

# AN ASSESSEMENT OF HANOI INTERNATIONAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract:** *This study examines Hanoi's current international tourism development efforts, focusing on tourism service quality. It aims to assess the relevance of the current policies in place and the quality of the services provided to foreigners in Hanoi. To do so, it investigates three prominent sites, namely, Hoan Kiem Lake, Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, Van Mieu – Quoc Tu Giam. A survey conducted at these tourism landmarks, in-depth interviews, direct observation in the investigated places and secondary sources from published magazines and materials provide the data used in this study to make recommendations. Quality service issues are analyzed along SERVQUAL five dimensions. The results show that there are still several drawbacks in knowledge value, environmental landscape, safety, attitude and tourism infrastructure. Relevant strategies designed to enhance Hanoi tourism quality for foreigners in the future are recommended. The various proposals made include among others raising people's awareness, setting a concrete institutional framework, enacting and executing the laws, and sharpening the staff's skills.*

**Key words:** *Tourism, foreign visitors, knowledge values, environment, safety, staffs' attitude, tourism infrastructure.*

## 1. Introduction

Hanoi is essentially known to the world as the capital of Vietnam and its cultural, political and economic center. Far less acknowledged though is its role as one of the main tourism destinations in the country. This in spite of the fact that Hanoi boasts numerous scenic places that enchant visitors and contribute to its growing international reputation as a destination of choice for an increasing number of overseas tourists.

Hanoi's potential as one of the main tourism destinations both in the country and the region is strong. It is ranked first nationally in terms of historical monuments and is home to nearly 3,840 of the total 40,000 monuments listed, with 1,164 of them already restored and in prime condition. It also has a flurry of fine restaurants that offer gourmet cuisines from all over the world. In addition, as attested by an evaluation recently released by Trivago, a website specializing in comparing hotel service quality, the city has a wide range of amenable hotels. The hospitality industry in Hanoi was ranked second out of 100 cities around the world (<http://www.vietnamplus.vn>) only preceded by Dresden, Germany, ranked number one in terms of hotel service quality (Vietnam news Agency. 2013).

Moreover, with many of the rural areas

within Hanoi's radius slated for green tourism, the city is seeking to position itself at the center (and the starting point) of the eco-tourism activities that are being developed within that area. It is therefore no accident that Hanoi's popularity among foreign travelers has been growing. A few statistics will drive this point home.

According to the Statistical Handbook of Hanoi, 2012, Hanoi tourism revenue rose by more than 40,000 billion dong (US\$ 1.9 billion) in 2012, a 23 percent increase over the previous year, with foreigners accounting for most of it. As the General Department of Tourism's statistics show, the total number of international visitors to Vietnam in 2012 reached a record high of slightly over 6.6 million with 2.1 million of them choosing Hanoi as their primary destination. And in 2013, more than 2.5 million international tourists visited Hanoi (a 19 percent year-to-year increase). With a 56.9 percent year-to-year rise, Korean tourists stand out among foreign visitors. But there has also been a rise in the number of visitors from the United Kingdom (26.4%), Australia (22.5%), Taiwan (16.3%), and Japan (11.7%) to name a few (Lang Viet Journal. January 2014).

Bearing these statistics in mind, the General Department of Tourism has set specific targets for Hanoi as a tourist destination in the years to come. The goal is now for Hanoi to reach 3.0 million foreign visitors by 2015 and 3.5 million by 2020.

That said, Hanoi cannot afford to rest on its laurels. Figures can be misleading. While the

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steady rise in the number of tourists visiting Hanoi and the expected continuation of this trend convey the impression of a somewhat idyllic situation, with Hanoi seemingly a problem-free tourism destination, they fail to reflect the threats to its present growth.

Hanoi, like any other sought-after tourism destinations in the world, faces stiff competition from other cities vying for more visitors, which admittedly exacerbates its need to remain competitive, a never-ending endeavor. The real threats to its rising status on the international tourism scene, however, lie elsewhere - internally not externally even though international competition cannot be ignored.

