

APPLYING DIGITAL MARKETING IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN PHU THO PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

Phu Tho is a province with great potential for tourism development, but recently, its capacity has not been fully promoted. In particular, the outbreak of covid 19 has seriously affected the development of the tourism industry. The article clarifies some theoretical issues about digital marketing, digital marketing in tourism, and the current situation of tourism development in Phu Tho province, thereby making recommendations to effectively apply digital marketing to tourism development in Phu Tho province in the near future.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Tourism, Marketing in tourism, Phu Tho

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has been grown strongly in recent years, particularly digital marketing. The importance of digitalization is undeniable when it helps identify user's behaviors, customers' preferences, databases, etc. It can help people to explore many new things that they have not known before, and this is why digital marketing is a main key success factor in tourism where people want to set foot on an undiscovered destination. Moreover, there is a huge connection between digital marketing and the tourism industry with a significant increase in booking apps and websites, travel vloggers, food reviews, etc.

Digital marketing is a useful tool to promote the image of the company and its products to residents at home and abroad. Low cost and high efficiency, especially for an industry that needs the promotion of tourism. Therefore, finding the directions, applications, solutions to improve the capacity of applying digital marketing in business activities is extremely necessary for the tourism management agencies, as well as tourism businesses in Phu Tho. However, in recent years, the development of tourism in Phu Tho province is still limited, so up to now, it has not achieved the desired goal. The current situation of tourism in general and tourism in Phu Tho, in particular, is still limited, especially after the negative impacts of the covid 19 pandemic. Therefore, it is necessary to study deeply and apply digital marketing into tourism development processes, to have appropriate solutions to overcome difficulties and fully exploit the potentials of the province next time.

RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

The qualitative method is used mostly in the theoretical part of the article by researching information *via* literature, books, websites, articles, etc. The secondary data will be extracted from books, journals, academic articles, videos, and websites to serve the theoretical part.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Trend of Digital Transformation in Tourism

Digitization is the most important change in our constantly changing world. These innovations and technologies have helped change and develop new systems, apps, and even devices that help people in business and their personal life. Digital transformation altered the operations and customer relations of the tourism industry. It is all done with a few clicks of the button in a fraction of the time it would normally take in this new digital environment, consumer expectations are not what they used to be. They are now set very high due to the innovative disruptions like virtual reality, artificial reality, the Internet of things, mobile bookings, and even online payments.

Internet of Things (IoT)

With the integration of IoT with the internal circuits of a room, hotel rooms can be automated, for example, heated or cooled when people leave and enter the room. As more devices get connected to IoT, the tourism industry can use the same to give the customer a higher sense of satisfaction. Knowing the customer's preferences would also be beneficial as it helps the staff be proactive in anticipating guest's needs. For example, a customer who has been regularly staying at a hotel and using the spa services can be offered a complimentary or discount deal for the next service (Figure 1).

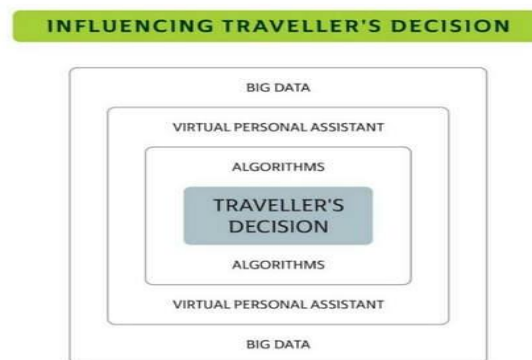


FIGURE 1
VIRTUAL PERSONAL ASSISTANT – VPA

Zsarnoczky, M. (2017a)

Mobile Integration

Customers have everything on their phones right from shopping to managing finances and even booking travel. Some brands have apps that make books more frictionless and pleasant. Changes become convenient and the customer also gets updates on the latest deals. Without a mobile presence, does a booking company even exist? Interestingly, Asia and the Middle East are ahead of North America and Europe in mobile bookings. Approximately 28% of bookings are done *via* mobile in North America (Grover, 2018).

