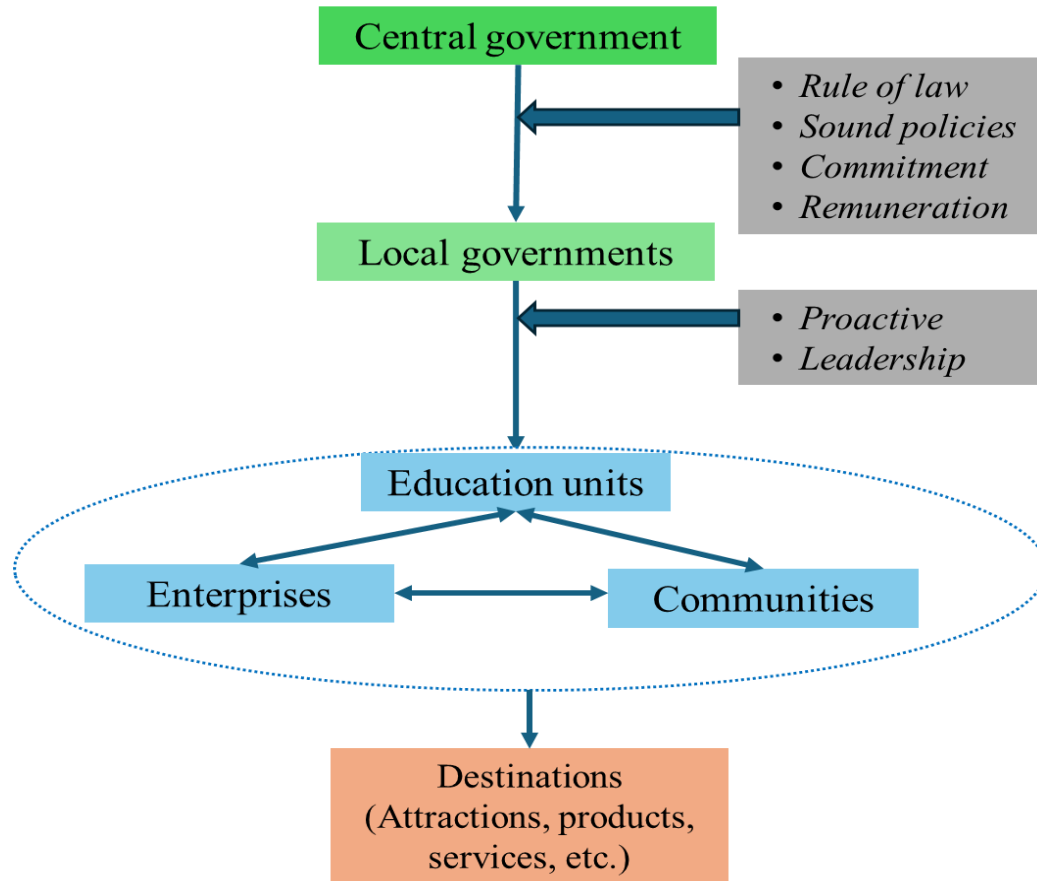


Figure 32: Tourism governance
Source: Own work

Tourism development policies need to be discussed and agreed upon with stakeholders. These policies should be developed based on the resources and potential of each destination. *Vietnam is rich in tourism resources as all 63 provinces have tourism potential. To achieve breakthrough growth, provinces need to formulate their development strategies both by incorporating the overall goals of the central government and by making the most of local resources, identifying their market segment and contributing to a wider range of tourism products (at the national level).*

Vietnam has attracted many angel investors since its economic opening. However, it is necessary to have sector-specific investment strategies with appropriate regulations in place for the tourism industry to generate faster growth in the sector. When allocating investment capital, to maximize added value, spillover effects to other industries also have to be taken into consideration.

In fact, on-site exports of the Vietnamese tourism industry have not created high revenue due to challenges, such as, quality and attractiveness of products and differences in exchange rates. Furthermore, the pricing of those domestic products and services which make them less attractive to Vietnamese than the services offered by international destinations within the region (Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia) i.e., Vietnamese rather spend their money abroad than at home. Therefore, the government needs to have solutions in place to formulate a reasonable pricing policy to boost a domestic market of 100 million people. In addition, it should promote the development of tourism products that meet global standards to attract more international tourists. A higher level of private sector involvement would help diversify tourism products and services, not least because they more readily adopt scientific and technological innovations, and hence are faster to respond to market challenges. The huge potential and contributions of the private sector to tourism development have been recognized in Cuba and China (Hingtgen *et al.*, 2015; Yan and Chen, 2018).

So far, Vietnam ranks 5th among the 35 Asian countries in terms of economic openness. Vietnam's integration into global supply chains and government-led economic liberalization initiatives are helping it to grow into a significant industrial hub in East and Southeast Asia. However, Vietnam's economy is becoming increasingly vulnerable to economic crises and downturns such as the global financial crisis of 2007-2008 and trade conflicts between big economies. *Tourism is particularly sensitive to such shocks and hence, it is considered a high-risk industry.* Therefore, activities related to risk response should always be studied each year to have the best reaction to scenarios. In other words, the risk management systems used by businesses need to be updated annually to protect the achievements of the industry due to it has been confirmed as a lucrative industry with sensitivity and high-risk. In addition, policymakers should also allocate resources to building economic resilience and to developing crisis plans to minimize damage and speed up recovery in case economic shocks hit Vietnam. Proven through research by Kaushal and Srivastava

(2021) and Burbano *et al.* (2022), the readiness of risk management systems helped India and the Galapagos Islands overcome crises with minimal losses.

International visitors coming to Vietnam are mostly from Asian countries, the reasons being geographical distance, access to information and simple procedures (Vietnam is visa-free for the citizens of some Asian countries). The European and American markets still have big potential for Vietnam. To create tourism products that are attractive to this high-end market, Vietnam initially should shortlist products and services that not only meet international standards but are also unique and worthwhile. Additionally, the government should invest more in tourism marketing and promote Vietnam as an attractive, visitor-friendly and safe destination. Not less importantly, the Vietnamese government should strengthen educational and cultural cooperation with major countries in Europe to create new opportunities and to attract more tourists. This would also promote trade relations and attract major investors in the tourism sector which would facilitate knowledge transfer and would help integrate tourism development into the process of overall economic development.

To conclude, government policies and governance capacity at all levels of government are major determinants of the performance of Vietnam's tourism industry. While the Vietnamese government has been improving its operations, in general, more efficient, this has not resulted in increased growth in the tourism industry. Therefore, in addition to its overall economic growth strategy, the government should introduce more sector-specific policies and regulations, review relevant administrative procedures and make more funds available to boost the tourism industry. Travel demand is currently on the rise globally, with quickly changing trends and a higher demand for quality products and services. Policies, strategies and promotional campaigns should also be reviewed on a regular basis in line with these developments. *In addition, to further increase the effectiveness of tourism development programs, each province should formulate its own 'lower-level' (local level) tourism policies capitalizing on local resources and promoting tourism products unique to the given locality. In addition, political stability and public safety are important factors contributing to the success of the destinations.* However, regulations and administrative procedures should be further simplified and made more transparent to make Vietnam more attractive to investors and tourists alike. *It is necessary to develop infrastructure connecting provinces, increase cooperation between provinces and build supply chains across provinces to ensure reliable*

sources of input, product quality and diversity, and hence increase competitiveness. Asia is particularly rich in natural and cultural resources. In order to increase their competitiveness in the international market, each destination should develop tourism products with unique selling proposition (USP), create a distinctive brand identity and launch international marketing campaigns. In this respect, other Southeast Asian nations have an edge over Vietnam. This, in part, explains, why, historically, foreign visitors stayed longer and spent more money in e.g., Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore. Lastly, the government should allocate more funds to R&D&I activities as well as attract young people with high degrees to benefit from new scientific achievements in tourism development and then improve the efficiency of the industry in the future.

5.6 Conclusions

In an increasingly interconnected world, individual governments are required to have procedures in place to effectively deal with any potential threat arising in any part of the world irrespective of whether these are political, economic, social, or cultural in nature. This puts pressure on governments to continuously improve their governance apparatus. Extensive, in-depth research on institutions and governance can thus provide valuable input for policymakers.

This study looked at time series spanning 34 years (1990-2023), used an Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) regression model and variables highly relevant to good governance to scrutinize the government's efficacy in steering and fostering the tourism industry in Vietnam. *The main findings provide some insights into the government's role in promoting the development of Vietnam's tourism industry. In particular, the higher values of HDI and the 'rule of law' indicator have a positive impact on tourism revenue. Thus, the main goals of the Vietnamese government, that is, to build strong institutions and promote human development in all aspects respects, has successfully contributed to the development of this sector. However, the higher of 'export-to-GDP ratio', 'FDI capital flows', 'political stability and the absence of violence/terrorism', and 'government effectiveness' did not support Vietnam's tourism industry.* Therefore, some policy recommendations were discussed, which focus on improving tourism governance.

