

**VNU UNIVERSITY
OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
AND HUMANITIES, HANOI**



**RIKKYO
UNIVERSITY**

PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN TOURISM RESEARCH



NHÀ XUẤT BẢN TRI THỨC

VNU UNIVERSITY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES, HANOI
FACULTY OF TOURISM STUDIES

Website: <http://fts.ussh.vnu.edu.vn/>

PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN TOURISM RESEARCH

VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hanoi
In partnership with Rikkyo University, Japan

Hanoi, October 17th and 18th 2025

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PREFACE

In an era of profound transformations within the global tourism industry, propelled by rapid advancements in digital technologies, evolving tourist behavior, and the increasing imperative of sustainability, tourism research and education assume a pivotal role in shaping the future of the sector. It is within this critical context that international academic discourse becomes indispensable.

To commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the Faculty of Tourism Studies, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi (1995–2025), and in a significant collaboration with Rikkyo University (Japan), the International Conference on *“Contemporary Issues in Tourism Research”* was successfully convened on October 17–18, 2025. This academic served as a vital platform, bringing together distinguished scholars, policymakers, educators, and industry practitioners from Vietnam and abroad to disseminate research findings, exchange invaluable experiences, and foster discourse on emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities within tourism studies.

To realize this objective, the contributions presented at the Conference encompass a wide range of pertinent themes, including:

- Contemporary issues in tourism research and education.
- Sustainable tourism in its diverse forms (e.g., cultural tourism, ecotourism, MICE, circular economy).
- Digital transformation and innovation (AI, Big Data, Blockchain, VR/AR, and applications of technology in tourism research and education).
- Destination management, governance, branding, and tourist behavior.
- Socio-economic impacts of tourism on local communities and sustainable development.

The Organizing Committee received a substantial number of submissions from domestic and international contributors. Following a rigorous double-blind peer review and revision process, fifty-nine high-quality papers were accepted for publication. These selected works not only underscore the academic rigor and intellectual commitment of their authors but also offer valuable insights for both the theoretical understanding and practical application of tourism development in an increasingly complex and globalized environment. We are pleased to announce that these papers will be compiled into the official conference proceedings, serving as a lasting record of this academic endeavor.

The Organizing Committee wishes to extend its deepest gratitude to all authors, dedicated reviewers, esteemed partners, and enthusiastic participants for their invaluable contributions and unwavering support. It is our firm belief that this volume will serve as an indispensable resource for researchers, educators, and practitioners, while simultaneously inspiring further inquiry into the multifaceted dynamics of contemporary tourism and fostering future collaborations.

Hanoi, October 2025

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A STUDY ON THE POTENTIAL FOR MINING TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF COAL MINES IN CAM PHA, QUANG NINH PROVINCE

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Abstract

This study focuses on assessing the potential for developing geotourism associated with mining activities in Cam Pha, Quang Ninh, a region known for possessing Vietnam's largest coal reserves and a rich repository of geological and industrial heritage. Through a combination of theoretical analysis and empirical investigation, particularly field surveys at representative coal mines such as Deo Nai and Coc Sau, the research identifies a range of strengths that support mining tourism development. These include unique geological features, historical significance of the mining industry, striking geomorphological landscapes, and the rich cultural identity of the mining community. At the same time, the study acknowledges several challenges that must be addressed. These include the lack of adequate tourism infrastructure, safety concerns for visitors within active or former mining sites, post-mining environmental degradation, and the limited awareness and engagement of local communities in tourism activities. Data gathered from 126 respondents reflect a growing interest in new forms of tourism that prioritize educational experiences, especially those that contribute to the preservation of geoheritage and industrial heritage. This form of tourism holds particular value for students and young generations in learning about geography, industrial history, and environmental responsibility. The study is based on strategic educational communities and solutions that aim to promote sustainable mining-based geotourism, emphasizing the balanced integration of heritage conservation, engagement, and livelihood opportunities for local communities.

Keywords: mining tourism; mining heritage; educational tourism; Cam Pha; Quang Ninh.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism, often described as a “smokeless industry”, emerged and rapidly integrated into the economy, becoming a sector of distinct strength with a crucial role in the national economic

framework. Developing tourism not only maximizes the use of resources, generates employment, and improves the living standards of local communities, but more importantly, it has become a driving force for socio-economic growth. The tourism industry is now genuinely the “golden goose” of the economy. Mining tourism is a specialized form of tourism that draws on historical, cultural, landscape, technical, and educational values derived from former or active mineral extraction sites. Its purpose is to serve sustainable tourism development, community education, and the diversification of tourism products. The concept of mining tourism was first proposed in 2016 by Slovak scholars Pavol Rybár and Ľuboš Štrba, who introduced their definition at an international conference on geotourism, mining tourism, sustainable development, and environmental protection held in Florence, Italy. According to (Rybár & Štrba, 2016):

“Mining tourism is a form of adventure and educational tourism, targeted at both professionals and the general public, combining both experiential activities and knowledge through practical trips to mining sites, mining museums, and the study of archived data of the mining industry.”

They emphasized that mining tourism is a unique form of tourism, sharing a lot in common while still maintaining its distinctive traits when compared to geotourism or industrial tourism. Mining tourism focuses on elements such as mining heritage, occupational symbolism, and the sophisticated culture that revolves around miners - aspects outside the typical scope of geotourism.

In Vietnam - and particularly in Quang Ninh province - mineral resources are abundant, most notably its large, long-active coal mines. Quang Ninh has been inseparably linked with the coal industry throughout its formation and development, hosting around 90% of the nation's coal reserves. Especially notable is the Cam Pha area, which includes the Deo Nai coal mine, visited by President Ho Chi Minh in 1959 - now recognized as a National Historical Site (2016). The area also contains architectural and historical landmarks such as the Deo Nai mine road junction, 12/11 Square, Port Crane No. 1, anti-aircraft gun positions, the Command Bunker of the Cua Ong Coal Selection Company, the Vung Duc scenic and historical site, the headquarters of the Coal Newspaper, and the Cam Pha military school (vietnamtourism.gov.vn). Additionally, attractions such as Bai Tu Long Bay, Cua Ong Temple, Cai Bau Pagoda, and the Yoko Onsen Quang Hanh hot spring can be integrated into tourism routes to enhance appeal. From a transportation perspective, the area is well connected via the Ha Noi - Hai Phong - Quang Ninh Expressway, Ao Tien International Port, and Van Don International Airport - making it a logistically perfect and easily accessible location for developing mining tourism experiences that reflect miner culture.

