

Sustainable tourism governance: the case of Vietnam and French Polynesia

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Abstract:

Tourism is now one of the pillars of Vietnam's economic development. This industry developed in the course of the 90s in a particular context of openness to the market economy under the control of the Communist Party. Vietnam's tourism strategy, which is now more focused on sustainable tourism, makes it necessary to rethink the mode of governance of this sector. Thus, the case of Hoi An, a cultural site in the center of the country classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, illustrates the specificities of sustainable tourism governance. In French Polynesia, tourism accounts for 77% of the country's own resources. Since the 2008 crisis and the sharp drop in tourist numbers, it has been necessary to rethink the tourism strategy of the destination, which today is part of sustainable tourism. To do this, this overseas collectivity has its own skills enabling it to manage tourism through a specific mode of governance of the sector that has had to be changed.

Whether it's Vietnam or French Polynesia, the governance of sustainable tourism implies fits in the long term, adapting the sharing of tourism expertise to a larger scale of actors, most often local, which is not without problem in terms of the coordination of implemented actions.

Key words: governance, sustainable tourism, Vietnam, French Polynesia

Résumé:

Le tourisme constitue aujourd'hui l'un des piliers du développement économique du Vietnam. Cette industrie s'y est développée dans le courant des années 90 dans un le contexte particulier d'ouverture à l'économie de marché sous le contrôle du parti communiste. La stratégie touristique du Vietnam, aujourd'hui davantage axée sur le tourisme durable, oblige à repenser le mode de gouvernance de ce secteur. Ainsi, le cas de Hoi An, site culturel du centre du pays classé au patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO, permet d'illustrer les spécificités d'une gouvernance du tourisme durable.

En Polynésie française, le tourisme représente 77% des ressources propres du pays. Depuis la crise de 2008 et la forte chute de la fréquentation touristique, il a fallu repenser la stratégie touristique de la destination qui aujourd'hui s'inscrit dans le tourisme durable. Pour ce faire, cette collectivité d'outre-mer dispose de compétences propres lui permettant de gérer le tourisme à travers un mode de gouvernance du secteur spécifique qu'il a fallu faire évoluer. Qu'il s'agisse du Vietnam ou de la Polynésie française, la gouvernance du tourisme durable suppose de s'inscrire dans le long terme, d'adapter le partage de la compétence tourisme à une plus grande échelle d'acteurs, le plus souvent locaux, ce qui n'est pas sans poser problème au niveau de la coordination des actions mises en œuvres.

Mots Clefs : gouvernance, tourisme durable, Vietnam, Polynésie française

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Introduction

The tourism industry is increasingly recognized as one of the largest and fastest growing industry in Vietnam, in term of exchange earnings, income generation, job creation and share of gross domestic products (De Hass, 2002). Vietnam's tourism industry is relatively young with only about 40 years of significant development. However, the Vietnamese government fears that rapid tourism development may lead to a loss of political control over the industry as well as cause negative impacts on environment (Lloyd, 2003). Therefore, the Vietnamese government have given high priority to the management of the environment; it was facilitated by the promotion of a strong series government resolutions and directives issued in the late 1990s. Unfortunately, the country lacks appropriate strategy for the improvement of human resources, infrastructures and the institutional framework needed for sustainable tourism development (Thanh, 2007). The government is also lacks standard and processes to monitor its strategies for sustainable tourism development and environmental management. Previous studies indicate that the level of involvement of tourism enterprises and local communities in general, in the control and operation of tourism activities is limited (De Hass, 2002 ; Ha, 2005 ; Dinh et al, 2006). In reality, the heaviest constraints to sustainable tourism development in Vietnam is the lack of communication and co-operation between various authorities, especially with central government developing policies for tourism planning, marketing and promotion of tourism.

In the same way, French Polynesia, whose tourism is the leading sector of the economy (77% of the country's own resources¹), is part of a sustainable tourism approach. Indeed, the destination was directly impacted by the attacks of the World Trade Center and the economic crisis of 2008. Thus, 260 000 tourists in 2001, we went to 190 000 tourists in 2003 to get down to 150 000 tourists in 2009. More than half of the visitors disappeared in the space of 8 years. Since then, tourist activity has begun a slow recovery with 192,000 tourists welcomed in 2016. Comparing the evolution of world tourism and tourism in French Polynesia, we see that the destination does not quite follow the global trend, remaining well below that. This observation implies that tourism in French Polynesia does not only depend on external factors that would affect all tourist flows in the world, but also determinants more specific to French Polynesia. In this context, it was necessary to set up a real tourism strategy for French Polynesia with a marketing repositioning of the destination where Polynesian art of living and cultural heritage are highlighted in the framework of sustainable tourism. This did not happen without questioning the mode of governance of tourism in French Polynesia.