The study, however, has some limitations that call for further research using different sets of variables and econometric models. Research on synergies between tourism and other economic sectors of Vietnam such as industry and agriculture further our understanding of the tourism economy. In addition, models that can forecast future shocks and consequent changes in tourism revenue with relatively high certainty should be constructed to help both the government and stakeholders minimize damage to Vietnam's tourism. Furthermore, the time series in this study is 34 years. Higher resolution time series, that is, monthly or quarterly data, could also yield new insights. However, Vietnam's incomplete digital data system poses some challenges in that respect.

Conclusions

The basis of this dissertation

Since the 1990s, Vietnam's tourism industry has undergone considerable transformation, in part, as a result of the introduction of breakthrough policies. Over the course of three decades, the revenue of the tourism industry increased gradually at the beginning, and then, between 2010 and 2019 was considered a boom period, which shows the huge potential of tourism resources and the efficiency of tourism operations. This galvanized government efforts to promote further growth in the sector. The introduction of Tourism Policy 2017 meant a major milestone in tourism development. Since then, the government has given priority to the tourism industry over other sectors when allocating investments. The achievements of the tourism industry both pre- and post-COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate the resilience and great economic potential of Vietnam's tourism which make it worthy of government support.

This dissertation aims to fill the gaps in research on Vietnam identifying during the literature review. Studies related to macro-environmental factors, especially the governance capability (institutions and governance) affecting tourism development are not studied widely. Although the government identified tourism as a key economic sector in 2017 and launched its tourism policy that same year, there has not been any research analyzing, measuring and discussing the effectiveness of this policy. Therefore, the present study analyses the role of government in the development of the tourism industry. To this end, two main investigations were conducted: (1) assessing government efforts in practicing good governance (i.e. improving public administration, government competitiveness and public policies; increasing economic openness and maintaining political stability) during the 34 years (1990-2023) in order to boost tourism revenue and (2) assessing of the Tourism Policy 2017's effectiveness (the first official policy for promoting the tourism industry as a key economic sector apart from agriculture and industry) based on the achievement of the past six years.

Research questions and main findings

The ultimate objective of this research was to investigate whether the efforts of the Vietnamese government to boost tourism revenue are paying off. The preliminary findings are discussed in chapters number 2, 3 and 4, it confirms the success of Tourism Policy 2017 and of government efforts targeted at building a favourable macroeconomic environment, which, in turn, creates

momentum in the tourism industry. Chapter 5 discusses government efforts to adopt good governance practices and their effect on tourism revenues, which can be concluded that the central government has truly assumed the role of ‘central management’ within the tourism industry. It has the means to exploit the industry’s full potential, and thus transform it into a key economic sector. **Table 20** below presents the research outcomes and challenges identified in each research question.

Table 20: Findings and challenges

Research question 1: (a) <i>How can Vietnam develop its tourism potential by building on the experience of other countries and (b) What are the most pressing issues that still need to be addressed by the research community?</i>	
Outcomes	Issues that need to be addressed
<p>(1) Compiling a list of studies from countries across the world related to “government intervention to support the development of the tourism industry”.</p> <p>(2) A schematic diagram of the government intervention in the tourism industry and factors that influence tourism revenue as shown in Figure 10 in Chapter 2.</p> <p>(3) Drawing up a list of research gaps relating to Vietnam’s tourism industry.</p>	<p><i>Vietnam so far lacks research focusing on the role of government, in particular, tourism policy analysis and governance capability assessment.</i></p>

Research question 2: *How has the government successfully promoted the tourism industry to become a key economic sector as stated in Tourism Policy 2017?*

Outcomes	Issues that need to be addressed
<p>(1) Providing evidence for the effectiveness/success of Tourism Policy 2017</p> <p>(2) Assessing the geographic reach of Tourism Policy 2017.</p> <p>(3) Assessing how effectively Tourism Policy 2017 and related content is communicated to stakeholders.</p> <p>(4) Assessing the effectiveness/ success of Tourism Policy 2017: <i>Tourism Policy 2017 has achieved the following results:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>facilitating investments in provinces, especially those lagging behind,</i> - <i>streamlining administrative procedures for activities related to tourism development,</i> - <i>uniting all parties involved in tourism,</i> - <i>involving society as a whole in tourism activities,</i> - <i>improving the quality of tourism products and services,</i> - <i>leveling up the destination image to the international market.</i> <p>(5) Surveying stakeholders to provide input for a more effective tourism policy</p>	<p><i>Issues that call for more attention from the government:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>A lack of solutions to support provinces in formulating their own development strategies to meet the overall goals of Tourism Policy 2017.</i> - <i>A lack of solutions to support provinces that are lagging behind in infrastructure development, developing products and services, and improving the standard of public services.</i> - <i>A lack of solutions to support provinces in formulating development strategies, long-term and short-term plans, and identifying specific types of tourism that can increase their competitive advantage.</i> - <i>A lack of solutions to support provinces in developing products and services that meet international standards.</i> - <i>A lack of solutions to design policies for employees in order to develop the labour force and increase employee dedication.</i>

Research question 3: *How was the spatial spillover in tourism revenue of the 63 provinces both pre- and post-Covid-19 pandemic?*

Outcomes	Issues that need to be addressed
<p>(1) Identifying the magnitude of positive spillover effects of tourism revenue between provinces in 2019 and in 2022.</p> <p>(2) Assessing the effectiveness of government policies related to improving quality of life, for example, developing infrastructure, improving health-care systems and enhancing public safety (which serve residents and tourists alike), have on tourism revenue.</p> <p>(3) Assessing the effectiveness of government policies aimed at improving government competitiveness, for example, formulating ‘business support policies’, promoting the level of ‘proactive and creative provincial leadership in solving problems for enterprises’, creating ‘a transparent business environment and providing equitable business information’ on tourism revenue.</p> <p>(4) Assessing the impact of a larger and better-trained workforce, a dynamic economic environment and higher income levels on tourism revenue.</p> <p>(5) Assessing the contribution of agriculture resources to tourism revenue.</p>	<p><i>The government should pay attention to the following findings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Finding solutions to design training programs matching the needs of the tourism industry.</i> - <i>Finding solutions to raise the standard of healthcare services at the provincial level and promote proactive and creative provincial leadership in order to facilitate private-sector development.</i> - <i>Finding solutions to promote cultural tourism potential in Northern Vietnam to fully exploit the region’s potential.</i> - <i>Solutions to broaden the geographic reach of tourism-development policies.</i>

Research question 4: *To what extent have the Vietnamese government’s efforts to practice good governance affected tourism revenue over the past three decades?*

Outcomes	Issues that need to be addressed
<p>(1) Assessing the effectiveness of government efforts to practice good governance (to improve government competitiveness, to raise economic openness and to maintain political stability) over the past 34 years (1990-2023) and its impact on tourism revenue: <i>There are variations in the impact of good governance across the tourism industry.</i></p>	<p><i>Issues that call for more research and discussion:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>A lack of solutions to increase on-site-exports of the tourism industry and FDI flows in the tourism industry.</i> - <i>A lack of solutions to improve government effectiveness with respect to the tourism sector</i> - <i>A lack of solutions to improve tourism governance at all levels of government (the central government and in all 63 provinces)</i>

Hypotheses and their outcomes

The detailed outcomes of the hypotheses are presented in **Table 21** below:

Hypotheses 1	Accepted	Partly accepted	Rejected
Tourism Policy 2017 produced positive spillover effects on the tourism revenue of the 63 provinces in 2019 and reproduced similar results in post-pandemic 2022.	X		
<p><i>Conclusion: At the 99% confidence level, the Spatial-Lambda value is 0.481 by 2019 and 0.57 by 2022, indicating there is positive spatial dependence between the 63 provinces in terms of tourism revenue in both studied years. In other words, Tourism Policy 2017 succeeded in connecting provinces in order to have tourism development in tandem in 2019 and in 2022.</i></p>			

Hypotheses 2	Accepted	Partly accepted	Rejected
A higher exports-to-GDP ratio, the share of FDI in total annual investments in the economy, Human Development Index, Government Effectiveness Index, score of ‘Political stability and absence of violence/terrorism’ indicator and score of ‘Rule of Law’ indicator had a positive influence on Vietnam’s tourism revenue for the period 1990 to 2023.		X	
<p><i>Conclusion: This hypothesis is partly accepted. The results of the component factors in this complex hypothesis are as follows:</i></p> <p><i>Based on the probability of the factors “Human Development Index’ and ‘rule of law’ are in the 99% confidence interval, the hypothesis related to these two variables is accepted:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>A higher ‘Human Development Index’ and ‘rule of law’ score had a positive influence on Vietnam’s tourism revenue for the period 1990 to 2023.</i> <p><i>In contrast, based on the probability of the factors ‘export-to-GDP ratio’, ‘the share of FDI in total annual investment in the economy’, ‘political stability and absence of violence/terrorism’ and ‘Government Effectiveness Index’ are in the 99% confidence interval but on the negative side with the expected hypothesis, the author comes to the state:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>A higher ‘Export-to-GDP ratio’, ‘the share of FDI in total annual investment in the economy’, ‘Political stability and absence of violence/terrorism’ and ‘Government Effectiveness Index’ had a negative influence on Vietnam’s tourism revenue for the period 1990 to 2023.</i> 			