Accordingly, the present study seeks to elucidate the key factors influencing the development of mining tourism and to evaluate its potential within the designated study area. Furthermore, the research proposes a set of foundational orientations and strategic measures aimed at fostering the sustainable development of mining tourism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Today, mineral mines are increasingly regarded as industrial heritage sites in diverse forms - open-pit mines, underground mines, and disused sites - all seeking to attract visitors, particularly those interested in minerals or with mining work experience. Globally, numerous countries actively conduct scientific research, register mining heritage as UNESCO World Heritage, and introduce heritage mining routes for tourists. Notably, several mining landscapes have been inscribed on the World Heritage List. For example, the Cuyuna iron ore mines in Minnesota, USA, near Vermillion and Vesmi, was once a major supplier of steel during the span of both World Wars, suffered harshly from an economic recession in the late 1960s, leaving behind degraded mining infrastructure and artificial lakes. Urgent terraformation of these outdated mining equipment that are polluting the landscapes for tourism has enabled the site to gradually regain its cultural and industrial heritage value (Sutherland, 2015). Efforts made to repurpose these sites have proved the transformation and the development of geo-tourism in these sites to be a success. To illustrate this, Poland's Dąbrowa Górnicza transformed a former mining pit lake into a leisure complex dubbed the "Masurian Lake of Silesia" (Dzięgiel, 2020). Another exemplary site is Poland's Wieliczka Salt Mine - one of the world's oldest, with continuous operation from the 13th century until the late 20th century. Beyond geological and mineralogical significance, Wieliczka boasts a 300 km network of tunnels, intricately carved mining chambers, and underground works of art, representing a unique fusion of mining activity and cultural creativity (Dzięgiel, 2021). In remote regions of Australia, such as Kuranda near Cairns, tourism has been harnessed alongside mining, with local communities developing tourism enterprises based on mining heritage (Buultjens et al., 2010). Portugal's uranium mining area is part of the Naturtejo Meseta Geopark - a UNESCO Global Geopark - with great mining tourism potential (Neto de Carvalho & Rodrigues, 2020).

Past research (Edwards & i Coit, 1996) has demonstrated the tourism potential of former mining areas in Wales and Spain, introducing urban planners with the concept of eco-museum concepts. Others (Saurí-Pujol & Llurdés-Coit, 1995) view mining tourism as redeveloping old mines into destinations showcasing tools, machinery, and ore-processing technologies, offering new insights into the mining industry. (Rybár et al., 2010) note that visitors' interests in underground tours can be enhanced through modern technology, such as virtual mining simulators across various platforms.

Previous studies have demonstrated the diverse socio-economic and cultural benefits of mining tourism across different contexts. Following (Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2009), who investigated mining tourism, local communities tend to perceive tourism as offering greater advantages than disadvantages, particularly in terms of job creation, and display both positive perceptions and supportive attitudes toward tourism development in mining areas. Similarly,

(Conesa et al., 2008) reported that in Cartagena's La Unión mining district (Spain), the emergence of mining tourism has opened new economic opportunities for the region. Innovative tourism products - such as visitor centers, museums, heritage trains, organized guided tours (Ruiz, 2011), thematic mining routes, and underground cycling trails (Geopark Karavanke) have further enhanced the attractiveness of these destinations (Bedjanič & Lenka, 2017). The creation of dedicated mining parks has also proven to be an effective strategy for revitalizing former mining sites, as illustrated by prominent examples in Spain and Italy: the Riotinto Mining Park in Huelva (Andalusia), the Almaden Mining Park in Ciudad Real (Castilla-La Mancha), the Mining Park in Teruel (Aragon), the La Unión Mining Park in Murcia (Region of Murcia), the Sardinia Geo-mining Park (Italy), and the Tuscan Mining Park (Italy) (Ruiz, 2011). Another widely adopted approach involves transforming abandoned mines into eco-museums, thereby preserving mining heritage while fostering tourism development (Pardo Abad, 2020). Beyond economic gains, mining tourism has also been recognized for its educational value. (Różycki & Dryglas, 2017) emphasized its potential to deepen visitors' understanding of geology, Earth's structural features, and the demanding nature of mining work. (Gürer et al., 2019) identified the Soma region in Turkey as a particularly suitable location for mining tourism, highlighting its capacity to raise public awareness of mining heritage. In Southeast Asia, (Agustriani et al., 2020) through a case study in Balibe Hill, Bonder Village, Central Lombok, Indonesia, demonstrated that post-mining areas, when repurposed for tourism, not only generate income for local communities but also foster distinctive and unique place identities. Data for their study were obtained from on-site surveys conducted with local residents, reinforcing the role of community engagement in ensuring the sustainability of such initiatives.

From the above examples, it is evident that in order to develop mining tourism, a crucial step is to conduct thorough research and accurately inventory locations with favorable conditions and post-mining resources, thereby enabling the planning and design of optimal tourism products as a foundation for attracting visitors to a given area. In addition, tourism development goals cannot be achieved without the supporting elements essential for tourism activities, such as appropriate accommodation facilities, food and beverage services, and complementary infrastructure.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Secondary data collection method

The authors collected information and data from various sources, including conference papers, scientific research projects, published studies, reputable online news portals specializing in the field, books, professional journals and related disciplines, as well as development projects, tourism plans, circulars, resolutions, and reports issued by central and local management agencies such as the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, the General Statistics Office of Vietnam, and the Vietnam National Coal and Mineral Industries Group, among others. The

synthesized data served as the foundation for an overall assessment of the current state of research and an evaluation of the resource potential for developing mining tourism within the study area.

Field survey method

During the research, we undertook comprehensive field surveys within the study area, systematically collecting primary data and photographic documentation of the research subjects, namely the operational sites of the Deo Nai - Coc Sau and Ha Tu coal mines. Additional surveys were conducted at relevant tourist attractions, including the Geological Hot Spring Center (Cam Thach, Cam Pha), the Yoko Onsen Quang Hanh hot spring resort, and the Cam Pha coal mining memorial site. The integration of these findings enabled the formulation of tailored tourism programs and itineraries appropriate to the regional context. Furthermore, the study assessed the natural and socio-cultural conditions, identifying both the facilitating factors and the constraints influencing visitor attraction and the broader development of mining tourism in the locality.

Questionnaire survey method

Based on the study's objectives, a questionnaire survey method was employed to gather opinions from stakeholders, including management authorities, experts in the fields of geology and mining, students in relevant disciplines (geology, mining, and geotourism), and members of the local community, using pre-prepared survey forms. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: (1) personal information of the respondents (such as age, gender, and field of work), and (2) questions focusing on the investigation of criteria (observed variables) aimed at assessing awareness of mining tourism and the potential for its development among different respondent groups.

