

# **The Cai Rang Floating Market, Vietnam: Towards Pro-Poor Tourism?**

By

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

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Bich Tram Huynh

## **Abstract**

Tourism is a major economic force in the world (WTO, 2004). Many developing countries have enjoyed spectacular growth in tourist arrivals and rely heavily on tourism as a source of income and employment (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). According to the World Tourism Organisation (WTO, 2004), tourism, as a key component of many countries' service exports, has the power to deliver significant international earnings that can be directed towards the fundamental world priority of alleviating poverty.

In the specific case of Vietnam, tourism is increasingly becoming one of the key national economic sectors. The government, following global action led by the WTO, has also tried to reduce poverty through tourism in some parts of Vietnam. However, there is little empirical research that has examined the potential of tourism to improve the livelihood of the poor in Can Tho city, where tourism is showing signs of growth while a large proportion of local population is still suffering from low income and poor living conditions, especially those at the Cai Rang floating market. Following a brief introduction to the tourism context in Vietnam and Can Tho city, the focus of the thesis will be on the Cai Rang floating market, Can Tho city, Vietnam.

The main aim of this research is to investigate how tourism can help to eliminate poverty among the Cai Rang floating market participants and those that are linked to them. The research is guided by the following questions:

- What is pro-poor tourism (PPT)?
- What are the challenges and limitations of using tourism as a tool for poverty reduction?
- What is the role of markets in local community development?
- What is the structure of the tourism industry in Can Tho city and the structure of tourism at the Cai Rang floating market?
- How can tourism contribute to poverty reduction among participants in the Cai Rang floating market?

This research will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on pro-poor tourism and community development.

The research upon which the thesis is based was conducted from 30 November until 25 December 2009 in Can Tho and Ho Chi Minh cities, Vietnam. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders in the tourism industry (both government and private sector), associated with the linkage between tourism and poverty alleviation. Key findings show that local authorities and communities have limited awareness of tourism's benefits and its role in poverty reduction. There is also a lack of community participation in tourism planning and development, and a lack of co-ordination between tourism stakeholders, especially the local authorities of different departments in Can Tho city. These results suggest that if tourism is really to make a difference, contributing to poverty alleviation, there needs to be better planning and partnerships.

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## Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
AFTA	ASEAN Free Trade Area
APEC	Asia–Pacific Economic Co-operation
AUTEC	Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee
CIEM	Central Institute for Economic Management
DFID	Department for International Development
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GRP	Gross Regional Product
HCMC	Ho Chi Minh city
HDI	Human Development Index
ICRT	International Centre for Responsible Tourism
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IIED	International Institute for the Environment and Development
LDCs	Less-developed countries
MCST	Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MICE	Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
NZD	New Zealand Dollar (New Zealand’s currency)
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development
PPP	Purchasing-Power Parity
PPT	Pro-Poor Tourism
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SMMEs	Small, medium and micro-enterprises
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNWTO	United Nation- World Tourism Organisation
USD	United States Dollars (the United States’ currency)

VAT	Value-Added Taxes
VCA	Value Chain Analysis
VNAT	Vietnam National Administration of Tourism
VND	Vietnam Dong (Vietnam's currency)
WTO	World Tourism Organisation
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

### **Foreign Exchange Rates**

US\$1 = VND20,890 (at February 2011)

NZ\$1 = VND16,359 (at February 2011)

ANZ Bank Vietnam (2011). Foreign Exchange Rates. Retrieved 10 February 2011

# **1. Introduction**

In the past ten years, much has been written on the implication of pro-poor tourism worldwide (Saville, 2001; Bowden, 2005; Overseas Development Institute, 2007). Likewise, in Vietnam research has been done about the linkage between tourism and poverty alleviation in Sapa (Lao Cai), Hue and Da Nang (Cu, 2007; Mitchell & Le, 2007; Overseas Development Institute, 2007). However, no similar research has been done on the Cai Rang floating market, Can Tho city, Vietnam, where there is a large proportion of poor people as well as considerable potentials for tourism development.

The key aims of this study are to:

- examine the current and potential impact of tourism on poverty reduction in Can Tho city, Vietnam, with a focus on the case of the Cai Rang floating market, and
- suggest actions which could be considered for strengthening the links between tourism and poverty alleviation.