Data Analysis

Forecasting plays an important role in all fields to help a business plan and strategize. In 2020, data science is sure to play a bigger role to help companies offer clients personalized deals thanks to predictive market analysis. Data plays a huge part in this new era where customer data is used to determine their preferences and where they make their bookings. For example, instant booking features guarantee a reservation alleviating the customer's concern and doubt (Newman, 2018).

Reviews and Ratings

As mentioned previously, customer reviews play a very critical role in converting a potential client. Customers do not make bookings without first reading and checking the ratings from previous customers. Worst case they can prepare for what is coming since the reviews are from the horses' mouth directly. This has pushed and will continue to push, hotels and Airbnb hosts to up their games and provide the best and highest quality of customer service (Figure 2).



FIGURE 2
IMPACT OF TRAVEL REVIEW [4]

(Wohl, 2019)

Artificial Intelligence and Chatbots

Once upon a time, hotels would have binders and pamphlets or brochures at the welcome desk to help customers with queries like What to do in the area? Where to find particular cuisine? Specific activities? Closest shopping districts? How to get to a certain place?

Today all the information can be provided on AI-powered apps and devices. Customers can access the information at any point with their smartphones. Voice-activated chatbots help set alarms, open or close curtains, and even order breakfast. Simple clerical tasks like reservation changes can be done without using human resources unless it is a delicate situation and sensitive touch is needed.

Virtual Reality

Virtual reality tours have gained popularity in a big way. Clients can take a look without actually leaving their homes what they are booking and paying for. For example, Hotel room and

facility tours; Museum tours; Tourist destination previews... A person does not get the full experience but they get a preview of what they can expect. This also offers the guests more confidence and peace of mind while making bookings.

Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is the integration of digital media, data, and technology in marketing activities. Digital marketing refers to the utilization of electronic media by marketers to promote products or services into the market with the main objective of attracting customers and allow them to interact with the brand through digital media (Yasmin et al., 2015). One of the important techniques in digital marketing is social media marketing (Chaffey, 2011). Digital marketing is also referred to as marketing online whether *via* websites, online adverts, opt-in emails, interactive kiosks, interactive TV, or mobiles (Chaffey & Smith, 2008). Mandal, et al., (2016) defined digital marketing as the promotion of brands using all available forms of digital advertising media to reach the target segment. In this study, digital marketing refers to the promotion of products and services using digital advertising media such as social media like Facebook (Table 1).

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Website | Businesses should design their websites to represent their purpose, history, products, and vision. Developing a site that is attractive at first sight and appealing enough to encourage repeat visits is the primary challenge. Designing a mobile-responsive website is on the increase since the consumer is often on a mobile device. |
| Social media | Companies should care about social media due to its potential for engagement and collaboration with consumers. Social media promotion will lead to relatively stronger results owing to its ability to build emotional ties with its target audience based on social media activity. |
| Mobile marketing | Mobile phone marketing is growing now that smartphone usage among travelers is increasing in particular. |
| Internet-specific ads and videos | Thanks to user-generated content sites such as YouTube and Instagram, video consumers and practitioners can upload ads and videos shared by millions of people virally. |
| Display ads | Display ads are small, rectangular boxes containing text and sometimes they are in the form of a picture that companies pay to place on relevant websites. The larger the audience, the more the placement costs. |
| Microsites | A microsite is a limited area on the web managed and paid for by an external advertiser/company. Microsites are individual web pages or clusters of pages that function as supplements to a primary site. |
| Search ads | Paid search or pay-per-click ads represent 40% of all online ads. Thirty-five percent of all searches are reportedly for products or services. These terms serve as a proxy for the consumer's consumption interests and trigger relevant links to product or service offerings alongside search results from Google, MSN, and Yahoo! Advertisers pay only if people click on the links. |
| Online communities. | Many companies sponsor online communities whose members communicate through postings, instant messaging, and chat discussions about special interests related to the company's products and brands. |
| Interstitials | Interstitials are often video or animation advertisements that pop up in between web pages, similar to turning a page of a magazine and being encountered with the page advert that you cannot get rid of seeing before turning the page again. |

| | |
|--------|---|
| Blogs | Blogs are usually controlled by individuals with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other materials such as graphics or videos. The best-quality blogs are interactive, allowing visitors to leave comments and even message each other. |
| E-mail | E-mail uses only a fraction of the cost of a direct mail campaign |