A total of 126 completed responses were collected (via Google Forms), of which 37 responses (accounting for 29.4%) indicated no prior knowledge of mining tourism - partly reflecting the novelty of this tourism type in Vietnam. Furthermore, the survey results enabled the research team to identify the level of interest among participants should they have the opportunity to engage in mining tourism, as well as their opinions on the advantages and potential challenges in developing this tourism type. Initial assessments of development potential were also made based on respondents' willingness to participate and their stated willingness to pay for tourism activities.

GENERAL MINING HERITAGE OF THE STUDY AREA

Cam Pha is one of the most important cities in Quang Ninh province, strategically located in northeastern Vietnam. Its coastal position along a key transportation corridor connecting Ha Long, Van Don, and Mong Cai allows for easy access by road, sea, and air through Van Don International Airport (Fig. 1). The city has a diverse landscape that includes Bai Tu Long Bay, offshore islands, sandy beaches, and coastal mountains, which supports the growth of marine and ecological tourism. Being close to major tourism hubs such as Ha Long and the Van Don Economic Zone

makes Cam Pha well-suited for regional tour itineraries. At the same time, Quang Ninh is Vietnam’s largest coal producer, and Cam Pha is home to several of the nation’s biggest coal mines, including Deo Nai, Coc Sau, Ha Tu, and Vang Danh. These mines all have significant potential for mining tourism.

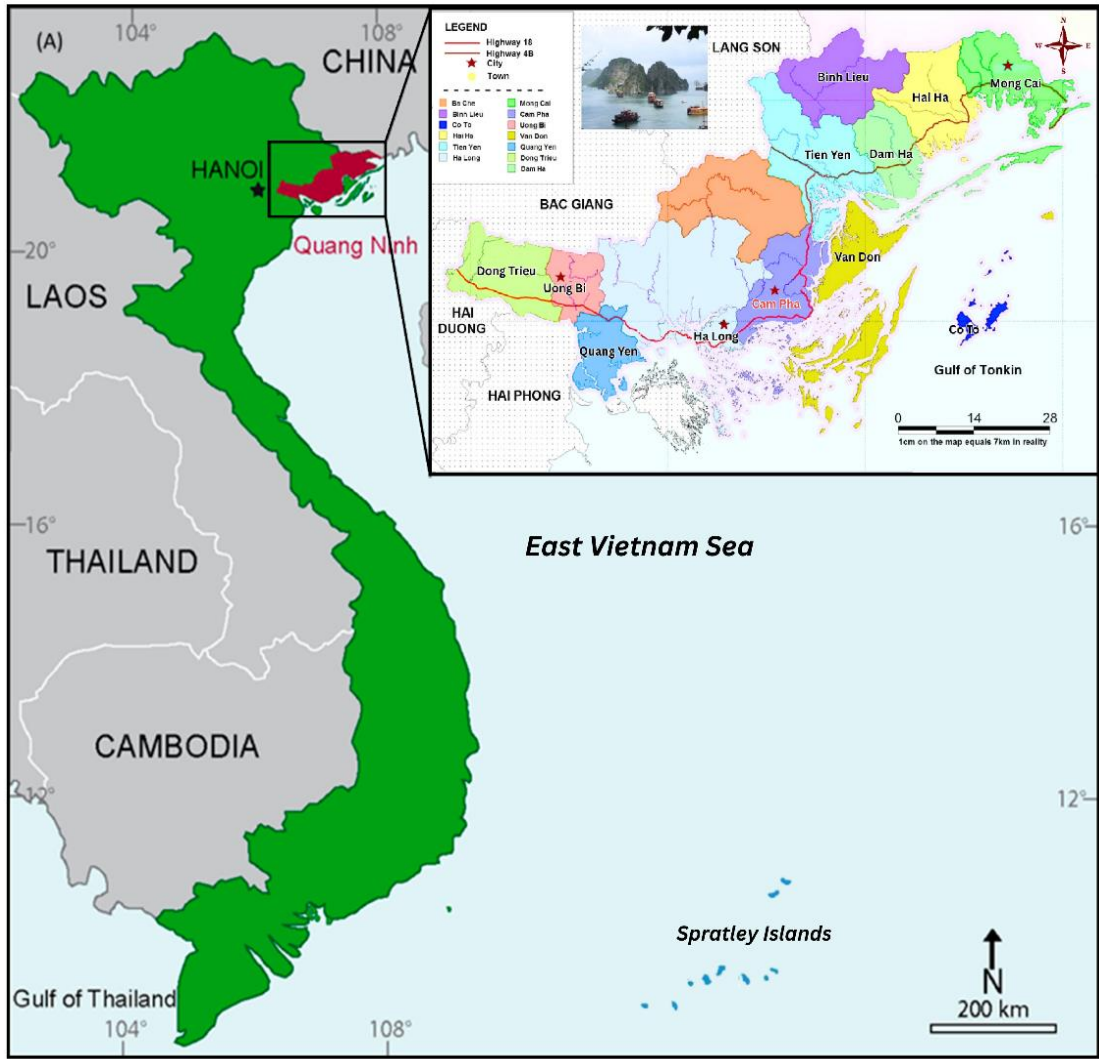


Fig. 1. Location map of the research area, Cam Pha city, Quang Ninh province

Cao Son coal mine has also organized tour routes for visitors to experience the most distinctive features of both the open-pit and underground mining sites, including viewing the entire mine, taking photos with heavy-duty trucks, trying out miner activities with protective gear and mining tools, and purchasing coal-based products (Fig. 2A). In 2015, the first international mine exploration tour was organized for a group of 40 visitors from 10 countries, including Japan, Taiwan, the USA, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and India, to visit Vang Danh and Ha Lam mines. After experiencing the mine tour, the visitors showed great enthusiasm. A

representative of Fire Vietnam Outdoor Co., Ltd (Ho Chi Minh City) highly appreciated the potential and uniqueness of the coal mines, hoping that the coal mine tour would become an attractive tourism product and draw visitors to Quang Ninh (vovworld.vn). Encouragingly, the tour later received significant attention from major travel agencies specializing in unique tourism experiences, such as Saigon Tourist, Fire Vietnam Travel, and SMI-VN Travel. These travel companies sent formal requests for site surveys and to bring clients for trial exploration. This tour not only attracts international visitors due to its uniqueness and adventurous nature but also offers high educational and historical value.