¹ Rapport Cost, 2011.

1. Vietnam and French Polynesia: toward a sustainable tourism

1.1. Vietnam and Sustainable tourism

The WTO states that sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are “... applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability ...” (WTO, 2004).

Emphasizing the involvement and participation of all relevant stakeholders, the continuous nature of the process, and the importance of raising awareness among tourists, sustainable tourism should meet a number of criteria, which are outlined in the appendix for further reference. Sustainable tourism as an enterprise that achieves an effective balance among the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development in order to guarantee long-term benefits to recipient communities. According to the UN-WTO (2004), it should:

- make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and help to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
- respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
- ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

In order to achieving sustainable development in the world agenda 21, since 1992 there has been a conscious effort to integrate the principles of sustainable tourism development into national development plans of Vietnam. Following the National plans, the strategy identified four over-arching objectives:

- To continue to prevent and control environmental pollution;
- To protect and use natural and biodiversity resources in a sustainable manner;
- To focus on enhancement of environmental planning and management;
- To improve environmental quality in the industrialization process.

To reach the objective of sustainable development, many other directives, resolution and normative documents of the State have been enacted and implemented. In the past 15 years, Vietnam has developed and completed five national strategies, these are considered the legal foundations for all stakeholders to follow during their operations in order to ensure the sustainable development of the country.

1.2. French Polynesia and Sustainable tourism

In 2011, after a year of consultation and reflection, the COST (Council of Strategic Orientations of Tourism) established a pillar report of the tourism strategy in French Polynesia.

This report mainly highlights the need for a broader and more distinctive repositioning, inimitable by other destinations, of the brand "Tahiti" too long confined to the image of bungalows on stilts that other more competitive destinations (Maldives, Fiji, Seychelles) also offer.

Thus, based on the notion of competitive advantage (Porter, 1986) and the method VRIO proposed by Barney and Hesterly (2006), it is worth asking whether French Polynesia has the resources or skills to develop a competitive advantage. Does it have at its disposal, according to the VRIO method, resources or skills that can be valued, rare, inimitable and exploitable from an organizational point of view?

Cultural heritage appears to be a strategic resource for French Polynesia. It should be noted here that the cultural heritage includes a material dimension (built landscapes, architecture and urbanism, archaeological and geological sites, certain developments in the agricultural or forest area) but also immaterial (songs, customs, dances, gastronomic traditions, games, myths, tales and legends).

Indeed, French Polynesia enjoys a rich tangible cultural heritage (lagoon landscape, landscape with lush forest, underwater sites) and immaterial (songs, customs, dances, gastronomic traditions, games, myths, tales and legends). This heritage brings value and arouses covetousness, it is rather rare, difficult to imitate. Finally, French Polynesia has the tools to take full advantage of the competitive potential of its cultural heritage.

The repositioning of the brand "Tahiti" became "Tahiti and its islands" around the culture and art of living in Polynesia was therefore started gradually from 2012 and those in a sustainable tourism approach.

Therefore, education plays a key role in raising awareness of the importance of cultural heritage. Likewise, its preservation stems from the attention paid to the environment. Finally, research contributes greatly to the enhancement of cultural heritage as well as the appropriation of culture to its influence. (Rival, 2016, Figure 1).