Internally, not everything is as good as it appears from statistics as a lack of quality in some tourism activities continues to plague the industry in the capital. Obviously, as the above Trivago evaluation points out, service quality issues do not pertain to the hospitality industry itself (although vigilance is always in order). If it were the case, Hanoi would not be ranked second (of course there may be isolated instances of bad service but overall service quality is perceived as highly satisfactory). This paper focuses on tourism service quality in Hanoi and its impact on foreign tourists.

How does Hanoi tourism industry meet foreign tourists' demands and expectations? How do overseas tourists view Hanoi monuments and historical sites? How well (or conversely how poorly) does Hanoi score on "tourist satisfaction"? What specific areas, if any, need improvement? What are the challenges ahead? What should be done to address them? Will Hanoi continue to see the number of visitors grow?

These are some of the key issues which this paper seeks to address. To do so, it focuses on three major tourist attractions in Hanoi. Specifically, three Hanoi landmark sites were investigated for the purpose of this study: (1) Hoan Kiem Lake (also known as 'Sword Lake'), situated in the Hoan Kiem district in the old Hanoi and used as the capital's symbol in logos and tourism brochures. (a large number of foreigners flock to Hoan Kiem Lake on any given day, making it a magnet for vendors who crowd the area); (2) Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, located in Hanoi Ba Dinh district and surrounded by such tourist attractions as Uncle Ho's stilt house, Ba Dinh Square, the Presidential Palace, and the One-

Pillar Pagoda and regarded as the climax of the art and techniques of the Vietnamese-Soviet engineers and Cold War era; and (3) Van Mieu - Quoc Tu Giam, a temple consisting, as its name indicates, of two areas, that has been Vietnamese people's sacred symbol of hard-work and creativity.

After discussing the key concepts relevant to this study, most notably the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL model used to measure service quality, and going over the methodology utilized in this study, the findings from the surveys and interviews with foreigners and personal observations are then discussed. This paper concludes with recommendations as to the measures that could be implemented to improve the perception of Hanoi as a destination for foreign tourists and make the most of its vast potential.

## 2. Review of Core Concepts

In this study, the SERVQUAL model is used to assess the gap between tourist perceptions and expectations, two key concepts at the core of this research.

### - *The SERVQUAL Model*

SERVQUAL is an acronym for service quality. The SERVQUAL model is a quality management framework developed by Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml, in the mid-1980s to measure quality in the service sector (Parasuraman et al., 1985). The model was refined in the early 1990s to include five factors grouped under the acronym 'RATER', which stand for Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy, and Responsiveness (Parasuraman et al., 1990).

- *Reliability* can be defined as the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.

- *Assurance* is to be understood as the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence. In the context of this study, it also connotes 'safety' (see 'safety' below).

- *Tangibles* refer to the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials. Another term used in this study alongside 'tangibles' is 'environment' which can also be substituted with 'landscape'.

- Simply put, *Empathy* implies the provision of caring, individualized attention to customers.

- Broadly speaking, *Responsiveness* is the willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service. As will be discussed in the next paragraph, in this study the term 'responsiveness' is interchangeable with 'attitude'.

Since this study focuses on the tourism sector, the above five SERVQUAL dimensions have been adapted to reflect the differentiated and specific features of the industry. Thus the following five adapted SERVQUAL dimensions will be used in this study to assess the gap between tourist perceptions and expectation: knowledge, values, landscape, safety, attitude, and infrastructure.

- *Knowledge* here refers to the capability of tourist sites, most notably historical sites, to provide knowledge value, i.e., impart information and deepen understanding as expected by visitors. In other words, is the information imparted valuable and enlightening to tourists?

- *Landscape* refers to the physical environment surrounding the three sites investigated in this research. As mentioned above, the term 'landscape' is interchangeable with 'environment'.