Fig 2A. The mining site at the Cao Son coal mine was surveyed and studied for inclusion in the tourism tour
(Photo: baoquangninh.vn)



Fig. 2B. Tourists take souvenir photos at the historical site of Uncle Ho's visit to Deo Nai coal mine (1959)
(Photo: baoquangninh.vn)

The mining heritage of Cam Pha includes diverse geological, cultural, and historical values, which show the close link between natural resources and human activity. *Geological heritage* features the unique structural aspects of the coal basin. This includes layers of coal seams, fault systems, and surrounding rocks, which represent the long-term processes of basin formation and geological change. The area's post-mining landscapes, including open pits, underground tunnels, spoil heaps, and mine lakes, reflect the industrial impact and have important scientific and historical value for mining technology. Fossil sites add even more to the geoheritage, providing insights into ancient environments and offering educational opportunities. *Cultural heritage* relates to the history of the coal industry's development. It spans from early manual extraction with simple tools to the use of modern technologies and support industries alongside environmental challenges. The unique "miner culture" - which includes living conditions, work environments, traditions, folk performances, festivals, legends, and the miners' annual commemorations-creates a distinct cultural identity that enhances the overall heritage value of the area. The groups of heritage values and related tourism activities are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Groups of factors and heritage values related to mining tourism

Groups	Heritage value	Sightseeing/Exploration Activities
Geological heritage	Geological structure	• Study the geological structure of the coal basin, coal layers, fault systems, and surrounding rocks. • Learn about the history of coal basin formation, sedimentary stages, and geological changes.
	Mining-related heritage	• Visit the current status of coal mines, underground mines, open-pit mining areas, and coal dumps. • Explore the landforms created by mining activities, including mine lakes and spoil heaps. • Scientific and historical values of geological heritage related to mining.
	Fossil	• Surveying and assess the scientific and educational values of areas containing fossils. • Learn about types of fossils, their ages, and ancient living environments.
Cultural heritage	History of mining industry development	• Early stage: the process of discovering and initially mining coal in Quang Ninh, including exploration of manual mining methods, tools, and rudimentary equipment. • Current stage: innovations in coal mining technology, development of supporting industries, and understanding environmental issues related to mining activities.
	Coal Industry Culture	• Explore the living and working conditions of mine workers through different periods. • Learn about the customs, cultural activities, and artistic practices of mine workers. • Songs, stories, and legends about the coal industry. • Festivals, rituals, and traditional miners' days.

(Source: author, 2025)

The interweaving of scientific values (geological and paleontological) with humanistic values (history and cultural heritage of the coal industry) creates a mining tourism product with substantial depth, catering to multiple market segments: from mass tourism and educational tourism to specialized thematic tourism and community-based experiential tourism. With proper planning and sustainable management, Cam Pha has the potential to become a unique destination that integrates

education, conservation, and recreation, simultaneously raising public awareness of heritage and contributing to local socio-economic development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Potential for mining tourism development in Cam Pha area

Coal mining activities in Cam Pha, Quảng Ninh have played a particularly significant role in Vietnam's industrialization process, both from the perspective of national history and within the broader global context. Since the late nineteenth century, under French colonial rule, Cam Pha emerged as the largest coal mining center in Indochina, laying the foundation for the formation of an industrial working class and the establishment of key infrastructures such as railways, seaports, and underground mines. During the periods of resistance and national reconstruction after 1945, Cam Pha coal not only ensured a vital energy supply for heavy industry and transportation but also generated foreign exchange through exports, while the mining workforce became a pioneering social force in revolutionary movements. Entering the socialist construction era (1954-1986), the coal industry was regarded as a cornerstone of industrialization, with large open-pit mines such as Deo Nai, Coc Sau, and Cao Son providing fuel for essential industries including thermal power generation, metallurgy, and cement production. In the period of renovation and international integration, Cam Pha has continued to play a decisive role in securing national energy security and increasing foreign exchange earnings from exports, while also promoting urbanization and enhancing the quality of the industrial labor force. Within the global trajectory of industrialization, the Cam Pha coal mining region can be seen as analogous to major coal industrial centers in Europe (such as Germany's Ruhr region), serving as a socio-economic driver of the transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy. Thus, the development of the coal mining industry in Cam Pha not only holds energy and economic significance but also reflects the integration of local industrial heritage into the global flow of industrialization. These factors affirm the importance of the region's industrial heritage and highlight its considerable potential for the development of mining-based geotourism.

Based on the results of an online survey with a total of 126 responses focusing on evaluating respondents' awareness, demand, and suggestions, the analysis examined trends in the age groups interested in this new form of tourism, the types of experiences desired, concerns or barriers to participation, and the willingness to pay for a tour. The occupations and ages of the respondents were primarily students, with a smaller proportion being researchers, managers, or office staff (Fig. 3A, 3B). Most respondents had previously traveled to Quang Ninh province, with the group having visited two or more times accounting for the highest proportion (56.3%); those who had visited once made up 28.6%, while those who had never been to Quang Ninh accounted for only 15.1%. This

reflects Quang Ninh’s strong appeal as a destination capable of motivating repeat visits, as evidenced by the high proportion of the “have been two or more times” group (Fig. 3C).

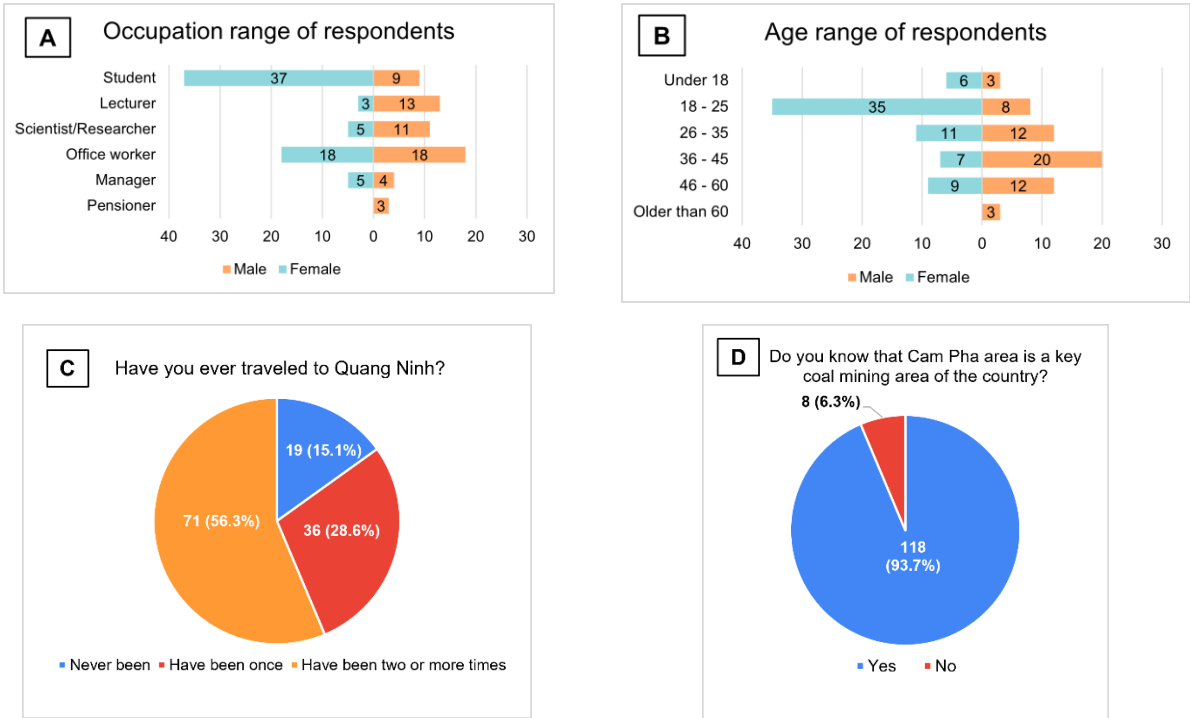


Fig. 3. (A) Occupation range of respondents; (B) Age range of respondents; (C) Number of times respondents have visited the study area; (D) Respondents' feedback on knowing Cam Pha (Quang Ninh) as a key coal mining area of Vietnam ($n=126$)