Source: Hudson, et al., (2012)

Digital Marketing Channels

There are several platforms to promote digital marketing, each of the channels has a unique structure, features, and tools to gain the audiences' attractions. The data below explains the functionalities of different marketing channels:

Display advertising (Website): The marketing information will be present on the website of an organization. It encompasses a wide range of advertisements such as ads, forums, contextual information, search engine ads, etc. This channel requires a deep comprehension of the target customers together with a content marketing strategy. The better the strategy is the more bard recognition the company achieves.

Email: Email marketing is the best type of marketing that will save a company's budget. According to Sipralytics, there is 73% of B2B marketers believe that email is the top tool to generate potential customers and increase revenue effectively. Also, for every \$1 spent on email marketing, the company can expect to gain \$42 of return on investment. However, compiling emails should be done delicately and ingeniously, as well as avoiding annoying information which has a negative influence on the leads and loyal customers.

Organic Search (Search Engine Optimization – SEO): This is considered the most important key success for every marketing department recently. SEO helps a company appear more in search results from keywords on many different social media platforms depend on which apps they use. Marketers also use SEO to increase the company's website rank, improve the conversion rate, and develop brand awareness. Psychologically speaking, customers tend to look for products or services of whom with a higher rank on the search results.

Paid Search Traffic (Search Engine Marketing - SEM, and Pay-Per-Click – PPC), both of them are similar to SEO but mainly conducted by paid advertising. It helps the company promote its brand effectively by arranging the website and posts' positions near the top of the search results. Advertisers will only pay for each time a user clicks on their ads. Based on the clicking data, the advertisers can easily understand the customers' behavior and demographics to improve future ads.

Social Media: Due to fact that there are more than 3.8 billion users from various social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, Linked In, etc. The potential customers are huge in these virtual worlds if business know-how reaches them cleverly. These platforms are worth the time of every company to attract new customers, cultivate relationships with leads, and reinforce interactions with your target market (IntroBooks)

Digital Marketing in Tourism

Tourism is a part of the service sector which is distinguished from other industries such as manufacturing, construction, art, and the primary sectors. Therefore, marketing plays an important role in this smokeless industry with different special characteristics. Intangibility is the first characteristic of this industry because tourism mainly provides services instead of tangible products like other industries. Next is the inseparability of production and consumption, which means services are created and used at the same time by providers and tourists. Besides that, service marketing is perishable because no service can be stored for future use. Finally, heterogeneity is a

tough attribute in this industry where service is about to serve every kind of people, and people are all distinctive (Srinivasan, 2009).

Additionally, tourism is one of the industries is impacted the most by the digital transformation era. As reported by the Sale Cycle, the global online travel market was at around 629 billion USD in 2017 and is forecasted to approach nearly 818 billion USD by the end of 2020. Two factors get influenced the most are transportation and accommodation when millions of apps and websites have been created for users to book the itinerary of their journey. At this moment, it is much easier than people can just buy an online ticket and check-in at the airport with the barcode or QR code, it not only helps customers reduce queueing time, but also reduce the workload of the airport ticket checking staff. As a similarity to the transportation issue, the accommodation problem is also tackled conveniently with online booking. Clients do not need to call in advance or worry about the hotel is full, everything is well-prepared before the trip just with a couple of touches on the phones (Tuong, 2020).

Furthermore, thanks to the development of digitalization, passengers have an enormous activity to do on the plane with the advanced in-flight entertainment systems. Besides the movies, games, TV shows, music, etc. the in-flight system also plays a tool to promote the airline's products, especially for the low-cost airline. Digital marketing also facilitates small local travel businesses to promote their brand and start-up. In particular, in some countries in South East Asia, people prefer to stay in a local homestay instead of luxurious hotels. At those places, they can enjoy and experience the daily activities of natives as well as interact more with local people. That is why local tourism is extremely popular in that area, especially in Vietnam and Thailand (Tuong, 2020).