- The *Safety* dimension is a direct reference to how safe tourists around Hanoi feel at the three sites investigated. It basically comes down to one question: can foreign tourists walk around these landmark tourism sites (and others in Hanoi) and feel relatively safe and not overwhelmed by the constant fear of being robbed? Obviously risk zero does not exist and Hanoi, as most capitals in the world, if not all, attracts pickpockets and the likes regardless of the preventive measures taken.

- In the context of this study, what the *Attitude* dimension means is best captured by the following question: What kind of attitudes are foreign tourists faced with when seeking a particular service at either one of the three locations? For example, do ice-cream vendors treat them disrespectfully or, on the contrary, display consideration and fairness? As discussed above with regard to the Empathy dimension Attitude thus implies the provision of caring, individualized attention to customers. As mentioned above, the term 'attitude' is also interchangeable with 'responsiveness'.

- Here *Infrastructure* is to be understood as tourism infrastructure, that is, the conditions,

design, and social factors of the service facilities, for example, the path system, benches, trash bins, public toilets as well as the main roads alongside the sites. The infrastructure dimension is to be distinguished from the landscape feature in that it concerns all the elements of a site that contribute to tourists' experiences as opposed to the impressions and atmosphere created by the landscape. For instance clean toilets will help tourists develop a positive view of the site whereas dirty, dilapidated latrines may contribute to generate frustration and negative reactions, which today, given the widespread use of social media may also result in negative comments and feedback of the site to be read by a wide array of people around the world.

#### - *Tourist Expectations*

Tourist expectations can be defined as beliefs about service delivery that function as standards or reference point against which performance is judged (Zeithaml and Bitner, 1993). Expectations refer to the attributes of the tourist service that visitors usually anticipate receiving when they consume it. Marketing staff need to keep in mind the expected qualities of the service that visitors want to buy when planning its promotion campaign.

#### - *Tourist Perceptions*

According to Beerli and Martin (2004), tourist perception is the process by which an individual tourist selects, organizes and interprets information inputs to create a meaningful picture of the tourist service. It can also be defined as a visitor's opinion of a tourist service ability to fulfill his/her expectations. It may have little or nothing to do with the actual excellence of the service,. In many cases, it may be based on the current public image of the location, the experience of visitors with its other services, and the influence of opinion leaders or consumer's peer groups.

### 3. Methodology

Primary data was obtained through a face-to-face survey and in-depth interviews. Personal observations by the researcher also added to the data collected as did secondary data, most notably documents.

#### - *Face-to-Face Survey*

The survey approach selected for this study enables the researcher to gather factual information relating to foreign tourists in

Hanoi: what they do, what they think, who they are. It is well suited for the collection of such data as it lends itself to dealing with specific issues as is the case in this study. A face-to-face survey involves direct contact between the researcher and individual respondents, in this case at the tourism sites.

A survey involving a total of 385 foreign tourists was thus conducted at Hoan Kiem Lake, Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, and Van Mieu - Quoc Tu Giam temple over a 2-month period running from March 2013 to April 2013. The sample size is based on the average percentage of visitors coming to each site every day and the Vietnam Information and Data Analysis Center (commonly referred to as the 'VIDAC's model'). Based on this model, the sample size of 385 was computed by using the following formula:

$$N = (z^2 \cdot (p \cdot q)) / e^2$$

In which: N- sample size; z- reliability value; p- expected percent in the statistics; q=1-p; e-sample error.

#### *- In-Depth Interviews*

According to Denscombe (1998), the potential of interviews as a data collection method is "better exploited" when they are used for the exploration of complex issues. In-depth interviews are especially suitable to gain valuable insights and produce information which deals with the topic in detail and can be checked for validity and relevance. They are also likely to produce a very high response rate.

A total of six in-depth interviews were conducted at the three sites investigated (2 foreign tourists per site). In addition, one manager was also interviewed at each of the three sites to get comprehensive information from a managerial point of view.