The survey results also show that an overwhelming majority of respondents (93.7%) were aware that Cam Pha is a key coal mining area of the country, while only 8 people (6.3%) were unaware of this fact. This indicates a high level of recognition of Cam Pha’s role as an industrial coal mining hub, underscoring the socio-economic importance of the coal industry in Quang Ninh as well as its presence in media, education, and tourism experiences. This high level of awareness provides favorable conditions for developing tourism products centered on industrial and mining themes, as visitors already possess a foundational understanding, which can enhance receptiveness and interest in local mining heritage tourism experiences (Fig. 3D).

The survey results indicate that the majority of respondents (89 individuals, accounting for 70.6%) had heard of mining tourism, while 37 respondents (29.4%) were unfamiliar with the concept (Fig. 4A). Notably, those who were aware of this tourism type were primarily lecturers, students, and researchers-individuals with access to information through academic environments, scientific research, or training programs related to geology, tourism, and heritage. This suggests that knowledge of mining tourism is still concentrated within the professional and academic community. In contrast, most of those unfamiliar with the concept belonged to the

local community and general tourists, who have fewer opportunities to engage with specialized concepts. This serves as an important indicator of the awareness gap between the research-education sector and the local community, highlighting the necessity of enhancing public communication, organizing experiential activities, and introducing mining tourism products to the general public.

Regarding the question on assessing the development potential of this tourism type, most respondents expressed a favorable view of the potential for sightseeing and experiential activities at both operating and former coal mines to become tourism products. Specifically, 72 respondents (57.1%) considered this an attractive tourism product, while 32 respondents (25.4%) rated it as very attractive. Meanwhile, 21 respondents (16.7%) assessed the level of attractiveness as average, and only 1 respondent (0.8%) regarded it as unattractive (Fig. 4B). These figures reflect a positive public perception toward mining-related experiential tourism, especially when such products combine uniqueness and novelty with immersive, educational experiences. However, the fact that 16.7% rated it as average and 0.8% as unattractive indicates the existence of a less interested segment, possibly due to concerns over safety, environmental issues, or a lack of understanding of the experiential value. This suggests that to maximize tourist appeal, it is essential to strengthen communication efforts, ensure safety and comfort standards, and design engaging experiential content that allows visitors to both explore and appreciate the industrial heritage and cultural values of the coal mining sector. Enhancing community awareness will not only increase local participation and support in mining tourism development but also help spread heritage values, providing a foundation for a sustainable tourism model that tightly integrates conservation with local socio-economic development.

The survey results indicate that experiences associated with the cultural and historical values of the coal industry receive the highest level of interest from visitors, with learning about the history and culture of the coal industry accounting for 64.3%, followed by visiting a coal museum and heritage site at 63.5%. Activities involving observation and exploration of the mining environment also attract considerable attention, including observing the coal mine from above (54.0%) and visiting an underground mining tunnel (50.0%). In contrast, experiences requiring direct participation in mining activities, such as role-playing as a miner, or combining the trip with relaxation and eco-tourism, record only moderate interest (40.5%). The proportion of respondents suggesting other activities beyond the listed options is very low (4.0%), indicating that visitors' preferences are primarily focused on the identified activities (Fig. 4C). These findings suggest that the strategy for developing coal mine tourism products should prioritize in-depth interpretation of industrial heritage and sightseeing experiences, while selectively incorporating role-play and eco-tourism activities to diversify the offerings.

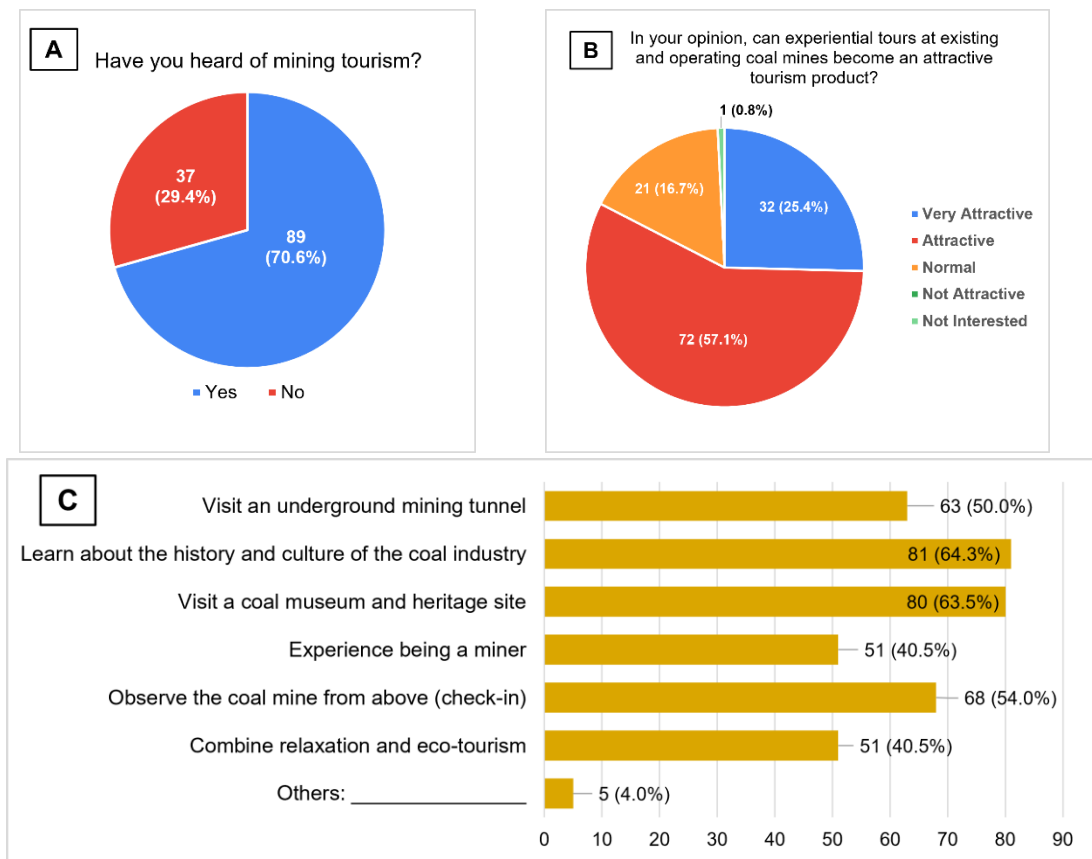


Fig. 4. (A) Respondents' awareness level of mining tourism; (B) Response to the attractiveness of experiential tours at existing and operating mines; (C) Experiences respondents are interested in if participating in a coal mine tour ($n=126$)