The scientific importance of applied econometric models

This dissertation starts with a systematic literature review - an academic method of identifying, selecting and critically appraising research in order to provide adequate answers to specific and well-formulated questions. This approach is highly focused on a specific and explicit topic area, with rigorous adherence to established research parameters. A systematic literature review process will frequently be preceded by a detailed plan, which sets out the approach and methods to be employed in the review prior to its commencement. An SLR always fulfills key criteria: transparency, clarity, integration, focus, equality, accessibility and coverage. Consequently, this approach yields reliability and insightful findings. It is therefore regarded as an evidence-based approach. Systematic literature review is a common tool and a first step in research conduction in many scientific disciplines, as well as in policy-making and research.

The principal objective of this dissertation is to evaluate the success of government policies in stimulating growth in tourism revenue. The implementation of an efficacious policy requires the establishment of a collaborative process between all relevant stakeholders. To measure this, a qualitative study utilising a semi-structured questionnaire was initially conducted, with the objective of providing a comprehensive overview of stakeholders' perspectives and achievements/challenges seven years after the Tourism policy 2017 (the first official policy for the development of the tourism industry) was issued. This qualitative study, in conjunction with subsequent quantitative studies, serves to reinforce the credibility of the results and recommendations.

Spatial modelling is an analytical process carried out using a geographic information system (GIS) to describe the relationships between a given set of spatial features. The aim of spatial modelling is to study and simulate spatial objects or phenomena occurring in a geographical area/region and to provide a basis for planning and solving pressing problems. The application of the spatial model in this dissertation reveals a notable increase in the magnitude of positive spillover effects of tourism revenue between provinces from 2019 to 2022. This suggests that the policy of regional integration had a beneficial effect, particularly during the post-pandemic recovery period. This model, in alignment with numerous other studies conducted in Vietnam, serves as a powerful tool for demonstrating that regional connectivity is a pivotal factor in the advancement of the tourism industry in the 63 provinces.

Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) estimation is an econometric model employed for the analysis of long- and short-run relationships between different time series variables. This model represents a combination of Vector Autoregression (VAR) and Ordinary Least-Squares (OLS) models, offering high flexibility and ease of use for the analysis of time series. In this regression, both the dependent and independent variables are related not only contemporaneously, but also across historical (lagged) values. The ARDL model offers a number of notable advantages, including: (i) suitability for even small sample sizes; (ii) estimation with a single equation; (iii) implementation of variables with different lags, regardless of the order of difference (I(0), I(1), or both); (iv) short-term calculation with the ECM model using linear transformation without loss of degrees of freedom. Therefore, this dissertation takes advantage of ARDL model to scrutinize the government's effectiveness in steering and fostering the tourism industry in Vietnam over a time series of 34 years (1990-2023). The main findings provide some insights into the role of the government in promoting the development of Vietnam's tourism industry. The short- and long-term interactions between good governance practicing efforts and the performance of the tourism industry are identified, providing a basis for discussion and future adjustments.

With the aim to provide the most relevant evidence regarding the efforts of the Vietnamese government in boosting the tourism industry over the past three decades, the author combines multiple data sets and diverse approaches. The findings therefore highlight the initial achievements as well as challenges that the government needs to address to facilitate more favourable developments in the future.

Policy implications forward to increasing tourism revenues

The following policy implications are summarized from the detailed analysis in each chapter. All four research questions focus on the role and performance of government in formulating development policies and building an effective governance environment.

First and foremost, the government needs to perfect tourism development policies to create a favourable institutional environment for tourism development and then launch preferential policies on land, tax and credit to mobilize investment capital in areas with potential for tourism activities. The government should support the development of strategies and long-term and short-term plans that are specific to individual provinces. In addition, government bodies should re-evaluate how easy it is for stakeholders to access information on

tourism development policies and should assess the viability and effectiveness of these policies for the tourism industry. Moreover, government capacity should be strengthened at the provincial level to ensure effective policy implementation across provinces. Furthermore, since the tourism industry is characterized by seasonality and is susceptible to external shocks, related policies should be regularly revised, inviting input from all stakeholders.

Scientific planning is crucial for attracting investment and increasing the efficiency of investment capital. Provinces in Vietnam should assess their tourism potential and prioritise investments in the sector based on the findings. Furthermore, the central government should also guide regions in formulating their resource exploitation strategies to help avoid duplication of tourism products and services at the national level. For example, the north should focus on cultural and historical values, the central region should focus on world heritages and traditional craft villages and the south should focus on typical agricultural products of Vietnam. However, ultimately, the provinces should be striving for a harmonious combination of economic sectors for general development and sustainability. Furthermore, this can support to form product chain and then a value chain. Most importantly, the central government should play a key role in providing policy advice to provincial governments and regulating investment allocation.

In order to generate equal development opportunities for all localities, and thus significantly enhance the competitiveness of provinces that are still lagging behind, it is necessary to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each province and formulate appropriate policies. In addition, the central government should encourage closer cooperation between neighbouring provinces. Each region should identify the province where investments could generate the highest return and invest heavily in that province in the hope that this would also fuel economic growth and tourism development in neighbouring provinces.

The central government should annually assess the administrative apparatus from the national to local level to ensure that officers are qualified, engaged and have a passion for working in the tourism sector. Simultaneously, to address one of the challenges of the tourism industry, which is the lack of a skilled workforce, the government should hold regular consultations with educational institutions to update human resource training programs, bearing in mind the need for a highly specialized workforce, that is able to adapt to a dynamic working environment. These training programs should come out of a collaboration between

the government, universities and businesses. More importantly, the government should allocate more funds to scientific research in the tourism industry. Targeting to develop the tourism industry to become an effective and sustainable economic sector, scientific research activities must play an important role in formulating and implementing strategies, long-term and short-term plans, and training programs.

The government should perfect the mechanisms for supporting provinces in improving their basic infrastructure, public transportation, information systems and the quality of tourism services. This improves connectivity and enhances cooperation between localities. To achieve this, the government should quickly complete a more appropriate expenditure plan for the tourism industry. Supporting underdeveloped provinces in developing more attractive tourism products necessitates heavy investment from the government. Thus, local governments should also propose sound expenditure plans (including the allocation of their own resources and asking for funding from the central government) in order to meet international standards and attract more tourists in the future.

It is essential to adopt new public management practices in order to facilitate cooperation between the public and private sectors, entrepreneurs and local communities to make sustainable development. The government plays a central role in creating a favourable business environment and stimulating innovation. The regression model in chapter 4 demonstrated the positive impact of enterprises, therefore it is important to increase their efficiency in the future, especially by supporting the development of tourism businesses with well-known and enduring brands. The government also needs to pay more attention to small and medium-sized businesses, including family businesses. It should provide financial support packages, facilitate technology/knowledge transfer, speed up digital transformation and connect them to the business ecosystem.

In terms of the international market, the government needs to make efforts to increase openness and flexibility in welcoming international visitors. **Figure 33** illustrates that the majority of incoming visitors to Vietnam over the past five years have originated from Asia, with Europe, America, Oceania, and Africa representing the next largest groups of visitors, respectively.