#### *- Personal Observations*

This research is also based on personal observations. They provide a solid platform for gaining insights (Denscombe, 1998). In this research, most (but not all) personal observations were made at Hoan Kiem Lake, Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, and Van Mieu - Quoc Tu Giam, with others made at various other tourist sites around the city.

In this form of observation (referred to as 'field observations'), the researcher pays attentions to the world around him/her and tries to draw conclusions from what he/she

observes (Thomas, 2003). Field observations can be made in a variety of contexts and surroundings and can be planned or unplanned. They give the observer the benefit of being able to obtain data from intrinsic situations without planning in advance. In other words, they provides for spontaneity, which in turn may provide for valuable input. Participant observations can also be made during interviews, while the interviewee endeavors to answer questions.

Nevertheless, the observation technique involves some limitations. One of them is the deformation of data since people may adjust their behavior when they believe they are actuality observed (Thomas, 2003). Another related limitation is that the observation only emphasizes the outside performance as the observer cannot discover people's inner thoughts and viewpoints (Patton, 2002). But while an observer cannot read somebody's mind, he/she may infer some thoughts from the behavior of that person or from some surrounding facts. In short, information may be restricted to what is observed in the surroundings;

#### *- Documents*

Documents can be defined as material that provides knowledge regarding the examined occurrence (Corbetta, 2003). They are present autonomously of the researcher's proceedings (Yin (2003). The most important use of documents is to substantiate and confirm other sources. As pointed out by Corbetta (2003), relying on documents is a non-reactive technique where the information given in a document is not subject to a possible misrepresentation which, as just explained above, may be the case with personal observations. Still, as Patton (2002) argued, documents can have some limitations in terms of exactness and comprehensiveness of the information.

## **4. Findings and Discussion**

Since the survey format elected for this study was a face-to-face survey, which enabled the researcher to continue making contacts until the total number of responses required had been accumulated, there was no discrepancy between the total number of international visitors surveyed and the total sampling number required.

Based on the data collected, the profile of the respondents is as follows: 32.66% of the

foreign tourists surveyed were between 26-40 years old, 23.33% between 19-25 years old, and 21.33% between 41-55 years old, with above 55 years old and below 19 years old representing smaller groups; 16.68% and 8.0%, respectively. 54.66% of them were males and 45.34% females. In terms of nationality, the highest proportion of those surveyed consisted of European visitors (41.33%), who mainly came from Western Europe (France, Germany, Belgium, etc), followed by tourists from America (39.33%), with Asians accounting for another 19.33% (China, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Taiwan, etc).

As can be seen in Table 1 below, the data collected indicates that the widest gap among the five dimensions is *Attitude* with a mean average of 0.6 followed by *Infrastructure* and *Landscape* (0.6 for both) with *Knowledge* and *Safety* the narrowest (0.3 for both). The Hoan Kiem Lake has the highest mean average (0.6), followed by the Van Mieu-Quoc Tu Giam (0.5) and the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum (0.2). The wider the quality gap, the lower service quality becomes.

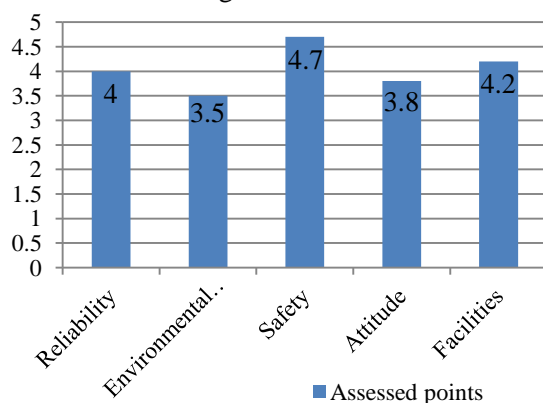
Since the widest gap between what the foreign tourists surveyed expected to find in terms of knowledge, landscape, safety, attitude, and infrastructure and what they were actually confronted with pertains to Hoan Kiem Lake, this means that this particular site offers the lowest overall service quality level of the three. Foreign tourists gave it a low assessment and were especially disappointed with the attitude (0.8), infrastructure (0.7), and landscape (0.6) at that site, clearly well below their expectations and below par. Although it spurred less negative reactions, the Van Mieu-Quoc Tu Giam temple was not spared either. Attitude there was also seen as a problem (0.8) as was infrastructure (0.6). With the highest gap (landscape at 0.4) the Mausoleum fared much better.

