

presentation of Sydney. Throughout the conference staff from the Manly Environment Center hosted a display of Manly, materials and research they have undertaken to protect the natural and social environments of this very special tourism precinct on the edge of Sydney Harbor, the Pacific Ocean and National Parks. The strong social ethic was continued to the final keynote session of the conference with a talk by Eddy Kneebone (Department of Technical and Further Education, Victoria) about the role of tourism and tourism research in the worldwide struggle for reconciliation of indigenous people.

The conference proceedings, *Tourism Research: Building a Better Industry*, and the document, *Tourism Research in Australia: A Strategy for Mobilizing National Research Capabilities*, are published by the Bureau of Tourism Research (Australia) and can be ordered by contacting m.kennedy@dist.gov.au.

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Sustainable Tourism in Vietnam

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Relegating a turbulent recent past to history, Vietnam now seeks modernization through economic development. As in many developing economies, the tourism sector is actively promoted as a key engine for growth. Liberalization of the market economy over the past few years has led to investment in and development of tourism. Many new hotels have been constructed in Hanoi and Ho Chi Min City (formerly Saigon), historic sites rejuvenated, and new aircraft (Airbus and Fokker) purchased for the national carrier, Vietnam Airways. The Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT), the Vietnam NTO, reports that hotel room supply has expanded from 18,000 in 1988 to almost 50,000 in 1997. It is also reported that international tourist arrivals have increased from 440,000 in 1990 to 1.6 million in 1996. It is clear that tourism in the country is expanding rapidly.

The government wishes to continue to develop tourism. Development planning has defined the objectives of 3.5 million to 3.8 million arrivals in 2000 and about 9.0 million in 2010. It is expected that the present number of hotel rooms will double by 2000. If these targets are met, tourism will cause enormous economic, social, environmental, and institutional impacts in Vietnam. This scale of change in such a short time period suggests that

not all impacts will be beneficial. Evidence from elsewhere in the Southeast Asia region implies that this major projected change induced by tourism in Vietnam will result in significant impacts of which many are likely to be negative and in some cases potentially severe.

Within this context, the 1st "International Conference on Sustainable Tourism Development in Vietnam" was held in Hue, Vietnam (May 22–23 1997). The conference program was organized by the Nanyang Business School of the Nanyang Technological University (NTU, Singapore) and sponsored by the Hanns Seidel Foundation of Germany. The official conference organizer was VNAT. This conference sought to address the potentials and challenges of sustainable tourism in Vietnam. More than 170 delegates, speakers and officials from government, industry and universities discussed the issues and challenges of current and future tourism development in Vietnam. The context for national tourism development was presented by Vu Tuan Canh (VNAT). Vo Phi Hung (Thua Thien—Hue People's Committee) briefed delegates on tourism development in the Province. Presenters made it clear that sustainable tourism practice is the key to successful tourism in Vietnam. Sustainability was defined, in terms of the accepted body of knowledge, as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (UN 1987). It was accepted that sustainable tourism is not in conflict with economic development, but is concerned with long-term resource use, conservation, and economic viability (APEC 1996; Eber 1992).

Geoffrey Wall (University of Waterloo, Canada) outlined strategic approaches for sustainable tourism development in the Southeast Asia region. Richard Butler (University of Surrey, UK) presented a comprehensive theoretical framework for sustainable cultural heritage tourism. Using cases from regional countries, Russell Arthur Smith (NTU) illustrated the consequences of ignoring sustainable tourism practices: including environmental degradation, loss of cultural heritage, community dissatisfaction, political implications, reduced tourism demand, and depressed economic returns on investments—and hence the importance for long-term resource management. In a related presentation, Pham Trung Luong (VNAT) identified the extensive potential for ecotourism in Vietnam but warned of the considerable problems of weak planning, inadequate infrastructure, poor management, and unbalanced investment which could result in environmental degradation at unique nature-based destinations.

The changing expectations for tourism enterprises by the investment community were summarised by Michael Olsen (Virginia Polytechnic University, USA). This highlighted the need for more rigorous investment analyses and especially greatly improved financial management in the industry. These observations were most timely, given the increasing hesitancy of foreign investors to be involved in projects in Vietnam. Related issues were the Vietnam government's investment incentives, guarantees, and remittance policies. Other presenters focused on the sociocultural impacts of tourism development. By the use of case studies, the potential issues of Vietnamese cultural sensitivity for imported cultural paradigms were noted. The context for education and training within the ASEAN nations was also analyzed. The overall educational framework of training institutions and programs for tourism in Vietnam were highlighted. These papers underlined the serious current training shortfalls in Vietnam and the urgent need for management-level education. Bui Thi Tam (University of Hue, Vietnam) discussed the need for comprehensive and integrated tourism planning in Vietnam as a problem-avoiding strategy. By comparing the cases for Singapore and Hue, she demonstrated that this strategy may

be adapted in several ways for differing developmental contexts. Ong Lei Tin (NTU) considered strategies for developing regional centres for tourism. Often overshadowed by capital cities, regional cities may, with appropriate planning, become attractions in their own right. They can provide services and accommodation for rural attractions and be staging areas for tourists in transit.

Based on a consensus of presentations and discussions, recommendations for the future development and management of sustainable tourism in Vietnam were made. Significant among these were those related to the natural environment and cultural heritage resources. Many speakers addressed environmental conservation and protection during the conference. This concern is of paramount importance to tourism in Vietnam in terms of maintaining and improving strong attractions. Tourists want to experience natural beauty and are likely to be repelled by spoiled or degraded natural environments. It was recommended that natural resources be restored, conserved, and used in a sustainable manner for long-term use and that biological diversity be maintained. Pollution control would also be essential. While government and industry have significant roles to play in ensuring environmental protection, it was noted that the recommended measures should be enacted with the full cooperation of local communities and the education of tourists. Proactive establishment and management of environmental protection areas was also recommended.

Speakers noted that the cultural heritage of Vietnam was a unique asset which embodied the spirit of the nation and the people. Conceptually, the cultural heritage of the country relies on the active participation of the people to maintain its viability. This was true for the traditional performing arts, and crafts, and the historic heritage sites. In order for these resources to be conserved and applied to tourism development in a sustainable manner in Vietnam, it was recommended that long-term planning for conservation and use be considered within the context of overall national and provincial planning and policy development. Issues that require attention include tourist access, conservation and controlled development of physical and non-physical resources, carrying capacity for heritage sites, provision of appropriate tourism services, and interpretation of cultural heritage resources for tourists. Local lived cultures must also be protected and allowed to grow. The contribution of tourism development to the quality of life of the inhabitants should also be sustainable and respect the vitality of the different cultures of Vietnam. □ □

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