It is undeniable to say that SEO, SEM, and Social media are the most popular tools in tourism marketing currently. A good team of digital marketing, SEO, and SEM skills will help a company increasing its search results in Google as well as other marketing channels leading to reach more clients. It's true to say that the higher the position you are in the google search result, the more chance you have to get more customers. Besides that, instead of contacting customers *via* phone or email, now a travel agency can solve most clients' problems through any social media platform fast and easily. If Google is the best channel to approach customers, then social media is the place to attract them with posts, blogs, videos, and reviews. A large number of active internet users in Vietnam plays an important role in domestic tourism marketing.

Besides that, the mobile app is also a representative of media communication in the role of engaging customers. Currently, in every big city or famous local areas in Vietnam already have a mobile app providing tourists attractions, transportation route, well-known restaurants, accommodations, tips, facts, and a lot of useful information about Vietnam. For example, in the imperial city – Hue, most of the hotels from 2-5 stars and travel agencies have their websites connected to travel apps in the region. Moreover, restaurants and hotels also join the world- popular booking apps such as Booking.com, Airbnb, TripAdvisor, etc. The multi- channel will give tourists more choices in selecting what they want exactly (Anh, 2019).

Tourism Potential of Phu Tho Province

Phu Tho is known as the cradle of Lac Viet culture, the birth center of the Ancient Viet people when the Hung Kings built the Van Lang country. Over thousands of years of history, this place still retains the imprint of the nation's early dawn. Phu Tho is a locality with many potentials and advantages for tourism development.

Phu Tho is located in the central position, the transition zone between the Northern mountainous region and the plain, the apex of the delta triangle of the Northern Delta, the

confluence of three rivers: Thao River, Lo River, and Da River, surrounded by the two mountain ranges of Tam Dao and Ba Vi, leaning against the hills and mountains close to the end of the Hoang Lien Son range, facing the fertile North Delta. Phu Tho has many diverse landscapes that are bestowed by nature, making it a prime location: Son Chau, Thuy Cau. Phu Tho has many scenic spots such as Bach Hac junction, Ao Gioi Suoi Tien, Ao Chau lagoon, Van Hoi lagoon, Thanh Thuy hot mineral water mine, Xuan Son National Park... It is also valuable to develop various types of eco-tourism, relaxation, and discovery (Figure 3).



FIGURE 3
PHU THO TOURIST MAP

(Source: Phu Tho Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism)

The whole province has 1 provincial city, 1 town, 11 districts, 14 wards, 253 communes, 10 townships, of which 214 are mountainous communes and townships. Phu Tho has a quite convenient location, located in the industrial development belt around the capital. The transportation system of waterways, roads, and railways is very convenient, connecting Hanoi capital with the Northwest mountainous provinces. and Yunnan province - China. Phu Tho is also a province located close to the northern key economic region and the Hanoi - Hai Phong - Quang Ninh corridor. In terms of tourism, Phu Tho is also relatively close to the tourism growth triangle of Hanoi - Hai Phong - Quang Ninh. This is a good condition for the economic development and tourism of the province.

Natural Tourism Resources

Phu Tho is located in the transitional area between the Red River Delta and the Northwest

mountains, with a lower terrain in the direction of Northwest - Southeast. In the province, in addition to the river system, there are countless lakes, lagoons, and streams of tourist value such as Ao Chau lagoon, Ao Gioi - Suoi Tien, Dam Ca... Currently, Ao Chau lagoon is emerging as a tourist attraction. The lagoon has 99 large niches that collect water from 99 large and small streams. Within the lagoon, there are about 25 islands and a large peninsula. Especially the province has many hot water sources that are valuable for relaxation and healing for people in the region.

Phu Tho has many important protected areas with economic, scientific, and special value for tourism. Xuan Son National Park deserves to be one of the unique natural heritage of the country. The national park has a total area of 15,048 hectares, the buffer zone is 18,639 hectares, of which the strictly protected area is 9,099 hectares (Dung et al., 2005). The unique feature of Xuan Son is that it is the only national park with primeval forests on limestone mountains. Xuan Son is considered as a forest with rich ecological diversity, high biodiversity, diverse topography creating diverse landscapes.