The data summarized in Figure 1 below, which shows the importance of each of the five service quality features tested in this research, further casts light on the main concerns of foreign tourists in Hanoi. As a complement to Table 1, it helps further understand the areas of tourism activities most in need of improvement.

**Table 1:** Gap between Hanoi Foreign Tourist Perceptions and Expectations

	Knowledge	Landscape	Safety	Attitude	Infrastructure	Mean average
Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum	0,2	0,4	0,1	0,1	0,2	0,2
Hoan Kiem Lake	0,5	0,6	0,3	0,8	0,7	0,6
Van Mieu-Quoc Tu Giam	0,3	0,5	0,5	0,8	0,6	0,5
Mean average	0,3	0,5	0,3	0,6	0,5	

**Figure 1:** The Criteria Importance in the Eyes of Foreign Tourists



Source: created by the author for this study

- *Safety*: Unsurprisingly, safety comes as foreign tourists' top concern. Safety for the purpose of this study includes bodily integrity (assault and battery, etc), the protection of one's personal property, and personal space. It is a very sensitive issue among tourists, all the more among Asians as avoidance of risk and uncertainty ranks high in Asian cultures (Hotsfede, 1980). In practice, this suggests that Asian tourists tend to avoid any situation that appears to be risky. While, as Table 1 suggests, tourists understand that there is always an element of insecurity anywhere they may go (even more so in an unfamiliar environment) and that security concerns will -

and should - always be at the back of their minds, they did not expect the Van Mieu – Quoc Tu Giam site to be so unsafe. Safety in that particular location is lacking; pickpockets and beggars are commonly seen with theft there an almost daily occurrence. Adding to the sense of insecurity and impropriety of the site is the presence of “pussy sale” vendors, who clearly have no place in such a historical and religious place. Moreover, unprofessional guard staffs, ineffective traffic control, and poor traffic light systems have also been a cause of anxiety for foreign travelers. So much so that a majority of the tourists surveyed indicated they usually travel at daytime and are back to their accommodations at nighttime as they feel nightlife is unsafe. Admittedly, tourism activities should be enjoyed during the day and at night and tourists should not have to feel they have to be confined to their hotels to feel safe.

- *Infrastructure*: Also ranking high on the list of tourist concerns is infrastructure, a term which, in this study, as mentioned earlier, is interchangeable with ‘facilities’. As with safety, the ‘physical environment’ is also critical in terms of generating positive feedback and possibly ‘repeat’ visits to Hanoi. Again with rumors - or bad news - spreading like wildfire thanks to social media, all it takes is a series of bad experiences followed by bad comments to contribute to building a negative image. Since unclean facilities, most notably toilets, or the lack thereof are some of the most discussed topics on line and a constant source of query by those about to embark on a trip, a lack of adequate infrastructure could be detrimental to the reputation of Hanoi as a tourist destination. While Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum has been spared by negative foreign comments, this is hardly the case with the other two sites as many short-comings such as uneven pathways, vendor-caused congestion, a shortage of public facilities (benches, trash bins, public toilets, etc) continue to adversely affect their perception. Adding insult to injury, the price of public toilets can be unreasonably high, thus further contributing to developing a negative image. As shown in Table 1, tourists clearly have higher expectations and feel that more should be done to accommodate some of their needs as tourists.