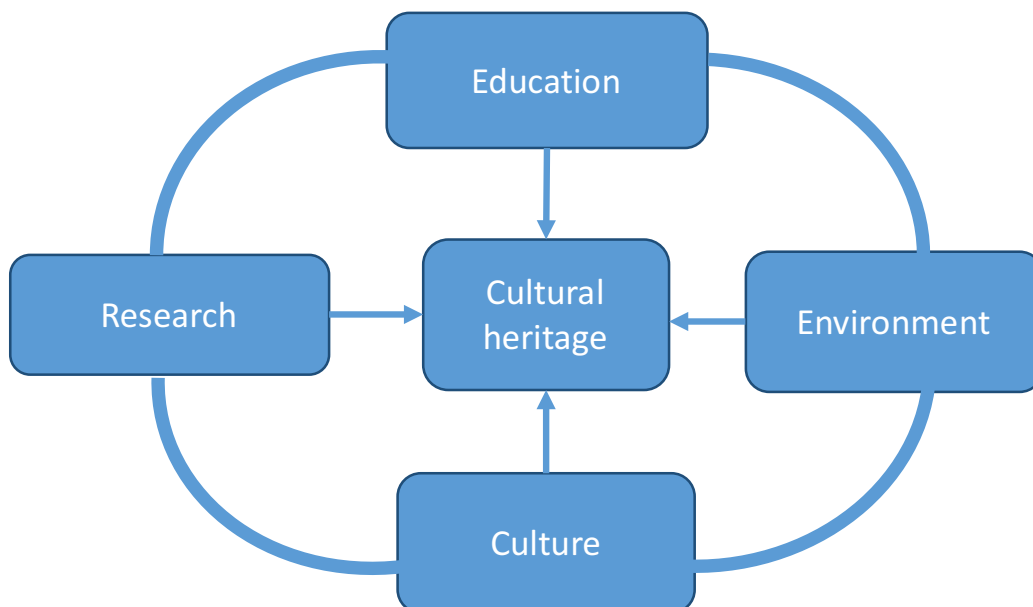


Figure 1 - Polynesian Cultural Heritage Management Model as a Strategic Resource – Rival (2016)

2. Vietnam and French Polynesia: toward a sustainable tourism governance

2.1. Changes in tourism governance in Vietnam: the case of Hoi An province

Hoi An ranked 7th of the World's Top 15 cities by the Travel & Leisure magazine with the total score of 90.31.

Hoi An, the Ancient Town, is located 30km south of Da Nang City, and 60 km northeast of Tam Ky. Hoi An used to be an international trade center by sea on the east western region, during the 16th and 17th centuries. It was the busiest trading port in the Dang Trong region of Vietnam, under the reign of Nguyen as merchants from Japan, China, Portugal, Spain, and Holland often arrived for exchanging and purchasing commodities. Based on archeological relics and architecture documents, Hoi An was not only a place of converge and exchanging of many cultures, such as Champa, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Japanese and Chinese, especially impacted most by Vietnamese and Chinese civilizations. Hoi An has a natural area of 6027.25 Ha (60sq.km) inhabited by 81.021 people. On December 4th, 1999, the UNESCO inscribed Hoi An on the World Heritage List.

In 1997, the national government of Viet Nam, the provincial government of Quang Nam and the municipal government of Hoi An started to invest state funds in restoring government-owned historic properties in Hoi An, in preparation for the nomination of Hoi An as a World Heritage site. Foreign donors also contributed by providing funds for the restoration of ancient houses, along with technical expertise which helped build the capacity of local heritage site managers.

In December 1999, the Ancient Town of Hoi An was inscribed as a World Heritage site. Encouraged by the upsurge of domestic and foreign tourist arrivals following the inscription, the national, provincial and municipal governments have invested in the long term conservation of the built heritage of Hoi An to promote its development as a tourist destination. This zone covers the monuments in the ancient town and the areas determined to be part of the monuments' original elements, which must be protected in their original state. The boundaries of the Hoi An Ancient Town were established by the Cultural Heritage Law of the Viet Nam Government and the Hoi An People's Committee Statute on Managing, Preserving and Utilizing the Hoi An Ancient Town.

Between 1997 and 2007, 168 government-owned heritage buildings were restored at a total cost of US\$ 5,864,374. The municipal government provided 45.5% of the total funding, while the national and provincial governments contributed 49.5%. Financial support from foreign donors accounted for 5% of the total cost. In addition to providing funding, the foreign donors provided technical support and management assistance (UNESCO, 2008).

According to the Project "Conserving and promoting cultural heritage in Hoi An in order to develop tourism 2009-2020" (total investment capital: US\$ 48,000,000.), Hoi An tangible heritage site is divided into three areas: Special protection area, replenishment area and context- square: 25ha, landscape protection area-square: 28ha)

Conservation of intangible heritage: The municipal government began to stage cultural performances for local residents and tourists as early as 1995. Performances of singing, dancing and playing of traditional musical instruments are regularly held in ancient houses of Hoi An.