Humanistic Tourism Resources

Phu Tho is the King land area - the cradle of Vietnamese culture, whose development is associated with the construction and defense of the country with a history of over 1,000 years. Therefore, the humanistic resources here are also quite diverse that can be exploited for tourism purposes. Hung Temple - a special national historical and cultural relic. The historical site of Hung Temple in Hy Cuong Commune, Viet Tri city is the place to worship the Hung Kings, to worship Quoc To Lac Long Quan and Quoc Mau Au Co. This is a special spiritual destination in the journey to the roots of all Vietnamese people, is the center of worshipping Hung Kings in Phu Tho - the representative intangible cultural heritage of humanity has been recognized by UNESCO. In the province, there are 1,372 cultural and historical relics and sites related to relics, including one special national-level relic, 72 national-level relics, 209 national-level relics. province, 260 festivals with the typical culture of the land of the ancestors. In which, the special national historical relic site Hung Temple is a unique and sacred cultural space of the Vietnamese people; Two world cultural heritages, "Hung King Worshipping Belief" and "Phu Tho Xoan Singing" are the highlight for Phu Tho to build a unique tourism product.

With 305 ranked relics, the historical and cultural relics of Phu Tho include 4 basic types of relics as follows:

The revolutionary historical relic is a place to commemorate historical events, memorials of famous people, revolutionary bases, victories, places marking crimes such as Hien Luong War Zone (Ha Hoa), Victory over Lo River (Doan Hung), Ho Chi Minh memorial monument in Co Tiet (Tam Thanh), war zone 10 Dai Pham ...

Archaeological relics include 6 sites that are the residence of prehistoric people that have been researched, excavated, and verified such as: Vi Son, Phung Nguyen (Phong Chau), Ca village (Viet Tri) ...

Architectural relics: This type includes the architecture of civil houses, treasures, old quarters, ramparts, fortresses... However, in Phu Tho mainly architectural and artistic relics: communal houses, pagodas, temples, shrines... account for 80% of the total number of relics currently existing in the province, which are concentrated in the districts of Phong Chau, Viet Tri, Tam Nong, Ha Hoa... this type of relic includes 605 relics.

Landscapes: The scenic spots in Phu Tho are few, the most prominent ones are the caves in Xuan Son nature reserve (Thanh Son), Ao Chau lagoon (Ha Hoa), Minh Hoa basin waterfall (Yen Lap).

Traditional festivals are also a unique feature that makes an important contribution to the tourism development of Phu Tho, it contributes to creating a new sacred and unique environment, helping people to have the conditions to learn, understand and appreciate the cultural values of history. Phu Tho currently has about 260 festivals including all types of traditional folk festivals, revolutionary history festivals, and religious festivals. In particular, many festivals bearing the cultural and spiritual nuances of the Ancestral land such as Hung Temple Festival, Au Co Mother Temple Festival, Tra Tram Tu Xa Festival, Phet Hien Quan Festival, Bach Hac Swimming and Brushing Festival, Xoan Festival Kim Duc, Phuong Lau, Dao Xa elephant procession, Mo Chu Ha's cake pounding festival...

As the center of the ancient State of Van Lang, the first state in Vietnam's history, Phu Tho is the convergence of 21 ethnic groups, each with a variety of customs and traditions. There are a variety of folk arts in Phu Tho such as Xoan singing, Gheo, Troop Drums, drum swing, belly dance... Among the types of folk performances, especially including Xoan singing, a unique art form that was recognized by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity in need of urgent protection in 2011, that is being made efforts to preserve and promote its values by the province and has a higher spread, and attraction to tourists, especially international tourists.