These aims will be achieved by addressing the following key questions:

- What is pro-poor tourism (PPT)?
- What are the challenges and limitations of using tourism as a tool for poverty reduction?
- What is the role of the market in local community development?
- What is the structure of the tourism industry in Can Tho city and the structure of tourism at the Cai Rang floating market?
- How can tourism contribute to poverty reduction at the Cai Rang floating market?

## **Current Trends in Tourism**

Recent statistical information indicates that tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world (WTO, 2006). International tourism is a vital part of the global economy, generating roughly US\$1 trillion in global receipts in 2008 (up 1.8% from 2007), and ranking as the fourth-largest industry in the world, after fuels,

chemicals, and automotive products (Honey & Gilpin, 2009). In 2005, the industry employed 74.2 million persons worldwide or 2.8% of total world employment. In the same year, it also accounted for approximately 3.8% of total world economic output (WTTC, 2005, cited in Senate Economic Planning Office, 2006).

Combining both the direct and related economic activities of tourism, the industry is estimated to employ 221 million persons or 8.3% of total world employment and contribute 10.6% of total world output (Senate Economic Planning Office, 2006). Under the impact of the worldwide financial crisis and subsequent economic recession, international tourist arrivals declined by 4.2% in 2009 to 880 million. International tourism receipts reached US\$ 852 billion in 2009, corresponding to a decrease in real terms of 5.7% from 2008 figures (UNWTO, 2010). Even though travel and tourism activity was depressed, the industry still employed more than 235 million people across the world and generated 9.4% of global GDP in 2009 (WTTC, 2010). According to the August Interim Update of the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, international tourist arrivals totalled 421 million during the first six months of 2010, up 7% on 2009, but still 2% below that of the record year of 2008 (428 million arrivals in the same period). Nevertheless, prospects have improved with arrivals now forecast to grow between 3% and 4% in 2010.

Over the next ten years, travel and tourism will continue to grow in importance as one of the world's highest-priority sectors and employers. The World Tourism Organisation forecasts that international tourism will generate US\$2 trillion by 2020 (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). The contribution of travel and tourism to global GDP is expected to rise from 9.2% (US\$5,751 billion) in 2010 to 9.6% (US\$11,151 billion) by 2020 (WTTC, 2010). The contribution of the travel and tourism economy to total employment is expected to rise from 8.1% (235,758,000 jobs or 1 in every 12.3 jobs) in 2010, to 9.2% of total employment (303,019,000 jobs, or 1 in every 10.9 jobs) by 2020. Export earnings from international visitors are expected to generate 6.1% of total exports (US\$1,086 billion) in 2010, growing (in nominal terms) to US\$2,160 billion (5.2% of total) in 2020.

Asia and the Pacific (+14%) and the Middle East (+20%), where results were already positive in the second half of 2009, continue to lead growth in the first half of 2010

with the majority of destinations in both regions posting double digit growth rates (Koumelis, 2010). Asia in particular is experiencing a very dynamic rebound, with especially strong results from Sri Lanka (+49%), Japan (+36%) and Vietnam (+35%). As in previous occasions, such as after the Asian financial and economic crisis (1997–1998), the SARS outbreak (2003), and the tsunami (2004), Asia has once again shown a strong capacity for recovery. International tourism has been a driving force in the region – currently the second most-visited region in the world – with 181 million international tourist arrivals (21% of the world total) and international tourism receipts of US\$204 billion (24% of the world total) in 2009 (Koumelis, 2010).

### **Tourism in the Developing World**

The breadth of international travel has greatly expanded in recent years to encompass the developing world (Honey & Gilpin, 2009). Since the 1950s, developing countries have received increasing numbers of international tourists, mainly from developed countries. International tourist arrivals have grown significantly faster in developing countries than they have in the EU or OECD countries (Roe, Ashley, Page & Meyer, 2004). Arrivals, revenue and receipts per visitor all grew faster in developing countries than elsewhere during the 1990s. Tourism makes a substantial contribution to their GDP and accounts for a higher share of exports than in OECD countries. In 2000, developing countries had 292.6 million international arrivals, an increase since 1990 of nearly 95% (Roe et al., 2004). There also has been a higher rate of growth in developing countries than in developed countries in the absolute value of tourism expenditure as recorded in the national accounts.