In addition to supporting cultural events in Hoi An, the municipal government actively supports the traditional craft villages surrounding Hoi An Kim Bong (carpentry and wood work), Thanh Ha (pottery) and Tra Que (horticulture) - as well as traditional fishing villages. The municipal authorities have included them on tourist maps and promote tours and shopping trips to the villages, thus helping to sustain the local economy and maintain

traditional skills and other elements of intangible cultural heritage in these villages (UNESCO, 2008).

Hoi An Ancient Town was classified as a National Cultural Heritage Site in 1985 and subsequently as a Special National Cultural Heritage Site under the Cultural Heritage Law of 2001 amended in 2009. The entire town is State property and is effectively protected by a number of relevant national laws and governmental decisions, such as: the Cultural Heritage Law (2001, amended 2009) and the Tourism Law (2005). The 1997 Hoi An Town Statute defines in regulations that are implemented by the Hoi An Center for Monuments Management and Preservation, the responsible agency of the People's Committee for the management of the property. Day-to-day management involves collaboration with various stakeholders, to maintain the authenticity and integrity of the property and to monitor socio-economic activities within and adjacent to the property. The capacity of the professional staff has been and continues to be developed by many domestic and international training courses. Revenue from entrance tickets is invested directly in the management, preservation and promotion of the property. Management and preservation are further strengthened through master planning and action plans at the local level. There are also regular restoration and conservation programs.

Multi-disciplinary research conducted by teams of international and national scholars has informed the conservation and interpretation of the town's heritage.

A Management Plan was implemented at the time of nomination of the property, and is being kept up to date and reviewed as required by UNESCO to ensure that it remains effective.

The buffer zone is managed to protect the property from external threats. The potential adverse effects to the property caused by annual flooding and urbanization are being effectively controlled with the active participation of all authorities and the local community.

The Master Plan for the Hoi An Ancient town conservation, restoration and promotion together with the city and tourism development was approved by Prime Minister on 12 January 2012, covered the period until 2025.

Long-term management should aim to promote improvement in the living conditions for local residents. As tourism increases a strategy to manage it within the parameters of the site will be required. Strategies to deal with adverse effects of the climate are being developed and should be included in the Management Plan.

In the future, it is an aim to link the Hoi An Ancient Town with the adjacent UNESCO Cu Lao Cham Biosphere Reserve and to build Hoi An into a community integrating ecology, culture and tourism.

Twice a year, the Hoi An municipal government convenes the "Sustainable Conserving and Promoting Hoi An World Heritage" workshop. The workshop is chaired by government officials and is attended by homeowners, construction company owners and tourism enterprise operators.

2.2. Changes in tourism governance in French Polynesia

French Polynesia is an overseas collectivity governed by Article 74 of the French Constitution and Organic Law No. 2004-192 of 27 February 2004 on the Statute of Autonomy of French Polynesia. As such, it enjoys broad political autonomy, with the French state essentially retaining the sovereign functions (defense, justice, police and treasury).

As far as tourism expertise is concerned, French Polynesia is therefore totally autonomous and has a specific organization to better manage this sector, which constitutes a path of economic autonomy.

French Polynesia has experienced a long period of crisis that has seen 13 governments succeed between 2004 and 2013. However, the implementation of a sustainable tourism development strategy requires consistency in efforts and orientations, in order to produce visible and lasting effects. The tourist strategy of French Polynesia must therefore be in the long term and free from changes in majority and / or political orientations. This inability to identify and implement a real tourism strategy is all the more problematic because the figures for tourism in French Polynesia overnight and in the years following the 2008 crisis are worrying (see Figure 1).