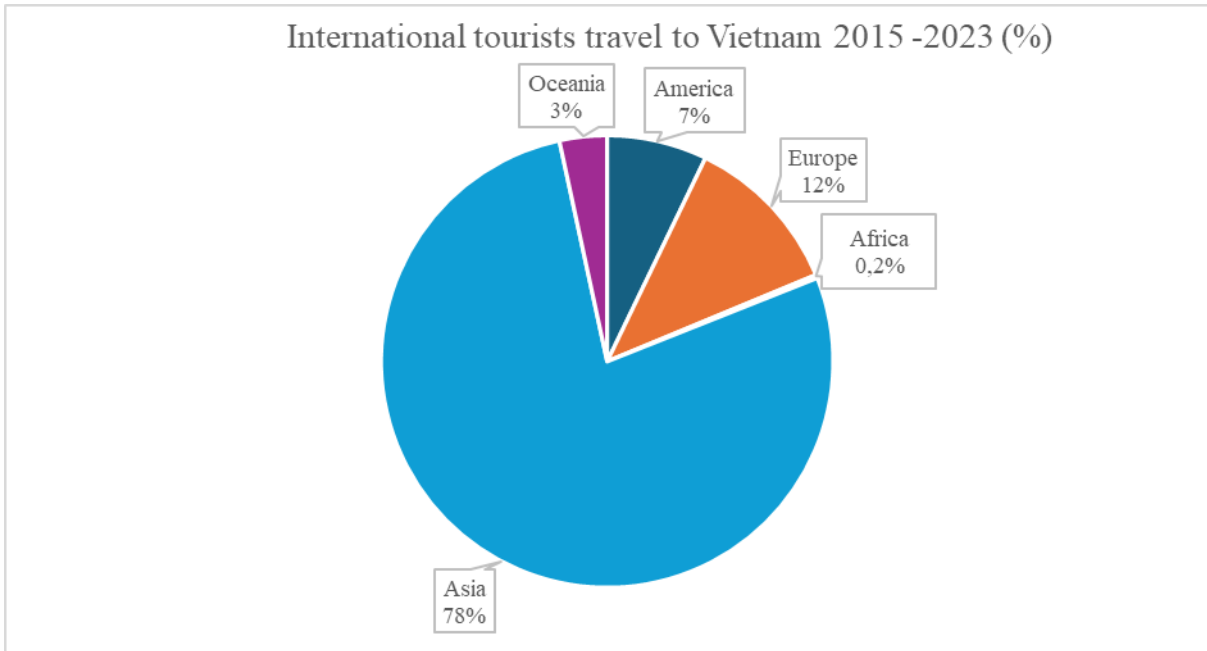


Figure 33: Structure of international visitors to Vietnam by continent (2015 – 2023)

Source: Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism 2023

Therefore, the government should have more and close connections with governments of Europe and America to streamline visa procedures and to increase the number of direct flights from Vietnam to these regions with the aim of stimulating tourism demand. Furthermore, the government should consider allocating a greater proportion of investment towards the development of digital tools, which would facilitate tourists' access to tours and promotional materials. With regard to the development and promotion of tourism products, the tourism industry should focus its marketing efforts on a number of key areas, which are also the competitive advantages of each region. These include cultural tourism and natural tourism in the northern region; sea and island tourism, MICE tourism in the central region; ecotourism and urban tourism in the southern region. Furthermore, an emphasis will be placed on the development of novel tourism products in a select number of provinces that highly competitive tourism resources, including the integration of medical treatment and healthcare at Dalat, Hue, agricultural and rural tourism in Thai Nguyen, Daklak, and Ben Tre, as well as products tailored to the diverse needs of tourists, such as educational tourism in the two major urban centres of Vietnam, namely Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi capital.

It is necessary to revise administrative procedures to make entry, exit and travel less stressful for international tourists. There is also an urgent need for sound regulations that can facilitate the opening of new routes by domestic and international airlines in order to connect Vietnam with key and potential tourism markets. Furthermore, to create tourism products that are attractive to this high-end market, Vietnam should initially shortlist products and services that not only meet international standards but are also unique and worthwhile. Additionally, the government should invest more in tourism marketing and promote Vietnam as an attractive, visitor-friendly and safe destination. Not less importantly, the Vietnamese government should strengthen educational and cultural cooperation with major countries in Europe to create new opportunities and to attract more tourists. This would also promote trade relations and attract major investors in the tourism sector which would facilitate knowledge transfer and would help integrate tourism development into the process of overall economic development. However, having a domestic market of 100 million residents with increasing disposable income, the Vietnamese government should consider this as the main target market to ensure sustainable development. Obviously, not only Vietnam, but all nations turn to the domestic market to revive their tourism industry in the new era of post-Covid-pandemic and other external shocks. On trend, senior tourism and medical tourism are described as a potential market segment, especially for domestic tours. Provinces that best serve this segment can be counted in are Quang Ninh, Nha Trang, Hue and Kien Giang.

Good risk management is also an effective instrument in safeguarding the achievement of tourism development. Risk response solutions should be put in place following consultations with all parties involved in tourism activities. Related procedures should be annually revised to ensure a fast and effective response under all circumstances. In addition, these procedures should regularly be benchmarked against the risk management systems of other countries. Regularly consulting with and learning from other countries will help Vietnam develop solutions and strategies more effectively. Tourism is a lucrative, but high-risk industry which is susceptible to external shocks. Therefore, policymakers should also always have plans in place to minimize damage and speed up recovery following crises.

Finally, policies that promote development should also incorporate the concept of sustainability. According to the UNWTO (2023), "sustainable tourism development is aimed at meeting visitors' needs while making optimal use of environmental resources, respecting the

socio-cultural authenticity of host communities and ensuring viable, long-term operations"¹⁵. Vietnam's biodiversity is the 16th richest in the world. Preserving natural biodiversity and maintaining local agricultural ecosystems are crucial for sustainable development and can greatly benefit the tourism sector. Rural tourism and eco-tourism are typical products, that could make Vietnam one of the most attractive destinations in Asia. Therefore, agricultural activities associated with tourism should be given priority in funding schemes and in training programs for experts in research and development. In the future, local governments will need to integrate the concept of a "green economy" into their development strategies. Government officials should promote green practices and support businesses in adopting green criteria, especially in the case of products and services that need to meet international standards.

Novelty of this dissertation

This dissertation addresses the issue of assessing the role of government in the operation and management of an economic sector, which is a research gap in the tourism sector as identified in the literature review section. Each chapter, in turn, presents the most recent findings on the status of Vietnam's tourism industry. The new findings serve as references and then suggestions for future research as an overall.

Chapter 2 - a SLR - is an effort to provide the Vietnamese government with a list of references on the work of other governments across the world regarding various aspects of tourism development. Useful lessons from governments that developed the tourism sector successfully together with the reasons why tourism development policies were ineffective in some other countries, are discussed. Also, the factors that enable the government to be successful in developing and pursuing sound strategies for sustainable tourism development are analysed. They are all considered to be the first discussions on this subject. Furthermore, this SLR visualizes the micro and macro environments of the tourism industry in Figure 10, thus indicating the research gaps that the Vietnamese research community needs to consider.

Research on Vietnam's tourism activities is becoming increasingly exciting due to the industry's emergence and the task of seeking solutions for better future performance and higher revenue. Micro studies related to product quality, customer behaviour and strategic analysis of enterprises have become popular. However, macro studies related to government

¹⁵ <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development>

policy analysis are not yet available. In addition, literature review has also insisted that the success or failure of the tourism industry heavily relies on the governance capacity of the government and on sound government intervention (judicious and on-time policies) as well as measuring the effectiveness of tourism development policy is essential because it provides important information insights for making future adjustments. Meanwhile, the effectiveness of Tourism Policy 2017 in Vietnam has not been assessed, not even six years after its launch. *Chapter 3* comes to fill this task by surveying and collecting feedback from all stakeholders six years after the launch of Tourism Policy 2017 in Vietnam. Feedback from respondents relates to the benefits of the tourism policy and stakeholders' actions in their task to maximize their contribution. This research is an initial assessment of the necessity and effectiveness of Tourism Policy 2017, thus it is a valuable complement to formulate policy recommendations for the future.

Chapter 4 employs spatial models and utilises provincial data from 2019 and 2022 to investigate the question of whether the Vietnamese government has been successful in increasing tourism revenue in neighbouring provinces by improving regional connectivity. In addition, this chapter takes PCI data and PAPI data to assess whether government policies related to improving quality of life, government competitiveness, macro-environment and integration of 'agricultural resources' have a positive impact on tourism revenues. The novelty of this chapter is not only in the econometric model applied but also in the databases collected. The PCI and PAPI datasets provide many indicators of government efforts to enhance the quality of public administration and the governance environment. However, their utilisation in research remains relatively limited, particularly within the tourism sector. In terms of findings, preliminarily, the Vietnamese government has been successful in increasing tourism revenue in neighbouring provinces by improving regional connectivity. Furthermore, government policies related to improving human resources, the economic environment, administrative procedures and the quality of life also demonstrated a positive effect on tourism revenue. In order to have an accurate and adequate assessment of the effectiveness of this policy, it is essential to combine observations with time series. Consequently, these findings serve as a starting point for further research in this field. Moreover, the application of spatial regression models in Vietnam tourism research has been relatively limited, despite their widespread apply in economic section. In addition to providing correlation relationships, spatial regression

enables the description of observations in the form of maps, thereby demonstrating the capacity of localities to cooperate and link to gain economic development as a whole. This study hopes to provide supplementary data for previous studies on the spatial spread of tourism revenue in 63 provinces, thereby establishing a basis for comparison and improvement in future research.