- *Attitude*: It is the way people who deal with tourists treat them. While attitude is a

non-issue at the Mausoleum, it remains a problem at the two other sites instigated in this study. A magnet for vendors who crowd the area and often obstruct people’s movements, Hoan Kiem Lake, one of the most popular tourist venues in Hanoi, tarnishes the image of Hanoi as a tourism destination as foreign visitors reported a chronic lack of courtesy and consideration. Complaints about rude and disrespectful vendors, and reports of unprofessional tour-guides and tourists falling victims to pickpockets are common and continue to appear on the net. The aggressive attitude of native people toward foreigners, let alone vendors ripping off tourists or dubious characters trying to entice foreigners to dangerous seedy places, are problematic. Another issue related to attitude is the poor quality of some tourist products, including food. As the researcher observed, some souvenir kiosks and restaurants also charge extortionate prices for products and services whose low quality does not warrant such unreasonable fares.

- *Landscape*: There is some measure of disappointment with the landscape at the three sites. A nice first impression and serene atmosphere go a long way in planting positive images in tourists’ minds. Conversely, trash-littered gardens, smelly waste problems, untreated water, polluting gas emission, overfilled trash bins are eyesores and nuisance apt to interfere with tourists’ enjoyment of the sites and contribute to a negative perception of Hanoi. . Although the Van Mieu - Quoc Tu Giam temple is one of the leading monuments in Hanoi, it is surrounded by moss-covered lakes and the paths are damaged paths with unevenly distributed benches and grass. The failure to clean the lake periodically, for instance, or empty trash bins daily may not be perceived as important by locale but as far as the tourism industry is concerned it is the visitors’ perception and sentiments that matter not theirs. Since most tourists think the landscape should fit in with their expectations, something should be done to improve it.

- *Knowledge*: Knowledge, referred to as ‘reliability’ in Figure 1, ranks third in terms of importance to foreign visitors to Hanoi. It essentially has to do with the quality of historical and cultural information imparted to tourists. Many of them, most notably Europeans, come to Hanoi to learn about Vietnam’s history and civilization going back to times immemorial



rather than simply focus on more mundane pleasures. They want to become more cognizant of the history of the capital as it goes back hundreds of years and encompasses the many civilizations that have shaped Vietnam as we know it today and account for many of its cultural traits. They thus expect knowledgeable guides to take them through hundreds of years of history and complement the sight of monuments with much lore. Obviously, cultural and historical knowledge acquisition and conveyance requires well-trained, knowledgeable guides as well as proper signage at historical sites. While Vietnamese clearly treasure their history, traditions, and long-standing customs, it is also important that they be able on qualified people to share them with foreign visitors.

A number of factors account for all the above shortcomings. There is a lack of professional certified staffs with specialized knowledge and the technical skills necessary to meet tourists' cultural demands. The city's incomprehensive institutional framework in the management of tourism business also largely account for its failure to deal efficiently with all the problems the tourism business faces. In fact rather than being part of the solution they actually contribute to the problems. Moreover, tourism development plans and investments are still fragmented and lack long-term commitments and sustainable perspectives. In short, the capital has no clear transparent articulate strategy to accommodate tourists' needs. Another important factor is the failure to implement the security systems and stringently enforce the laws protecting travelers' rights. Finally, Vietnam's still low income levels and living standards and the concomitant low-paying jobs contribute to the image of tourists in the collective mind as 'cash cows' and prompt many locals to behave in ways which foreigners find unacceptable.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Will Hanoi continue to see the number of visitors to the city grow? One way to ensure growth in the tourism industry is to provide incentives for 'repeat visits.' So does Hanoi service quality provide enough incentives for tourists to want to return later or is it on the contrary a disincentive?