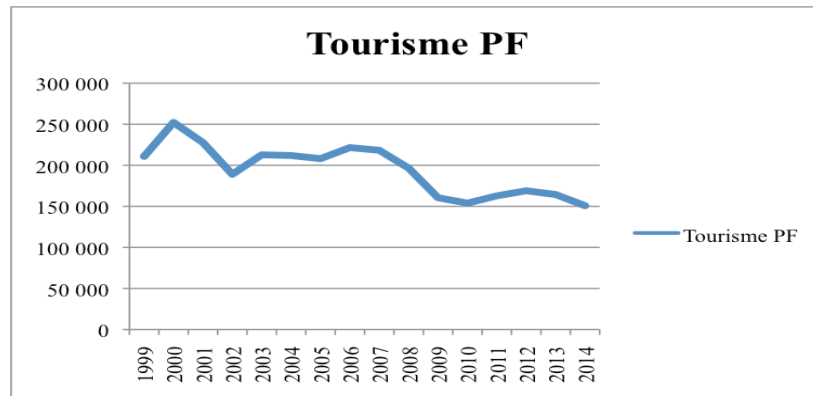


Figure 1- Evolution of tourist visits in French Polynesia from 1999 to 2014, number of tourists / year - (according to data from the Institute of Statistics of French Polynesia).

That is why in 2010 French Polynesia set up a new permanent institution: the COST (Council of Strategic Orientations for Tourism), which is mainly responsible for participating in the development of the tourism development strategy and for support implementation and evaluation. Thus, despite the instability, the COST helps ensure the sustainability of the work leading to the tourism development strategy, its application and its update.

The COST integrates, formally, all actors related to the tourism sector. It is made up of 61 contributors representing the Government of French Polynesia, local authorities and professionals and employees of tourism-related sectors in this overseas community. It thus includes a college of representatives of the country (various ministries concerned by tourism), a college of representatives of local authorities and a college of representatives of professionals and employees in sectors related to tourism development. This broad sharing of tourism expertise within the COST allows both public and private actors to act in consultation and with greater coordination for long-term actions.

A steering committee (COPIL) of the French Polynesia tourism development strategy was also launched in 2016. It is responsible for ensuring the proper implementation of the tourism policy and its evaluation. It ensures the proper coordination of stakeholders in the implementation of the tourism development strategy to achieve its objectives. It also ensures the consistency of the tourism development strategy with other sectoral policies promoted by the government. The COPIL is composed of representatives of French Polynesia, the Tourism Commission of the Assembly of French Polynesia (APF), the Economic, Social and Cultural

Council (CESC) and the Union for the Promotion of Municipalities (SPC). Representatives of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Institute of Statistics (ISPF) also participate.

In parallel, the tourism observatory, composed of private actors, was also created in 2016. This collegial body of co-steering of the strategy with the professionals has for mission to provide the elements of follow-up and steering of the strategy. Moreover, it helps to inform operators about tourist information, the results of strategic studies and the evolution of statistical indicators.

3. The specificities of sustainable tourism governance

3.1. Governance that fits in the long term

In order to achieving sustainable development in the world agenda 21, since 1992 there has been a conscious effort to integrate the principles of sustainable tourism development into national development plans of Vietnam. Following the National plans, the strategy identified four over-arching objectives: to continue to prevent and control environmental pollution; to protect and use natural and biodiversity resources in a sustainable manner; to focus on enhancement of environmental planning and management; to improve environmental quality in the industrialization process.

To reach the objective of sustainable development, many other directives, resolution and normative documents of the State have been enacted and implemented. In the past fifteen years, Vietnam has developed and completed five national strategies, these are considered the legal foundations for all stakeholders to follow during their operations in order to ensure the sustainable development of the country.

As far as, in French Polynesia, the multiple adjustments that have taken place over the last eight years have led to a long-term sustainable tourism governance. This resulted in the creation of the COST to ensure a long-term vision and match the repositioning of the destination. It was then the COPIL and the tourism observatory that came into being in order to bring more coherence to the decisions taken and their implementation.

3.2. Governance that integrates a greater number of actors, especially local

The case of Hoi An highlights the roles and responsibilities of local actors in sustainable tourism development. This leads to a wider sharing of tourism competence more delegated to local actors such as local government, local communities and local companies.

According to Aser B. Javier and Dulce B. Elazigue (2011) the role of local government is to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well being of their communities and their involvement in tourism must be related to that. The Local Government Tourism Strategy may contribute to economic development strategies and or regional as well as national tourism strategies and serve as the basis of the role of Local government Units. In the context of sustainable development, local governments also play important roles on the success of its local tourism industry, as well as have a strong influence in conserving its resources. Sustainable tourism development refers to the management of all resources that meets the needs of tourists and host regions while protecting the opportunities for the future, in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural

integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems (Tourism Act of 2010).