Chapter 5 describes the relationship between government intervention and changes in the tourism industry in the short and long term through an Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) regression model, thereby becoming a valuable reference for policymakers to improve future development policies. The preliminary stages of this research identified research gaps in the domain of public sector institutional quality. In addition, it revealed a dearth of studies applying time series methodologies to analyse governance practices in Vietnam. Thus, while the primary aim of the present study is to investigate the relationship between government intervention and changes in Vietnam's tourism industry for 34 years (1990-2023) and hence, provide input for policymakers, it also introduces novel analytical methods that, to the best of the author's knowledge, have not yet been applied in this field. The findings of this chapter provide insights on the government's role in promoting the development of Vietnam's tourism industry. Notably, the values of HDI and the 'rule of law' indicator increase annually and that has a positive impact on tourism revenue. Thus, one of the main goals of the Vietnamese government, that is, to build strong institutions and promote human development in all respects, has successfully contributed to the development of the tourism industry. The higher of 'export-to-GDP ratio', 'FDI capital flows', 'political stability and absence of violence/terrorism' and 'government effectiveness' indicators did not show any positive support for Vietnam's tourism industry. These findings become the basis for formulating proposals for the government to improve the advantages of FDI capital flows into the tourism sector as well as solutions to increase on-site exports of tourism products.

Limitations and future research directions

This research has some limitations. Since Vietnam's web portal is under construction, only a limited number of datasets are currently available. This puts constraints on the author's choice of variables. This is also the reason why provincial-level studies are virtually not available. Since almost all previous studies on Vietnam were conducted at the national level, detailed descriptions of localities were lacking. Effective plans and strategies depend on highly detailed

observations and assessments. In addition, data related to tourism revenue, the number of tourist attractions and the number of full-time and part-time employees in each province have not been made public. To collect such data, it is necessary to contact each province's government directly. This is a major limitation due to its time and cost requirements. These issues should also be addressed by the government in the coming years. Easy access to official data would definitely give a boost to scientific research on Vietnam. Due to the scope of this dissertation, only a limited number of econometric models were used in the analysis. In contrast, making viable policy recommendations requires an in-depth understanding of government behaviour. Therefore, the ideas put forward here should be considered preliminary. In addition, research on synergies between tourism and other economic sectors of Vietnam such as industry and agriculture further our understanding of the tourism economy. In addition, models that can forecast future shocks and consequent changes in tourism revenue with relatively high certainty should be constructed to help both the government and stakeholders minimize damage to Vietnam's tourism.

Due to the complexity and breadth of this topic, future studies with different sets of variables and econometric models are needed. As summarized in Figure 10 in Chapter 2, important topics that need to be addressed by the research community are R&D, human capital development, cooperation between stakeholders, the role of technology/knowledge transfer and innovation in the development of new products and services for the tourism sector. Furthermore, as a development based on this dissertation, factors affecting Vietnam's tourism industry from the international environment should be counted in the analysis and the comparison regarding Vietnam and other countries in Southeast Asia which promise many insight findings.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Some maps, figures and data tables of Vietnam

Southeast Asian country Vietnam occupies an area of 331,689 km². The nation is shaped like an S, with a lengthy coast running from the north to the south. Vietnam shares a lengthy border in the southwest with Laos and Cambodia, and it borders China in the north.

Vietnam is the thirteenth most populated country in the world, with an estimated 100 million people living there (as of 2023). Vietnamese is the primary language spoken, but English and French are becoming more and more popular as second languages.

Vietnam is divided into 63 provinces and there are 5 economic centres: Ha Noi, Thanh Hoa, Hai Phong, Da Nang, Ho Chi Minh City, Ba Ria Vung Tau and Can Tho.

Vietnam is split into eight regions for the convenience of management: the Northwestern, the Northeastern, Red River Delta, North Central Coast, South Central Coast, Central Highlands, Southeastern and the Southwestern.

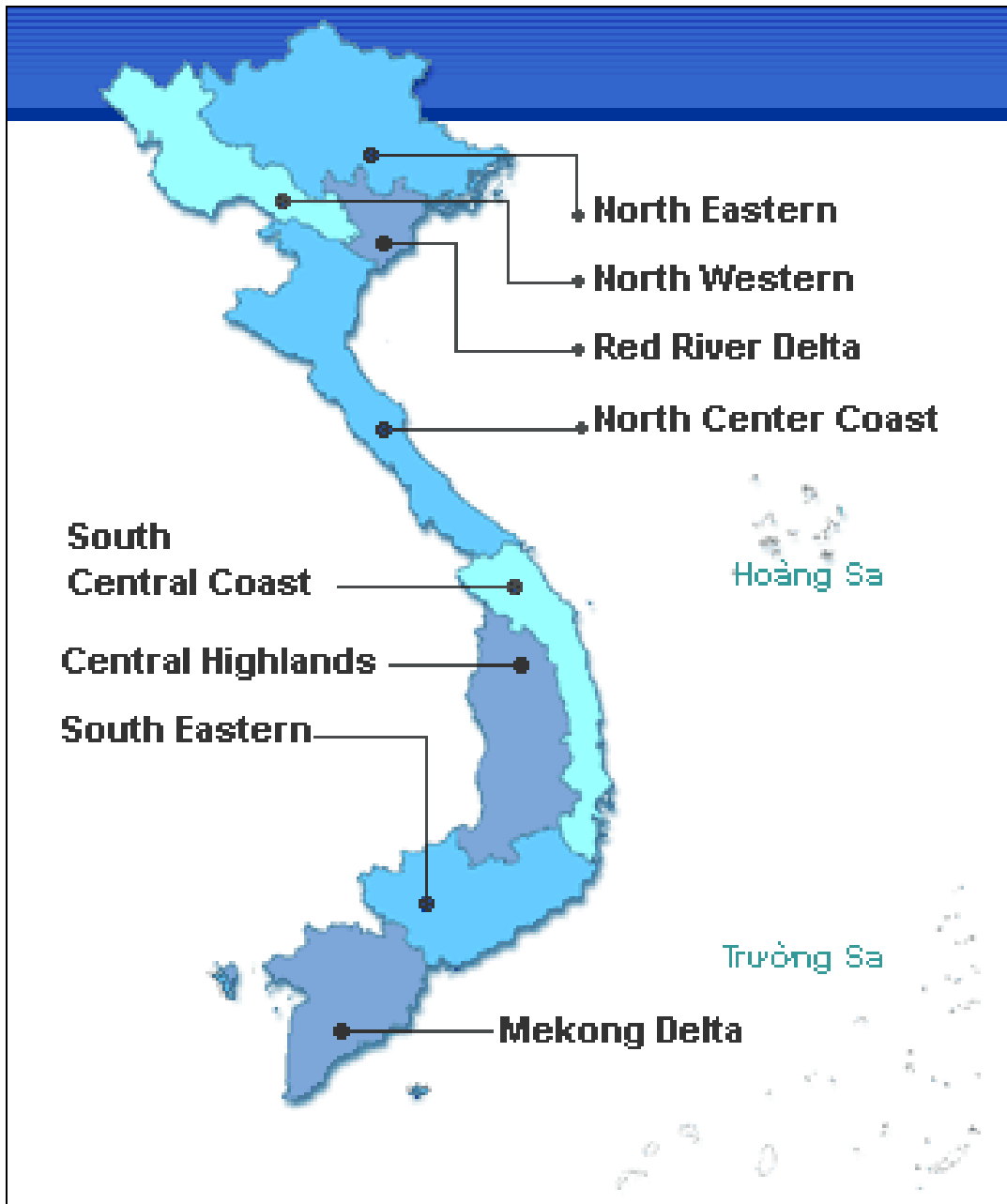


Figure: Map of Vietnam in regions

Source: <https://www.nationsonline.org/oworld/map/vietnam-administrative-map.htm>, 2023