Tourism Development Situation of Phu Tho Province

Resolution of the 18th Provincial Party Congress for the 2015-2020 term identified tourism development as one of the four breakthrough stages of the province. In order to implement and concretize the spirit of the Resolution, Phu Tho has focused on planning, building open mechanisms and policies to call for and attract investment in key tourist areas. Simultaneously, the province has promulgated solutions to find the right direction for tourism development such as building specific tourism products, linking to form attractive tours and routes, suitable to actual conditions of local. Thereby, tourism in Phu Tho province has made positive changes, the number of tourists coming to Phu Tho is increasing, many spots have become reliable addresses, attracting tourists during the national holidays (Table 2).

| Criteria | 2010 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | Average growth rate (%) |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|-------------------------|
| Overnight guests | 221.417 | 310.959 | 348.466 | 376.037 | 447.529 | 504.600 | 10,17 |
| Day-guests | 174.109 | 447.546 | 573.963 | 651.763 | 772.165 | 870.799 | 14,24 |
| Number of guests served by accommodation facilities | 392.769 | 752.185 | 916.110 | 927.800 | 1.219.693 | 1.375.399 | 12,83 |
| Number of visitors served by travel agencies | 2.757 | 6.320 | 6.319 | 9.500 | 7.084 | 9.143 | 7,66 |

Source: Phu Tho Statistical Office, 2020

Table 2 shows that the number of domestic tourists increases every year, in which, in the period 2010 - 2019, the number of day-visitors (who are not staying overnight) also increased by more than 5 times; The number of tourists staying overnight has more than doubled. Although there is an upward trend with an average growth rate of 10.17% in the period 2015 - 2019, this number of visitors is still quite modest compared to the potential of the province. This comes from the reality of the province, there are not many really attractive tourist sites to retain tourists; the quality of

service at tourist destinations is not synchronized, so the number of overnight tourists is still low. In the period 2015 - 2019, the province receives an average of 6-7 million tourists per year, in which, just nearly 700,000 stay overnight. This is a very small number compared to the number of visitors to Phu Tho. Therefore, it needs solutions to improve business efficiency, tourism services, increase tourism revenue, actively contribute to poverty reduction, job creation, increase income for labor, which one of the important solutions is to develop tourism products.

The number of day-visitors to Phu Tho is relatively high, however, the length of stay is also quite short, averaging 1.02 days (in 2015) and 1.1 days (in 2019), which is lower compared to neighboring localities (Lao Cai is 2.1 days; Son La is 2.0 days; Vinh Phuc is 1.5 days). The reason is that there are no tourism businesses and potential investors to create entertainment spots, eco-tourism areas, with attractive tourist products to prolong the tourists to stay and then increasing the average spending of tourists in Phu Tho province. Most tourists come to Phu Tho in the form of spiritual cultural tourism, festival tourism with low spending.

The number of international visitors to Phu Tho province in the period 2015 - 2019 has increased. In general, in 2018, the total number of tourists reached 8 million, including 7,200 international guests, an increase of 10.7% as the year plan and an increase of 18% compared to the same period in 2017 (Lam Dao An, 2019). In 2019, welcomed and served 8.2 million guests, of which 7,800 international guests stayed (Hoi, 2020). This number is still quite modest compared to some other localities in the region such as Lao Cai in 2017 it welcomed 3.5 million visitors; in 2018 it welcomed 4.3 million visitors; in 2019 it welcomed 5.1 million visitors; Tuyen Quang in 2017 welcomed 1.5 million visitors; in 2018 welcomed over 1.7 million visitors; in 2019 welcomed over 1.9 million visitors (Table 3).

Table 3
REVENUE FROM THE ACCOMMODATION, CATERING, AND TRAVEL SERVICES IN PHU THO PROVINCE IN THE PERIOD OF 2015 - 2019

| Criteria | | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | Average growth rate (%) |
|-----------------------|---------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------------------------|
| Accommodation service | Value (Billion VND) | 92,0 | 115,4 | 111,5 | 195,2 | 224,2 | 19,50 |
| | Ratio (%) | 5,03 | 5,82 | 5,69 | 8,27 | 8,26 | |
| Catering | Value (Billion VND) | 1.723,9 | 1.852,7 | 1.810,5 | 2.137,1 | 2.457,6 | 7,35 |
| | Ratio (%) | 94,29 | 93,49 | 92,37 | 90,57 | 90,56 | |
| Travel service | Value (Billion VND) | 12,4 | 13,6 | 38,1 | 27,4 | 32,0 | 20,88 |
| | Ratio (%) | 0,68 | 0,69 | 1,94 | 1,16 | 1,18 | |
| Total | Value (Billion VND) | 1.828,3 | 1.981,7 | 1.960,1 | 2.359,7 | 2.713,8 | 8,22 |