Vital to this approach is the contribution of a full range of stakeholders and the community in planning and decision making in order to determine the community's long term interest. On this basis, the local government can have a profound influence on the local tourism industry, and plays a part in conserving the very asset on which its future depends. Further, local government's institutional capacity to provide for tourism development will be affected by a number of issues, including: individual capacities, resources (financial and physical), community acceptance, and governance.

In the same way, the scope of practice of the French Polynesia tourism authority is wider than one could imagine at first glance. There is, in fact, an interweaving of a multitude of actors including the necessary consideration of private actors but also of administrations related to tourism: Ministry of Culture, Transport, Planning, education (training of young people), the environment (preservation of sites), not forgetting local authorities. This is of course due, first of all, to the cross-cutting nature of tourism that interacts with many other sectors. Moreover, in French Polynesia, to the extent that tourism is a real social project and given the repositioning of the destination (lifestyle, culture), the wide sharing of tourism expertise is all the more necessary. It is therefore more than essential to involve private and local actors. This is what was done through the COST (college of representatives of professionals and employees of sectors related to tourism development and college representatives of local authorities) during the definition of the tourism strategy for French Polynesia in 2010. More recently in 2016, the COPIL includes the CESC (Economic Social and Cultural Council) and the union for the promotion of municipalities. Similarly, the creation in 2016 of the Tourism Observatory aims to link the sector's governing bodies and private actors.

3.3. Complex governance not without difficulties

To go further with the role of local actors for developing Sustainable tourism in Hoi An, first, the Department of Culture, Tourism and Sport in Hoi an should work with local government and key stakeholders to identify the best choice of transport systems for their communities, regional land transport strategies. Secondly, it should focus on the environmental standards, water quality and quantity, aquatic ecosystems, biodiversity, natural hazards, allocation of natural resources. Thirdly, it should take into account the informal plans such as structure plans prepared by local government. Fourth, it should elaborate a marketing management plan for tourism destination and a regional policy statement establishing a council's broad direction and framework for resource management within its region. Finally, it should prepare a human resource strategy for tourism development.

As far as, the wide sharing of tourism expertise in French Polynesia is not without its problems. Indeed, this presupposes a good coordination of the various actors operating in the tourism field in order to implement the tourism strategy in a coherent manner. The concept of coherence, applied to IT (Information Technology) in the company, has been the subject of much research. For example, Henderson and Venkatraman, in their foundational article in the Strategic Alignment Model (1993), suggest that strategy and information systems development must be consistent. This is called strategic alignment between the company's strategy and that of the information systems. Similarly, Henderson and Thomas (1992) point out that alignment goes far beyond simply bringing IT into business strategy. The success of this strategic integration also involves linking up with the processes, structures and skills to finally arrive at the strategic alignment of the company. Alignment is then manifested by the

development of IT know-how close to the strategic axes of the organization and applicable to the entire company. Thus, it seems essential to focus on the relationship between the different stakeholders, both in terms of processes, structures and skills. This is particularly reflected in the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) such as Intranet, collaborative work tools, videoconferencing or common databases.

Conclusion

The study of the evolution of the tourism governance in French Polynesia and Vietnam makes it possible to highlight the specificities related to sustainable tourism governance.

Thus, despite the differences in political systems between the two destinations (Democratic / Communist Political System), there is a great similarity in the governance of sustainable tourism.

It is indeed essential to be part of a long-term logic, but also to integrate a large number of actors, including local actors. The case of Hoi An Ancient Town in Vietnam is a successful example of heritage conservation and sustainable tourism development based on a collaborative governance. Not only government's regulations and policies have meaningfully role for developing sustainable tourism in Vietnam. Local government plays also a central role in tourism policy, infrastructure development as well as human resource strategy.

Nowadays, the strong commitment and collaboration between local government, stakeholders and local community are very important in order to promote sustainable tourism in tourist destinations.

This governance of sustainable tourism is not without problems especially when it comes to determining which actors to consider and how effectively coordinated actions. Thus, in French Polynesia it took eight years to get close to a mode of tourism governance to meet the challenges of sustainable tourism.

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