Figure: Tourism map of Vietnam

Source: <https://www.vietnamparadisetravel.com/vietnam-travel-maps>, 2023



© Vietnamnomad

Figure : Transportation map of Vietnam

Source: <https://vietnamnomad.com/maps/vietnam-transport-map/>, 2023

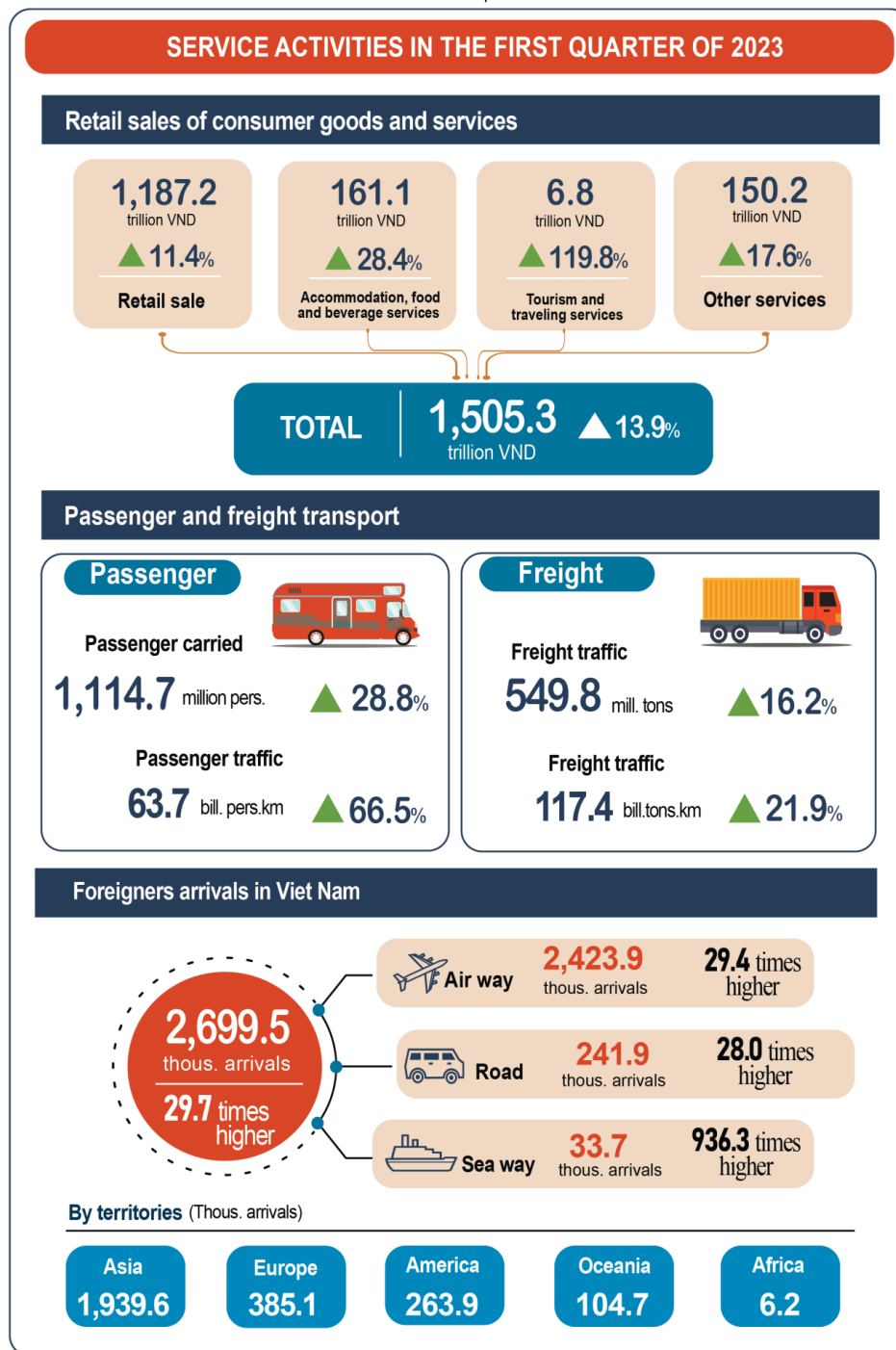


Figure: Service activities in the first quarter of 2023

Source: <https://www.gso.gov.vn/en/data-and-statistics/2023/03/infographic-social-economic-situation-in-the-first-quarter-of-2023/>

Table: The number of accommodations from 2015 to 2023

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021	2022	2023
Number of accommodations (thousands)	19	21	26	28	30	38	35	38
Number of rooms (thousands)	370	420	508	550	650	780	700	780

Source: Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2024,
<https://www.vietnamtourism.gov.vn>

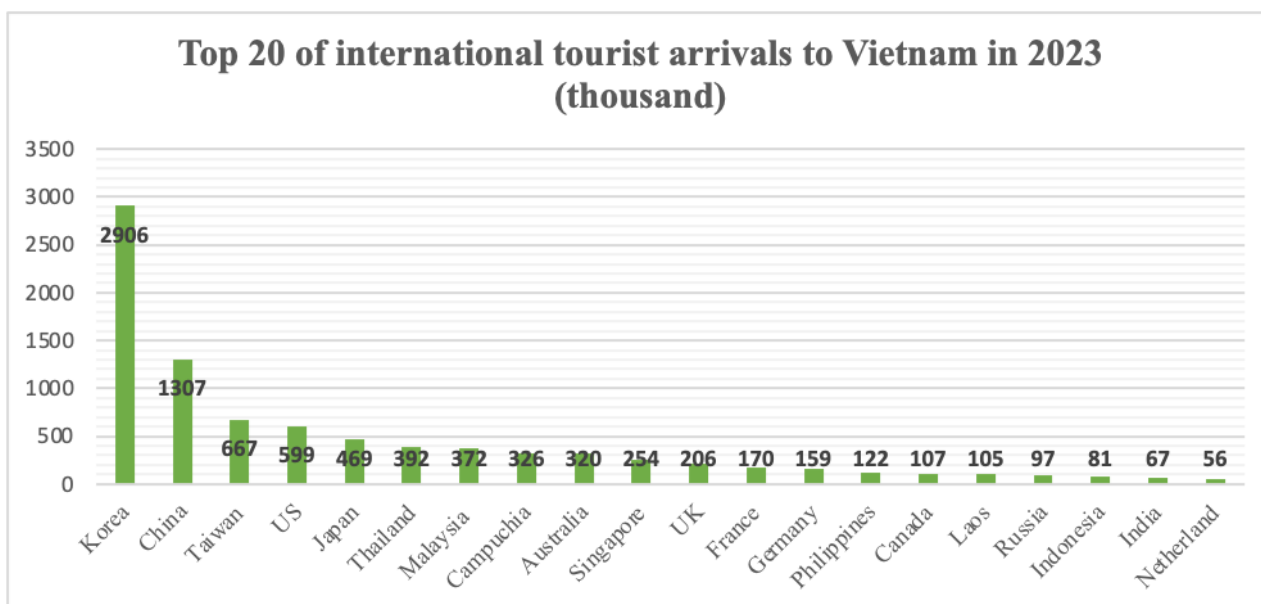


Figure: Top 20 of international tourists to Vietnam in 2023

Source: Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2024
<https://www.vietnamtourism.gov.vn>

BEST TRENDING DESTINATIONS IN THE WORLD 2024

TRAVELERS' CHOICE - BEST OF THE BEST DESTINATIONS

1		TOKYO	14		PUEBLA
2		SEOUL	15		BANDUNG
3		HALONG BAY	16		PANAMA CITY
4		PALAWAN ISLAND	17		HUARAZ
5		SAPA	18		NAIROBI
6		BOGOTA	19		LA PAZ
7		PATTAYA	20		PORT GHALIB
8		ALAJUELA	21		BRASOV
9		PHNOM PENH	22		MANTA
10		KUALA LUMPUR	23		CASABLANCA
11		JEJU ISLAND	24		SANTIAGO
12		VITI LEVU	25		TAIPEI
13		CHENNAI (MADRAS)			

Source:
Tripadvisor

seasia
stats

Figure: Best trending destinations in the world 2024

Source: Tripadvisor, 2024
<https://www.tripadvisor.com/>

BEST FOOD DESTINATIONS IN THE WORLD 2024

BY TRAVELERS' CHOICE - BEST OF THE BEST DESTINATIONS

1		HANOI	14		ISTANBUL
2		ROME	15		ATHENS
3		CRETE	16		CARTAGENA
4		CUSCO	17		CHIANG MAI
5		FLORENCE	18		CUBA
6		NEW DELHI	19		JAMAICA
7		BARCELONA	20		MENDOZA
8		NEW ORLEANS	21		CHARLESTON
9		LISBON	22		KYOTO
10		PHUKET	23		PANAMA CITY
11		PARIS	24		SAO PAULO
12		JAIPUR	25		BUENOS AIRES
13		BAKU			

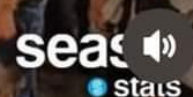


Figure: Best food destinations in the world 2024

Source: Tripadvisor, 2024

<https://www.tripadvisor.com/>

Table: List of impressive awards at the World Travel Awards in 2023

No.	Destination/ Government Agency	Awards
1	Vietnam	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Asia's Leading Destination- Asia's Leading Nature Destination
2	The Vietnam National Administration of Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Asia's Leading Tourist Board
3	Ho Chi Minh City	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Asia's Leading Business Travel Destination- Asia's Leading Festival and Event Destination
4	Ha Noi Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Asia's Leading City Break Destination- Asia's Leading City Destination
5	The Hanoi Department of Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Asia's Leading City Tourist Board
6	Hoi An	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Asia's Leading Cultural City Destination
7	Phu Quoc	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Asia's Leading Luxury Island Destination
8	Ha Giang	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Asia's Leading Emerging Tourism Destination

Source: Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2024,
<https://www.vietnamtourism.gov.vn>

Appendix 2: Tourism Policy 2017 (NQ08-TW-2017)

“POLITBURO’S resolution”

“I- SITUATIONAL REVIEW

Over the past fifteen years, the tourism industry has made remarkable progress and achieved important and very encouraging results. The growth rate of international tourists reached 10.2% each year while that of domestic tourists reached 11.8% each year. In 2016, the number of international tourists reached 10 million, which is 4.3 times more than that reported in 2001; the number of domestic tourists reached 62 million, which is increased by 5.3 times compared to 2001; direct contribution to GDP was estimated at 6.8% while both indirect and sparse contribution to GDP was estimated at 14%. Tourism infrastructure and technical facilities meeting the needs of the tourism industry is growing more and more. Tourism products and services are increasingly diverse and assorted. Service quality and professionalism are increasing step by step. Tourism business forces have grown in both quantity and quality, creating a number of reputable domestic and international brands. A number of tourist areas and sites have primarily come into existence.