As the five criteria examined in this study make it patently clear, substantial efforts need to be made so that tourists depart the country

with a positive experience and possibly a desire to come back at some point in the future; feeling safe while touring Hanoi should be the number one priority of the tourism authorities in the city. It is hard to think of any stronger deterrent to tourism than a sense of insecurity while walking down town, perceived or real. It is a real threat to competitive tourism sustainability of the city. It stains its reputation, something which, with the ubiquity of social media, Twitter, and the likes does not take much to do. No amount of hotel service quality, no matter how good hotel service is (Hanoi ranks second on this criterion), will compensate any flaw in the tourism services provided to foreign tourists once they step outside their hotels. Damage control is only a half-way solution.

As this investigation of three main tourist sites in Hanoi also points to, the flaws are not limited to safety but also pertain to the quality of tourism facilities (cleanliness among others), their reliability as well as the attitude of the people directly dealing with foreign tourists. It also makes it clear that tourism policies and development strategies need to be overhauled. So what exactly should be done?

### *- Recommendations*

Based on the above findings and discussion, the following recommendations can be made:

*1. Institutional frameworks and policies should be overhauled and strictly enforced* - Hanoi's relevant authorities should step up the monitoring of highly-visited tourist areas and strictly enforce regulations (consistently penalize violators), for instance, by taking away business licenses or prosecuting violators. In the meantime, the relevant ministries and agencies should amend the applicable legislation and increase the penalties and make sure that the violators (street vendors, beggars, wheeler-dealers of all kinds, etc.) are fully aware of the heightened penalties.

The Ministry of Culture, Sports & Tourism (MOCST) should strengthen interdisciplinary inspection teams dealing with behavioral and regulatory issues such as food safety, and security. Besides, the number of tourists in entrance and exit areas should be regulated and organized so as to avoid the typical jostling and pushing that take place and makes it easier for pickpockets to operate.

The government should also set up pilot police units at some of the major tourism centers in Hanoi in order to handle any problem efficiently and deter petty crimes. The tourism police unit scheme should detail the qualifications required for the job as police officer such as the level of cultural knowledge, communication skills, and foreign language ability. The government should assign the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, and the Ministry of Interior to coordinate the scheme development and implementation.

Furthermore, it is necessary for the city (i) to build a support center to be managed by the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism (ii) set up a hotline system for collecting information, and (iii) establish a surveillance camera system on the attraction sites. The center should not only provide tourism information but also dispatch any tourists' complaints and accusations to the relevant agencies. As to the surveillance system, it should not be noticeable and should preserve the integrity of the monuments. It should be able to easily and timely detect any theft, pick-pocketing, or damage to the environment and public property. It would also help control the number of visitors allowed in.

2. *Campaigns raising locals' awareness about civility should be launched* - The Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism should organize social activities designed to enhance civility and courtesy and encourage locals to develop good manners when dealing with foreign tourists. Since such a sought-after change in people's behaviors cannot be expected to take place overnight, it is important that the campaign be intense and for the long-term. A much-needed more civilized approach to tourism can only be gradual if it is to succeed.

Specifically so-called "civilizing festivals" could be organized to go over the civility-related topics that need to be covered. Part of the activities involved should among others include distributing leaflets and setting up tourism instruction sites in the festivals. Picnics could also be organized for young adults during which they would learn the importance of cleaning up and picking their trash before leaving a site. Besides, it is essential to educate students and integrate tourism-related campaigns into the relevant subjects in primary and secondary schools.

This would give them an opportunity to acquire the necessary knowledge to develop the right attitudes. But this should not only be achieved through their common subjects such as literature, geography, or civic education but perhaps also through a new subject related directly to tourism culture.

3. *Staff skills and knowledge should be enhanced through training* - One of the most pressing needs is to raise the quality of tour guides. Training needs to be improved and training programs innovated so as to reflect the growing diversity among foreign tourists and the concomitant need to understand the specific needs, norms, and values of each cultural cluster. Training programs should emphasize the need for professionalism, work ethic, and extensive knowledge of Vietnam history, culture, and people. They should also ensure that tour guides have a good command of foreign languages. Thus, the evaluation of the programs in place and student testing and certification must be implemented strictly. This will reduce the number of unqualified sub-standard training centers and enhance the training quality of those remaining in existence.