The absolute tourism earnings of developing countries grew by 133% between 1990 and 2000 and in the Least Developed Countries by 154%; this compares with 64% for OECD countries and 49% for EU countries (Roe et al., 2004). In 2000, the financial value per arrival to developing countries was considerably lower than the value per visitor to OECD or EU countries. However, between 1990 and 2000, developing countries, and particularly Least Developed Countries, secured a larger increase in income per international arrival compared with OECD or European Union countries. Least Developed Countries secured an increase of 45% and

developing countries nearly 20%, compared with 18% for OECD countries and 7.8% for EU countries (Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership, 2004a).

Between 1990 and 2000, the export value of tourism grew by 154% in developing countries, second only to the growth in the manufacturing sector (Roe et al., 2004). The WTO (2002a) found that for developing countries in general and Least Developed Countries in particular, tourism accounted for about 9% of exports in 2000. Agricultural export earnings were only about one-third of that of tourism export earnings for both country groupings. According to the WTO, if petroleum industry exports are discounted, tourism is the primary source of foreign exchange earnings in the 49 Least Developed Countries (Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership, 2004b).

Overall, tourism is a principal export earner for 83% of developing countries (WTO, 2004, p. 9). Compared with the developed countries of the OECD and EU, it is clear that tourism is a particularly significant export for developing countries – and particularly the least developed countries. Given that only 0.7% of international travel takes place in least developed countries, the economic impacts of these ‘insignificant’ flows are very considerable. Furthermore, as with international arrivals, the economic significance of tourism in developing countries is growing rapidly (Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership, 2004b). In addition to financial earnings, tourism also provides considerable economic benefits at the national level in the form of employment. In countries that are most dependant on tourism (particularly small islands) tourism can employ 20–50% of the labour force and can account for 30–90% of GDP, 50–90% of exports (Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership, 2004b).

The market share of developing countries has grown to 40% of worldwide international arrivals by 2007 – up from 34% in 2000 (WTO, 2002a; Travel Related, 2008). Nearly 60% of international arrivals still take place in the relatively small number of OECD and EU countries and nearly 70% of global expenditure remains in the developed world (Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership, 2004a). However, the traditional position of well-established destinations in the developed world is being increasingly challenged by new destinations in the developing world as numbers of arrivals and share of total arrivals is increasing at a far faster pace than those in

developed countries. According to the WTO Vision 2020 report, these trends are expected to continue well into the future (Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership, 2004a).

Developing nations are seeking the potential benefits of tourism, such as increased income, foreign exchange, employment and economic diversification (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). Vietnam is no exception to this: with its range of natural and cultural resources, the country is planning to attract significant foreign exchange from international visitors, making the industry a key economic driver for the country. Vietnam's tourism sector presented an average annual growth of 20% over the past ten years (New Hanoi, 2010). The industry contributed 6.3% of the country's total GDP in 2008. The tourism sector is one of Vietnam's two largest foreign exchange earners, generating more than US\$4 billion last year (New Hanoi, 2010). In the first nine months of 2010, total international arrivals exceeded 3.7 million, representing a 34.2% growth over the same period the previous year (VNAT, 2010a). With this growth rate, Vietnam ranks third in the Asia-Pacific region in terms of tourism rebound (Koumelis, 2010).

Experts also forecast that the number of foreign visitors to Vietnam will continue to increase as a series of major domestic and international events will be held in the country between now and the end of this year, especially activities to celebrate the 1,000 year anniversary of Thang Long-Hanoi from 1–10 October 2010. The tourism sector is expected to welcome 4.2 million international tourists this year (VNAT, 2010a). The tourism industry is anticipated to earn US\$8.9 billion in 2015 when the country expects to welcome 12 million foreign visitors and host 28 million domestic travellers (VNAT, 2010b). The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) forecast that the tourism sector will account for the biggest proportion of the labour force in Vietnam by 2015, employing around 15% of the country's whole labour force. The trained tourism workers will receive incomes, contributing to poverty elimination and the country's socio-economic development (Vietnam Business Forum, 2009a). The United Nation World Tourism Organisation's (UNWTO) Tourism Vision for 2020 has forecast that international tourist arrivals to Vietnam are expected to reach more than 1.56 billion by the year 2020 (VNA, 2010). In the same year, the tourism industry is expected to earn US\$15.9 billion in revenue, which would contribute 6% of GDP (VNAT, 2010b).