The development of the tourism industry has been contributing to promoting the shift in the economic structure and on-the-spot exports; preserving and promoting the values of cultural heritage and natural resources; creating more jobs and improving people's lives; speeding up the process of international integration, communicating and advertising the Vietnamese image and people.

However, the tourism industry contains several limitations and weaknesses. The tourism industry's growth has yet to correspond to its potentials, advantages, and social expectations. Tourism products have not been captivating, distinctive and their competitiveness is not too high. Tourist service quality has not yet met requirements. Efficiency and effectiveness of state management in the tourism industry have not been great. There are a lot of issues existing in terms of tourism environment, food, and traffic safety. Tourism promotion and advertisement are afflicted with a lot of limitations in terms of resources, coordination, professionalism, and low effectiveness. Workforce in the tourism industry is insufficient and unqualified. Tourist companies are mainly small and medium enterprises; capital, human resources and business administration experience are still restricted. Social roles in the tourism growth have not yet been promoted.

The above-mentioned limitations and weaknesses are mainly attributed to the fact that regulatory authorities at all levels and sectoral administrations have not really considered tourism as an economy which is integrative, interdisciplinary, inter-regional, needs a lot of social contributions and high international integration, and brings about deep cultural contents; the fact that there is a shortage in appropriate national policies for tourism development in line with the characteristics of an economic industry operating according to market rules. Tourism development institutions and policies have not yet met growth needs and are still heavily affected by the state subsidization perception. Effective interdisciplinary and inter-regional coordination remains low; investments are still scattered and social resources that need to be pooled for tourism development are just a few. Human resource training and development activities have not been paid attention in a due manner.

II - VIEWPOINTS AND OBJECTIVES

- Development of the tourism industry into a key economic sector is an important strategic orientation for the country's development and creating a driving force for the development of other industries and sectors. Despite this, tourism is not necessarily a key economic sector at every locality.

- The tourism industry must be developed into a general service sector of the economy that has the interdisciplinary and inter-regional nature, operates with central and key tasks and purposes, has its own brand and high competitiveness; has a lot of social participations and deep cultural contents; strengthens domestic and international linkages, pays attention to the linkage between the tourism industry and other branches and domains in the value chain forming tourism products.

- Developing both international and domestic tourism at the same time; creating favourable conditions for local people and international tourists to visit, discover and explore landscapes, natural and cultural heritage sites nationwide; respecting and treating tourists from all markets in an equal manner.

- Determining on the sustainable tourism development; conserving and promoting exquisite cultural relics and traditional values; protecting environment and nature; duly solving labour, employment, and social security issues; guaranteeing national defence, security, social order, and safety.

- Tourism development is the responsibility of the entire political system, regulatory authorities at all levels, sectors, and the whole society, together with the leadership and close guidance of the Party's committees at all levels; the goal of growing the tourism industry may be supported by strongly promoting the motivation role of enterprises and the community, the unified management of the State, and concentrating all available national resources for tourism development.

2- Objectives

- By 2020, the tourism industry will have basically become the key sector of the economy, created a driving force for the socio-economic development; will have professionalism and a relatively synchronous and modern technical and material infrastructure system; will create tourism high-quality, diverse, branded products which are imbued with national cultural identity and can compete with countries in the region.

The tourism industry is expected to attract 17-20 million visits of international tourists, 82 million visits of domestic tourists; contribute to over 10% of GDP, gain USD 35 billion in total revenue from tourists; reach USD 20 billion in export value through tourism activities; create 4 million jobs, including 1.6 million direct jobs.

- By 2030, the tourism industry will strive to really become a key economic sector of the economy that strongly promotes the development of other sectors and fields. Vietnam will be ranked as one of the top Southeast Asia countries with a developed tourism industry.

1- Refreshing awareness and conception of the tourism growth

Gaining a clear recognition that the tourism industry is a general service sector of the economy that is of an inter-sectoral and inter-regional, and involves a lot of social contributions and has profound cultural contents; is able to make great contributions to the economic growth, create more jobs, lead to a shift in the structure of economic sectors and serve as a driving force for development of other industries and fields, bring about efficiency in multiple aspects such as economy, culture, society, politics, foreign affairs, security and national defence.

Robustly changing perception of the tourism development and develop tourism according to the law of the market economy, ensuring consistency amongst the perspective, goals, action programs, and formulating innovative policies and systems to meet requirements for development of the tourism industry into a key economic sector.

Raising awareness of building and protecting images and environment among the public, enterprises, and communities, contributing to the sustainable growth, constantly improving the reputation, brand, and attractiveness of Vietnam's tourism.

2- Restructuring the tourism industry to ensure professionalism, modernity, and sustainable development in accordance with the rules of market economy, and international integration

Perfect the structure of the tourism industry, ensuring that the growth of the tourism industry is aligned with the overall development of the national economy.

Review and modify tourism development strategies and planning schemes with a view to pooling necessary resources to build areas serving as driving forces for the tourism development.

Develop and implement the Program on restructuring of the tourism industry with a view to giving priority to investments in tourism infrastructure development; linking input value chains of various industries; focusing on developing marine, island, cultural, spiritual, ecological and community-based tourism products that are attractive and highly competitive; controlling and improving the quality of tourism products and services in order to make them become modern and distinct; innovating methods and improving the effectiveness of promotion activities associated with products and markets; guaranteeing a safe and civilized tourism environment.

Provinces and centrally affiliated cities that have potentials and advantages to develop tourism must imperatively formulate projects on restructuring of their local tourism industries.

Continue to improve the legal system; adopt appropriate and innovative mechanisms and policies to develop tourism into a key sector of the economy that suits the requirements and nature of the general economic sector and operates according to the

market mechanism. Adopt mechanisms and policies to make best use of social resources available for investment in the tourism industry according to the guidelines on restructuring of the tourism industry.

For the time being, revise, improve and perfect policies directly related to the growth of the tourism industry:

- In the investment aspect, adopt incentive policies and preferential treatment for investments in tourism, especially in major, remote, and isolated areas having the potential for tourism development, specific tourism products, and tourism workforce training and development. Increase public – private partnership to call for social resources available for the tourism development. The State funds must prefer investments in setting up planning schemes and training workforce and carrying out promotional events.

- In the financial aspect, change the entrance fee mechanism into the service charge mechanism; adjust electricity prices applied to tourist accommodation establishments to be equal to those applied to production activities; adopt appropriate policies on the land use tax and land rents for tourism projects affected by low factors of land used for construction and land used for construction of buildings subject to height limits, and policies for land plots used for construction of dormitories and apartment buildings for tourism workers at places where human resources are limited; create favourable conditions for tourist's claim for VAT refunds.

Formulate and adopt a mechanism for effective management and use of the Tourism Development Assistance Fund. The state budget shall provide initial support for the Fund and shall be supplemented annually with revenues, including entry visa fees, entrance and sightseeing fees, contributions from businesses, tourists, and other lawful sources.

- In the aspect of entry procedures, continue to improve and promulgate policies on most facilitative and simple entry visa procedures for international tourists coming to Vietnam.

- For urgent matters that need to be dealt with immediately to create a breakthrough for the tourism development, in the absence of legal documents, or unless otherwise prescribed, pilot implementation of this Program will be allowed.

4- Investing in tourism infrastructure and technical facilities meeting the tourism industry's needs

Devote appropriate resources derived from the state budget to investment in transport infrastructure development, especially in key and motivation areas; improve traffic connectivity to tourist sites or attractions, control service quality and ensure traffic safety for tourists. Invest in rest stops along roads. Push the implementation of the “sky-opening” policy and carry out the 5th Freedom of The Air; create conditions for airlines to open new routes connecting Vietnam to source markets, increasing the frequency of existing flights; address bottlenecks and overcrowding at airports. Focus on investing in several specialized seaports and inland ports in areas having favourable conditions for development of sea and river tourism. Improve rail infrastructure and quality of rail services provided to tourists.