Source: Phu Tho Statistical Office, 2020

From 2015 to 2019, Phu Tho tourism has positive changes, revenue from the accommodation, catering, and travel services has continuously increased with an average growth rate of 8,22%/year. However, the portion of the accommodation service is much lower than that of food services. Foodservice revenue accounted for the largest proportion (over 90%) and revenue

from travel services accounted for a relatively low proportion (fluctuating around 1%). This is a problem posed in the tourism development strategy of Phu Tho province because, in order to develop tourism, the area of accommodation and food services is an important highlight. In particular, the context of the COVID-19 epidemic has been having a direct impact on the tourism business in the province. The number of tourists to Phu Tho decreased sharply, leading to a decrease in the revenue of the tourism industry. The tourism industry has to deal with great difficulties and challenges. In parallel with the anti-epidemic task, the province needs to have solutions to attract tourists to ensure the growth target of the tourism industry.

In the period of 2015 - 2019, the tourism growth value of Phu Tho province is low and unstable. Especially in 2017 there was a decrease in value when the growth was negative (decreased by 26.6 billion VND compared to 2016, equivalent to -1.08%). Besides, the growth in revenue of Phu Tho province is much lower than that of some localities with similar conditions such as Lao Cai and Thai Nguyen. The average growth rate of Phu Tho province is only 8.22%, while some provinces like Lao Cai province reach 63.10% (higher than nearly 8 times), Thai Nguyen reaches 13.45% (higher than nearly 2 times). This shows the lack of economic sustainability in tourism development in Phu Tho province. Phu Tho province's tourism has not been promoted full of the potential and strengths of a province that is famous for its diversity of historical, cultural, architectural, archeological, architectural and artistic relics, cultural relics, and war relics. And Phu Tho has not become a "destination" of domestic and international tourists.

Apply Digital Marketing in Tourism Development in Phu Tho

Defining the Internet as an effective tourism promotion tool with low cost, regardless of space and time. The tourism industry has exploited this advantage through maintaining and developing the tourism website with the access domain: dulichphutho.com.vn and the 8 Northwest Province Tourism Information Page: dulichtaybac.vn with multiple languages. In addition, linking websites, fan pages, facebook, placing banners, and specializing in Phu Tho tourism pages on press agencies and media inside and outside the province to promote information connection with tourists and tourism businesses more conveniently.

In particular, in 2019, Phu Tho started using the smart tourism portal <http://phuthotourism.vn> to form a tourism eco-system, creating reciprocity between the three types of tourists, the government, and businesses. The province also launched the Youtube channel Dat To, which is a unique form of a tourism promotion for the first time deployed by Phu Tho. This is an effective tool to promote the culture, people, and tourism of Phu Tho province to the tourists and investors, bringing high efficiency in tourism promotion. Up to now, the Youtube channel Dat To has produced many introductory videos, attracting over 320,389 views, 4,100 channel subscriptions, creating a great buzz and being known by a large number of people in the province and the whole country arrive. All videos on the channel have english subtitles to help foreign tourists easily learn and promote the image of the Phu Tho. The tourism industry has actively invited and coordinated with the Central Television Station, Phu Tho Newspaper, Provincial Radio, and Television Station to build and broadcast promotional programs to introduce cultural and historical relics, scenic spots, products, and services of Phu Tho tourism. Phu Tho electronic newspaper has set up a separate category "Tourism - Festivals" to fully update cultural and tourism events, historical sites, scenic spots, traditional festivals, cuisine - restaurants... Thereby, images and attractive tourism potentials are continuously introduced and broadcast on national television, creating a good impression.