Other suggested contributions include: (1) converting the purpose to tourism after the closure of underground mines and cessation of extraction activities, in order to take advantage of existing mine facilities; (2) providing visitors with information on the geological and mineral characteristics, mining technology, and environmental protection issues during the mining process; and (3) establishing a screening room to showcase documentary films about the history of the coal industry.

The survey results show that Cam Pha possesses several key advantages for developing mining tourism (Fig. 5). Most notable is the historical and cultural value of the coal industry (71.4%), which forms the foundation for creating tourism products associated with unique industrial heritage, capable of attracting visitors interested in history and labor culture. In addition, the uniqueness and distinctiveness of this tourism type (62.7%), along with its exceptional natural resources and landscapes (67.5%), create a distinctive appeal rarely found in other destinations. The advantage of connectivity with Quang Ninh's famous tourist attractions (65.1%) opens opportunities to integrate mining tourism into inter-regional tours, thereby increasing visitors' length of stay and spending.

Moreover, although only 40.5% of respondents highly rated it, convenient transportation infrastructure is still considered a supportive factor, facilitating easier access to the destination. Overall, these advantages demonstrate that Cam Pha has the potential to position mining tourism as a complementary yet distinctive product within Quang Ninh's diverse tourism landscape.

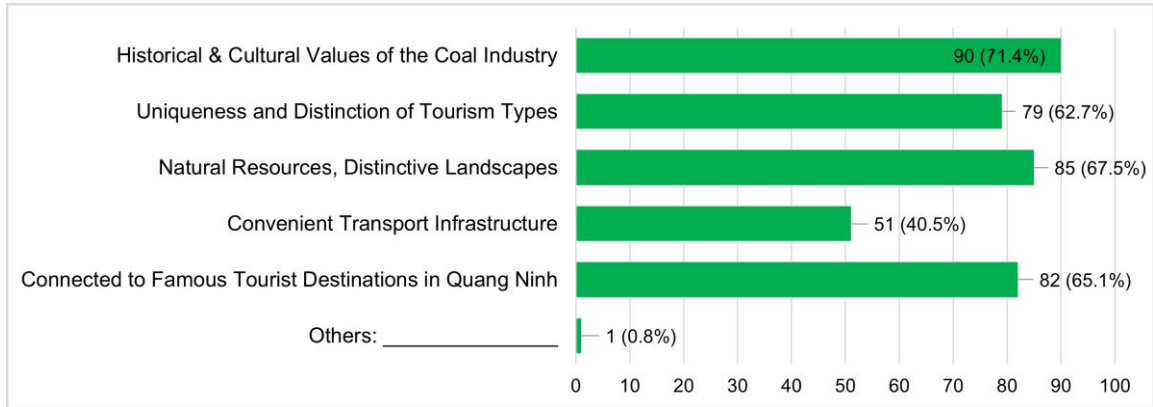


Fig. 5. Advantages for Cam Pha in developing mining tourism ($n=126$)

The survey results indicate that respondents have identified several major challenges to the development of mining tourism (Fig. 6). Most notably, environmental pollution and landscape degradation (64.3%) directly affect the attractiveness of destinations and the sustainability of tourism activities. The second major concern is the risk of accidents during mining operations and sightseeing (62.7%), which deters potential visitors and requires the implementation of strict safety measures. In addition, the lack of specialized and appealing tourism products (49.2%), combined with insufficient investment in tourism infrastructure and services (47.6%), reduces the competitiveness of this tourism type. Limited public awareness of the value of mining tourism (53.2%) is also a barrier, as it restricts community participation and support. Finally, competition from other forms of tourism (40.5%) makes it difficult for mining tourism to gain a competitive edge in the market.

Therefore, although mining tourism possesses its own potential and unique advantages, sustainable development requires simultaneously addressing environmental issues, ensuring safety, improving infrastructure, and enhancing community awareness.

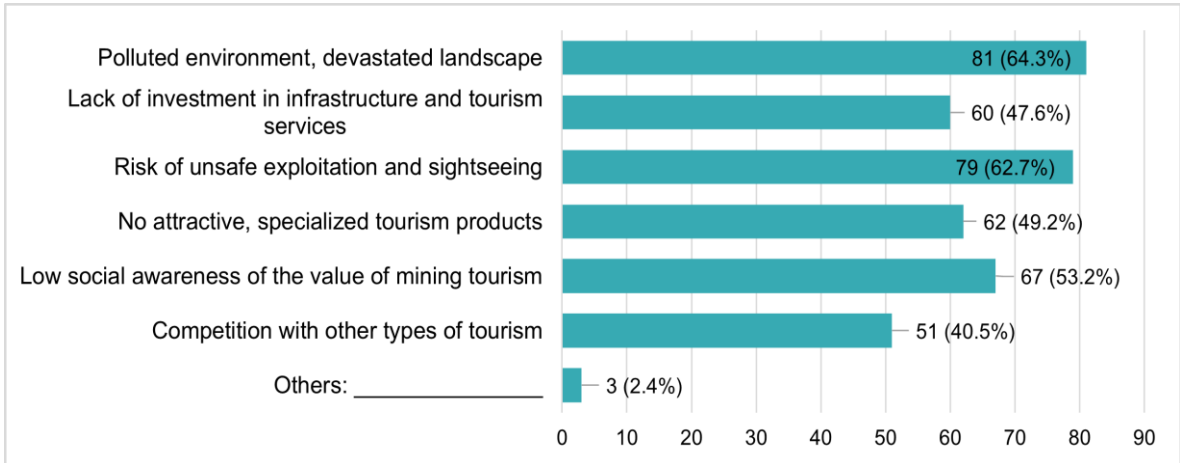
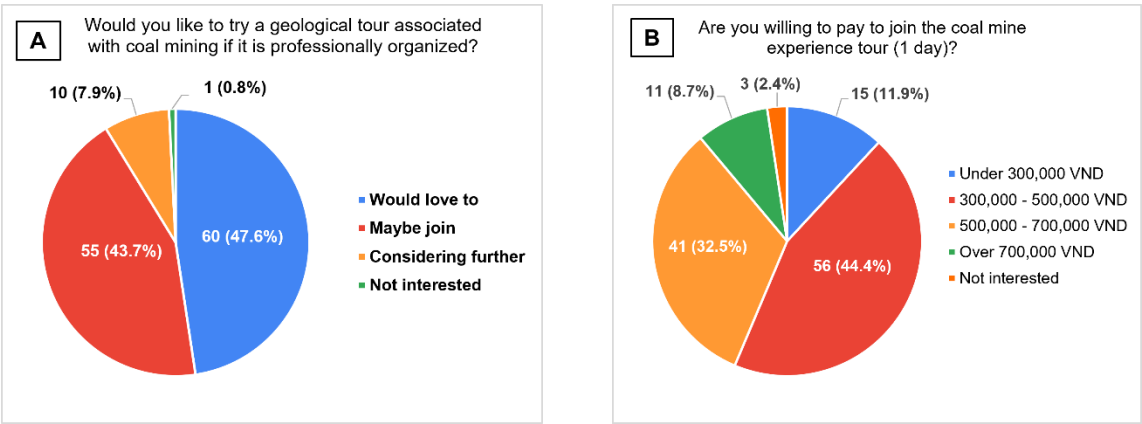