5- Increasing tourism promotion and promotion activities

Innovate communication and promotion methods and contents, enhance the application of modern technologies, ensure the unified and professional implementation, and improve the effectiveness in performing domestic and foreign tourism promotion activities. Build and position the national tourism brand associated with the key and unique image imbued with the national cultural identity.

Combine the use of State resources and mobilize the participation of the whole society in tourism promotion activities.

Enhance the roles and responsibilities of Vietnamese missions and chambers of commerce located abroad in carrying out tourism promotion activities. Encourage tourism businesses to set up their overseas representative offices. Promote the roles of overseas Vietnamese communities in tourism promotion activities.

Promote the roles of media agencies, create breakthroughs in domestic market promotion activities in combination with raising awareness about the roles and positions of the tourism industry.

6- Creating favourable conditions for corporate and social involvement in the tourism development

Promote administrative reform, create a healthy, transparent, and equal competitive environment providing favourable conditions for tourism businesses. Encourage businesses to innovate, innovate and diversify tourism categories and products in accordance with the orientation of restructuring the tourism industry. Support tourism startup businesses, especially those located in remote and isolated areas. Put more emphasis on protecting intellectual property rights for tourism businesses; impose strict penalties on unhealthy competition acts.

Create favourable conditions for people to directly participate in business and benefit from tourism; adopt policies to support the community-based tourism development. Enhance the roles of community, build a tourism community that can treat tourists in a civilized and friendly manner; promote the role of professional social organizations related to tourism.

7- Developing tourism human resources

Diversify tourism training programs. Promote the application of advanced science and technology in tourism workforce training and education activities.

Improve the quality of human resources both in state management, business administration and tourism employment. Focus on improving occupational skills, foreign language command and professional ethics for the tourism workforce.

Complete the national set of standards for tourism profession compatible with the one included ASEAN standards; establish the National Committee on Tourism and the Tourism Certification Council.

8- Strengthening tourism-related state management capacity and effectiveness

Complete the legal system on tourism and related fields to facilitate tourism development; complete the system of national standards and regulations in the field of tourism with the aim of regional and international integration; improve the quality of the tourism development planning.

Consolidate the state management system over the tourism industry to ensure synchronization, professionalism, effectiveness, and efficiency, meeting the requirements of inter-sectoral and inter-regional management of tourism activities; promote the role of the National Steering Committee on Tourism.

Improve competence, responsibilities, and powers of the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism. Establish tourism agencies at localities seeing potentiality for growing the tourism industry in conformance to the regulatory requirement under which no more tenured posts are accepted.

Conduct research into application of personnel and administrative models and systems particularly designed for the tourism industry that meet the tourism growth needs in the new context.

Increase specialized inspections, assessments and quality controls over hotels, travel agencies, tour guides and other tourism establishments; imperatively apply information technology advances to tax and fee management activities to prevent any loss incurred from tourism activities.

Boost international cooperation, make best use of potentialities, advantages, opportunities and available resources for tourism development and linkage between Vietnamese tourism and tourism in other regional and worldwide countries, and deal with difficulties that the Vietnamese tourism industry may face.

IV - IMPLEMENTATION

1- Party's committees having authority over provinces or cities, Party's subcommittees, Party's staff subcommittees, other Party delegations and centrally affiliated Party's committees shall communicate and ensure thorough understanding of this Resolution; shall, within their powers and duties, develop and implement plans and action programs for implementation of this Resolution.

Party's staff subcommittees of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism shall have the burden of taking charge of educating, developing, and carrying out the action program for implementation of this Resolution in the tourism industry.

National Assembly's Party Delegation shall lead revision, supplementation or issuance of laws, ordinances and create legal bases favourable for development of the tourism industry into a key sector of the economy.

3- Party's staff subcommittee of the Government shall take charge of formulating and carrying out the action program for implementation of this Resolution, inspecting, expediting, and periodically reporting to the Politburo on implementation of this Resolution. The National Steering Committee on Tourism shall preside over cooperation between ministries, sectoral administrations, and local authorities in implementing this Resolution”

(Source: <https://thuvienphapluat.vn/van-ban/Thuong-mai/Nghi-quyet-so-08-NQ-TW-phat-trien-du-lich-tro-thanh-nganh-kinh-te-mui-nhon-2017-338542.aspx>)

Appendix 3: Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders in the tourism sector

Stakeholders	Questions
Universities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What work has your institution been doing to support the government in implementing Tourism Policy 2017 effectively? 2. What work has your institution made to guarantee that the workforce serving the tourism industry is highly knowledgeable, adaptable, productive, and devoted to its field? 3. In your view, does Tourism Policy 2017 support the development of stakeholders in particular and the tourism sector in general? 4. Does your institution regularly keep in touch with other stakeholders to support the implementation of Tourism Policy 2017? 5. Do you support the launching of the Tourism Policy 2017? Please explain your answer in detail.
Managers in Hotels or Travel agencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What incentives does your business benefit from the government's Tourism Policy 2017? 2. Has your business had a more favourable development since the launching of the Tourism Policy 2017? Please state these changes. 3. In your view, has Tourism Policy 2017 been supporting the establishment and comprehensive development of tourism businesses entering the market? 4. Does your business regularly keep in touch with other stakeholders to support the implementation of the Tourism Policy 2017? 5. Do you support the launching of Tourism Policy 2017? Please explain your answer in detail.

<p>Provincial governments</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you find it easy and enjoyable to convey the contents of the government’s Tourism Policy 2017 to the parties involved in tourism activities (businesses, universities, NGOs, etc.)? 2. What efforts have you been making to support stakeholders to profit from Tourism Policy 2017 most effectively? 3. Do you regularly keep in touch with stakeholders to support them in case of difficulties? 4. Do you find Tourism Policy 2017 feasible? Please explain your answer in detail. 5. Do you support the launching of Tourism Policy 2017? Please explain your answer in detail.
<p>Tourists <i>Respondents will be “fanatic voyagers”</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What makes you a travel enthusiast? 2. Have you ever heard about the government’s Tourism Policy 2017? If yes, please list which point(s) you support the most. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Improving the infrastructure</i> - <i>Improving the quality of tourism products</i> - <i>Creating favourable conditions for residents to participate in tourism (extending the national holidays, increasing the number of attractions, controlling the price in high season)</i> 3. Please write here some changes in tourism activities in Vietnam from 2017 to the present that you can feel. 4. What do you think is the biggest attraction of Vietnam in tourism activities? 5. What changes do you expect in the future in the domestic tourism field? 6. To have tourism products and services more attractive in the future, what suggestions would you give to the government?

Appendix 4: List of respondents

Code	Name	Respondents' characteristic	Their homeland
R1	Pham Dinh Trung	Principal, Yersin University, Dalat	Central of Vietnam
R2	Hoang Ngọc Huy	Government officier, Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Lam Dong	Central of Vietnam
R3	Cao The Anh	Vice dean of Tourism department, Dalat University	Central of Vietnam
R4	Tran Ngoc Lien	Vice Principal, Hue University, Hue	Central of Vietnam
R5	Pham Xuan Nguyen	Director, Bidoup national park, Lam Dong	Central of Vietnam
R6	Bùi Thi Cam Huong	Government officer, Department of culture, sports and tourism, Dac Nong	Central of Vietnam
R7	Nguyen Thuy Nga	Vice Dean of Tourism department, Da Nang University, Da Nang	Central of Vietnam
R8	Tran Van Thong	Dean of Tourism faculty, University of Economics and Finance, Ho Chi Minh City	South of Vietnam
R9	Dang Hoang Danh	Lecturer, Tourism Department, Kien Giang College, Kien Giang	South of Vietnam
R10	Nguyen Dan Truong	Manager, Cho Lon Travel agency, Ho Chi Minh city	South of Vietnam
R11	Nguyen Du Ha Long	Lecturer, Faculty of Tourism, Nam Can Tho University, Can Tho	South of Vietnam
R12	Hoang Anh Dung	Manager, Ca Mau Travel agency, Ca Mau	South of Vietnam
R13	Nguyen My Kieu	Manager, Melia Vinpearl Tay Ninh Hotel, Tay Ninh	South of Vietnam
R14	Le Anh Tuan	Director of Training Department, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism	North of Vietnam
R15	Pham Hong Long	Dean, Faculty of Tourism, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ha Noi	North of Vietnam
R16	Le Thuy Trang	Lecturer, Faculty of Tourism, Phenikaa University, Ha Noi	North of Vietnam
R17	Bui Van Manh	Director, Department of culture, sports and tourism, Ninh Binh	South of Vietnam
R18	Pham Le Thao	Deputy Head of Travel Management	South of Vietnam

		Department, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Vietnam	
R19	Hoang Xuan Don	Head of Dong Van Karst Plateau Global Geopark Management Board, Ha Giang	North of Vietnam
R20	Nguyen Dao Dung	Head of Travel Management Department, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Vietnam	North of Vietnam