Up to now, the province has nearly 300 accommodation establishments with over 3,700 rooms, of which 33 hotels (5 hotels from 3 to 5 stars). Most of the 1-5 star hotels and travel

businesses have their websites and are registered with online sites that support booking services such as Agoda, Booking.com, Expedia.com, Hotels.com, iVIVU.com, Chudu24.com, Mytour.vn, TripAdvisor, Airbnb, HotelQuickly...

As can be seen, state management agencies and businesses in the province's tourism industry have begun to focus on building and developing digital marketing in simple initial forms. However, the level of technology application is only at a basic level such as websites, email messages, facebook... should not exploit and optimize the benefits from digital marketing. Most of them do not have a specific and in-depth strategy in this field. The current business promotion system is still weak and lacking, the information is scattered and there is no centralized link between organizations and businesses. Departments and sectors also have tourist information websites, but they are not strong and professional enough to provide complete information about Phu Tho tourism, attracting visitors around the world. Businesses do not understand the benefits of information technology solutions. The team of technicians and specialists in charge of information technology is lacking and weak, most of the businesses have to hire an external web design company to manage and support. Businesses do not have specialized departments for content editing, images, and web administration, the application is only at the basic level. Businesses are still confused when using search engines (SEM), as well as having to choose the best websites to promote their business image. Although the number of tourist websites has increased significantly, the websites have not been widely promoted, they are monotonous in form, presented in the style of the text with few pictures, the content is sketchy and not updated. Timely updates and lack of necessary information to provide customers. Many websites do not have full interactive and customer support functions, do not attach importance to collecting feedback from customers, but only focus on advertising on the website. Overall, the digital marketing of Phu Tho provinces is still small and has not brought much effect to the activities of the tourism industry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the Side of State Management Agencies

Set up specialized digital marketing departments in state management of tourism in general and tourism businesses in particular, in order to make the most of the strengths of digital and online marketing. Promulgating policies to encourage tourism companies in using information technology as an effective tool in advertising, promotion, and direct transactions with customers. Increasing the application of information technology in tourism promotion and business, with emphasis on social networking applications and designing and building videos to promote through youtube. Upgrade and efficient exploitation of the infrastructure services to attract tourists at the ruins, scenic, cultural and spiritual, tourist areas of the province.

Organize training and retraining to improve professional skills, management for leaders and staff in charge of information technology, network administration for provinces and districts. Fostering application skills in exploiting shared software, operating online operations, organizing and performing public services for public servants and related subjects.

Provide measures to support, attract participation and cohesion among stakeholders involved in tourism activities. In which, state management agencies play the role of creating supportive policies...; Enterprise creates, building mega selfie zones, featured products; Tourists directly support tourism promotion by posting and sharing great moments during the journey on social networking sites.

On the Side of Tourism Businesses

Extensive propaganda, raising awareness about digital marketing for officials and employees in enterprises and people to understand the necessity and benefits of applying digital marketing in tourism development. Thereby raising the sense of responsibility of members in promoting the local image on personal pages, social networking sites, as well as other platforms.

Technology websites to promote tourism trade, facilitate tourists to easily book rooms, book travel services in the easiest way, ensure the safety of electronic transactions; ensure the quality of products and services selected and purchased by the internet; building and maintaining a healthy e-commerce environment; Build trust and friendliness with visitors.

Implement deeper linkages between tour operators, restaurants, hotels, and banks... to become closed advocacy complies in every stage of the process from company information to purchase and sale, secure payment, create trust in the hearts of customers.

CONCLUSION

In the management of the tourism industry, in particular, digital marketing has made a great contribution to promoting the image to tourists, making it easier for tourists to choose the most satisfying travel destination. The application of digital marketing makes it easier to connect state management agencies with tourism businesses and customers, bringing benefits to the state and businesses in many aspects.

The application of digital marketing in Phu Tho is only at the beginning, the information technology infrastructure in Phu Tho is still very poor, backward, far behind the development level of the whole country. Therefore, if the above solutions are implemented, the application of digital marketing in Phu Tho tourism development management will be able to bring high efficiency in promoting the image of the country and people of Phu Tho with domestic and foreign tourists shortly.

DECLARATION FOR CONFLICT INTEREST

There is no conflict in a potential way from the author for the research, publication authorship.

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