Tour guide volunteers should be used to overcome the current limitations in terms of language proficiency. University students with good language skills could help to make Hanoi a comfortable and convenient place for foreigners to visit. Currently there are several clubs such as Hanoi Kid as well as universities' clubs. Participating in such a tour-guide volunteer campaign would be good opportunities for students to sharpen their language and communication skills and learn about other cultures. This would also make tourists witness the dynamics and enthusiasm of Vietnamese youth and also help them save on the cost of hiring official tour-guiders while travelling.

Finally, there should be comprehensive staff training for all those involved, from guards to managers. Specifically, it is necessary to review and reassess the staff's quality with clear and well-defined standards.

4. *Tourism infrastructure should be repaired, upgraded and maintained* - As a first step, public transportation should be upgraded and some of the routes overhauled. As a later stage, bus and subway stations should be built close to the tourist attractions. In addition, traffic lights, pedestrian systems, and vehicle



lanes should be set up rationally for the safety of the passing-by tourists. Sophisticated information technology systems should also be utilized by management in order to reduce costs and ensure timely and effective supervision. Specifically, the system should include hidden monitoring cameras in certain areas to maintain security. Additionally, trees could be numbered and micro-chipped for both supervision and periodical health checking. Meanwhile, lighting, lawn irrigating systems could be computerized as well. Moreover, a tourism service quality assessment system should be built to understand the current situations, identify deteriorated materials, and invest into new equipment.

Additionally, the following could make great contributions to security: restructuring equipment systems, constructing fences, installing glass case to preserve relics, reorganizing souvenir and food kiosks. Finally, environment and public toilet cleanup campaigns should be launched in the key tourism locals.

*5. The landscape should be improved and kept immaculate* - This can be done by organizing periodical cleanup activities like dredging ponds, nourishing trees, collecting waste in the monuments' areas, building and repairing sidewalks and pedestrian paths. It is important to involve volunteers in this process as it is an important element of the social system. It is also a way of raising awareness and contributing to making Hanoi a better place for everyone.

The landscape layout planning should be implemented properly. There should be several studies evaluating green density circumstances to plan suitable density for certain areas as well as identifying and planting new trees to create unique features. Additionally, the details of the plans and designs for the park should be notified to the public in order to gather suggestions from the locals. The upgrading process would have to be approved by experts who should have a say in all aspects of the process.

*6. Tourism products should be diversified* - Diversifying tourism products should be coupled with effort to enhance product knowledge. For example, holding history contests would raise people's awareness about preserving, valuing - and respecting - historical sites. In addition, attractions

associated with eco-tourism development would help develop a 'green' mindset. Moreover, value-added and prominent branded products and services should be intensively developed. New potential tourism areas should also be identified for branding.

*7. Promotional activities boosting Hanoi tourism should be further developed* - Large scale tourism, cultural, sports events such as the National Tourism year or international tourism fairs should be held more frequently. Region-linked projects also ought to be carried out to kick off tourism campaigns and involve the cooperation of locals. In addition, Hanoi tourism should be promoted through mass communication travel programs, a tourism column in several well-known newspapers, hosting tourism conferences sponsored by the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) or any other relevant international organizations. Besides, large panels and billboards should be installed at the national tourism sites, airline gates, and major intersections so as to link tourism promotion activities with the local and central agencies.

A more widespread use of e-marketing should be encouraged to promote tourism and set up an information portal for trade between Hanoi tourism and Vietnam tourism. Furthermore, there should be a better and more systematic use of online publications, whose use has been boosted by social networks and travel search tools, as a way of further promoting tourism. Specifically, national and international network database related to tourism and partners providing advertising services should be established comprehensively.

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