Fig. 6. Respondents' awareness level of mining tourism (*n*=126)

Respondents' intention to participate in mining tourism

The survey results show that the majority of respondents expressed a positive attitude and an intention to participate in coal mining tourism if it is organized professionally (Fig. 7A). Specifically, the ready-to-participate group accounted for 47.6%, reflecting strong interest and a willingness to join as soon as the opportunity arises. The potential group made up 43.7%, indicating a generally positive attitude but still requiring additional information or persuasive factors such as pricing, itinerary, or safety issues. In addition, 7.9% of respondents chose “Considering further,” demonstrating a certain level of interest but lingering hesitation, possibly due to concerns about safety during participation, environmental impacts, or unclear details of the experiential activities. Notably, the proportion of respondents not interested was only 0.8% (1 person) with the choice “Not interested,” suggesting that market demand for this type of tourism faces almost no major barriers. Overall, more than 91% of respondents were in a state of readiness or potential willingness to participate, which is a positive signal for the development of coal mining tourism products, especially if professional organization, safety assurance, and unique visitor experiences are prioritized.



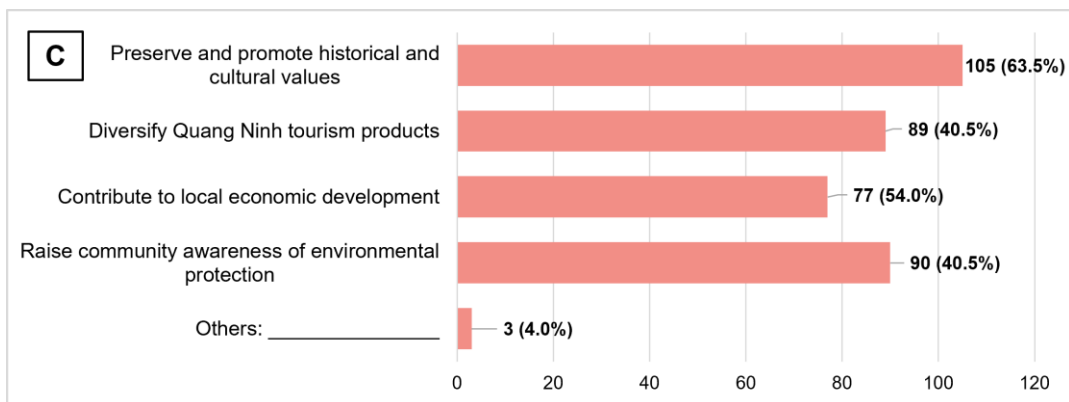


Fig. 7. (A) Respondents' willingness to participate in a professionally organized coal mining tour; (B) The willingness to pay for a coal mine experience tour (1 day); (C) Respondents' views on the importance of developing extractive tourism ($n=126$)

The survey results on respondents' willingness to pay for a one-day coal mine experience tour (Fig. 7B) indicate that the majority are interested in participating and willing to pay at different price levels, with the 300,000 - 500,000 VND range accounting for the highest proportion (44.4%), reflecting that this is the most suitable price range for most participants' budgets and expectations. The 500,000 - 700,000 VND range ranks second with 32.5%, suggesting that a considerable portion of customers are willing to pay more for higher-quality services or unique experiences. Meanwhile, the proportions of those selecting under 300,000 VND (11.9%) and over 700,000 VND (8.7%) are smaller, indicating a limited segment of price-sensitive customers or those willing to spend significantly more. Notably, the proportion of respondents not interested in this type of tourism is only 2.4%, suggesting that the market potential remains substantial and that the coal mine experience tour has the capacity to attract the attention of most potential visitors.

The survey results on respondents' perspectives regarding the significance of developing mining tourism (Fig. 7C) indicate that the most highly valued factor is "Preserving and promoting historical and cultural values," with 105 votes (83.3%). This reflects that the majority of respondents perceive this tourism type as an important means to safeguard cultural-historical heritage and transmit it to future generations. Next, "Raising community awareness of environmental protection" accounted for 71.4% (90 votes), demonstrating the public's high expectations for the environmental education role of mine-based experiential activities. "Diversifying Quang Ninh's tourism products" ranked third with 70.6% (89 votes), emphasizing tourists' desire to expand the destination's product portfolio and enhance its appeal. The factor "Contributing to local economic development" received 61.1% (77 votes), reflecting a positive perception of the economic benefits of this model. In addition, only 2.4% (3 votes) selected "Other," indicating a high level of consensus within the community regarding the key benefits that mining tourism can bring. Additional comments highlighted

educational values, the enhancement of public and tourist understanding of the mining industry, as well as the importance of maximizing the post-exploitation value of mines by repurposing mining facilities and infrastructure into long-term industrial heritage assets. Overall, the findings suggest that this tourism type is expected to bring not only economic benefits but also educational, cultural, and environmental value, thereby contributing to sustainable local development.

The survey results with 126 respondents reveal a strong relationship between respondent characteristics, age groups, and response patterns to questions related to mining tourism. The majority of students and young participants (18-25 years old), who accounted for a large proportion of the sample, demonstrated higher awareness of this tourism type, with 93.7% recognizing Cam Pha as a key coal mining area and 70.6% having heard of the concept of mining tourism. They also tended to evaluate mining tourism products more positively, expressed readiness to participate as soon as opportunities arise, and accepted a moderate payment level (300,000-500,000 VND). In contrast, middle-aged and older groups (26-40 and over 40 years old), who were less represented in the survey, responded more cautiously, often prioritizing issues of safety, environment, and service quality, as reflected in higher proportions of “average” or hesitant evaluations, yet showed greater willingness to pay at higher levels (500,000-700,000 VND). This differentiation reflects demographic stratification, in which younger and academic groups are associated with expectations of experience and exploration, while older groups emphasize safety, comfort, and cultural-social values. At the same time, the results highlight a notable awareness gap between the academic-professional community and the local population, as the concept of mining tourism remains relatively new to general visitors. These findings confirm that respondent characteristics and age groups not only influence awareness but also shape consumer behavior and attitudes toward participation, underscoring the necessity of clear market segmentation and the design of mining tourism products tailored to different groups, while simultaneously strengthening communication and community education to expand the potential customer base and ensure sustainable development.

Challenges for mining tourism development

The adaptation of underground safety and protective measures for mass tourism remains inadequate. Current safety systems and specialized protective equipment in mine shafts are primarily designed for coal industry workers. Applying them to general tourists, particularly those unfamiliar with harsh environments (e.g., high humidity, darkness, potential oxygen deficiency), poses significant risks. It is recommended to limit visiting depths and designated areas, design simulated underground routes on the surface or in decommissioned mining zones, and provide specialized tourist safety gear (helmets, lamps, masks, boots, dust-proof suits). Additionally, guides should receive specialized training in industrial safety.

Local communities also lack skills in community-based tourism. Compared to established eco-tourism destinations such as Sa Pa and Ninh Binh, residents in coal mining areas are unfamiliar with tourist services, leading to limitations in communication, product presentation, and experiential organization. Short-term training programs should be organized for local residents, covering communication skills, homestay management, food services, and environmental protection. Partnerships with tourism enterprises could help develop community-based tourism models integrated with vocational education.

Furthermore, certain age groups (e.g., elderly people, young children) may be unsuitable for industrial tourism environments due to high humidity, low light, noise pollution, and physical demands associated with difficult terrain. Tour packages should be categorized by age group: simulated experiences for seniors and children, and actual mine visits for healthy adult tourists. Complementary outdoor routes such as museums, reclaimed mining landscapes, and exhibition spaces should be added to diversify options.

In summary, effective coal mine tourism development requires adjusting tour content to suit different visitor segments, upgrading infrastructure and specialized safety equipment, and training local communities to foster a friendly and professional tourism environment.

Proposed solutions for developing mining tourism

1) Infrastructure and safety improvement: Upgrading the visiting infrastructure is a prerequisite for ensuring visitor safety and enhancing the tourism experience. This includes installing secure walkways, adequate lighting systems, and proper ventilation in underground tunnels or simulated mining areas. Tourism-standard protective equipment should be provided for all visitors. Experience tours should be designed specifically for decommissioned mines to eliminate operational risks while preserving authenticity.

2) Strengthening communication and promotion: One major challenge is that many people remain unaware of mining tourism as a unique travel option. To address this, promotional efforts should be intensified through social media platforms, immersive experiential videos, and collaborations with schools and organizations to organize educational tours and team-building activities. Such initiatives not only raise public awareness but also enhance the appeal of the product, facilitating easier market penetration.

3) Diversifying and innovating the experience: A variety of novel and engaging activities can significantly enhance the attractiveness of mining tourism:

- **VR mining simulation:** Virtual reality technology allows visitors to experience underground mining environments without physically entering the site, ensuring absolute safety and accommodating all audiences, including the elderly, children, and those with claustrophobia. This high-tech approach delivers a vivid and distinctive experience.

- **Mining heritage museum:** Preserves and showcases the culture, history, tools, and imagery of the coal industry. This adds depth to the tourism product, highlighting mining as not only an industrial activity but also a cultural and historical legacy. This is particularly suitable for school trips and educational tourism.

- **“A day as a miner” tour:** Visitors immerse themselves in the role of a miner by wearing protective gear, simulating coal extraction, and enjoying a typical miner’s lunch. This hands-on experience fosters empathy, appreciation for miners’ labor, and strong social media appeal.

Survey responses reflect a clear demand: mining tourism should be modern, safe, content-rich, and distinctive. The integration of technology, authentic experiences, and cultural elements will be the key to creating a unique and sustainable tourism product in Quang Ninh province.

4) Integrating with surrounding tourism resources: Combining mining tours with hot spring bathing or cultural-historical tourism can spark curiosity and diversify visitor experiences. Potential connection points include Yoko Onsen Quang Hanh: Enhances wellness and relaxation appeal; Historical site of President Ho Chi Minh’s visit to Deo Nai mine: Adds cultural-historical depth; Vung Duc hot mineral centers: Contribute to a closed-loop tourism route.

5) Local human resource development: Developing a team of specialized tour guides knowledgeable about mining history and regional culture is essential. Training programs should focus on guiding skills, tourist communication, industrial safety, and first aid. Community participation should be encouraged through homestay services, local cuisine, and souvenir production.

6) Public-private partnerships and investment attraction: Investment from major tourism enterprises should be sought to design professional, large-scale, and insured tours. Collaboration with the coal industry and local authorities will ensure lawful and efficient utilization of mining tourism resources. Specific supportive policies, such as tax reductions and preferential loans for community-based tourism households in mining areas, should also be introduced.

CONCLUSIONS

This study highlights the significant potential for developing mining tourism in Cam Pha, Quang Ninh province, particularly by leveraging the distinctive characteristics of coal mines as unique tourism resources. Survey results indicate that while there is notable interest from certain groups, such as researchers and students, public awareness of mining tourism remains limited. The main challenges include insufficient infrastructure, safety concerns, and a lack of specialized promotional activities.

To address these challenges, a set of integrated solutions has been proposed, encompassing infrastructure improvement and safety enhancement, targeted communication campaigns, and the creation of innovative tourism products such as VR mine simulations, mining museums, and immersive “One Day as a Miner” experiences. In addition, fostering linkages with nearby tourism

resources, developing specialized local human resources, and encouraging public-private partnerships will be crucial for establishing a sustainable development model.

By combining modern technology, authentic local culture, and safe yet engaging experiences, Cam Pha can transform its coal mining heritage into a distinctive tourism product. This approach not only diversifies Quang Ninh's tourism portfolio but also contributes to preserving cultural identity, promoting community participation, and creating long-term socio-economic benefits for the region.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper was supported by the Research Funding of Hanoi University of Mining and Geology (HUMG), Hanoi City, Vietnam, under grant number T25-15.

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Quyết định xuất bản số: 833/QĐLK-NXBTrT, ngày 26/9/2025

In xong và nộp lưu chiểu năm 2025

ISBN: 978-632-621-845-9



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