## **Tourism and Poverty Alleviation**

Given this remarkable growth and economic significance, it is not surprising that tourism has been considered an effective means of achieving poverty reduction in the less developed countries, including Vietnam.

According to the WTO (2005a), more than one billion people live on less than US\$1 dollar per day and 2.7 billion have less than US\$2 dollars per day to survive on. The effects of the global financial crisis are likely to persist and poverty rates will be slightly higher in 2015 and even beyond, to 2020, than they would have been had the world economy grown steadily at its pre-crisis pace (United Nations, 2010). Progress on poverty reduction is still being made, despite significant setbacks due to the 2008–2009 economic downturn, and food and energy crises. The developing world as a whole remains on track to achieve the poverty reduction target by 2015. The overall poverty rate is still expected to fall to 15% by 2015, which translates to around 920 million people living under the international poverty line — half the number in 1990 (United Nations, 2010).

Vietnam is considered a successful case in poverty reduction among developing countries (Vu, 2009). Its poverty rate has reduced from 58.1% in 1993 to 14.5% in 2008. The average poverty reduction each year is more than 1.8 million people, a reduction from more than 40 million poor people in 1993 to 12.5 million in 2008. Poverty reduction remains a major concern for Vietnamese society as the poverty reduction rate has tended to slow down, and there remains a risk for many people of falling back into the ranks of the poor when there are unexpected changes like an economic crisis, epidemics, a natural disaster (Vietnamese Communist Party E-newspaper, 2010). It is also appropriate to note that Vietnam is still defined as belonging to the group of the world's poorest countries (Nguyen, Cu, Vu & Tran, 2007).

Poverty alleviation through tourism has been practised by developing countries since the 1960s. However it is only in the last ten years that it has become a focus for academics (Peak, 2008). The concept of pro-poor tourism (PPT) was first developed in 1999 and its practical strategies were identified in 2001. A lot of people have become PPT enthusiasts (Ashley, Goodwin & Roe, 2004). Pro-poor tourism is set up



in developing countries as a means to improve the economic benefits for local people. It enhances the linkages between tourism businesses and poor people, so that poverty is reduced and poor people are able to participate more effectively in tourism development (EcoTour, 2007). The aims of PPT range from increasing local employment to involving local people in the decision-making process. The most important factor is not the type of company or the type of tourism, but that poor people receive an increase in the net benefits from tourism (EcoTour, 2007).

Though there are still no statistics officially released nationwide on income contribution from tourism to the poor in Vietnam, it is argued that in all cities or localities where tourism has become established, living standards and conditions of local people have substantially improved (Nguyen et al., 2007). Examples of tourism working effectively in poverty alleviation are said to be seen in a number of famous tourist destinations: Sapa (Lao Cai), Ha Long (Quang Ninh), Cat Ba (Hai Phong), Sam Son (Thanh Hoa), Cua Lo (Nghe An), Hue (Thua Thien-Hue), Hoi An (Quang Nam), Nha Trang (Khanh Hoa), Mui Ne (Phan Thiet) and some localities in the Mekong River Delta (Nguyen et al., 2007). According to a senior advisor of the European Union-funded human source development project, Vietnam's tourism sector is expanding to areas where its impact on poverty alleviation will be greatest (Vietnam Business Forum, 2009a). A survey by the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) on Vietnam's major tourism destinations, including Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh city, Hoi An, Ha Long and Hue, found that 97% of interviewed tourists said they were ready to pay more for a holiday that was environmentally-friendly and resulted in increased net benefits for poor people (VNAT, 2010c). Tourism is thus widely recognised as a large and very promising sector for poverty reduction (Nguyen et al., 2007).

Vietnam plans to continue to develop its tourism industry but with an emphasis on 'responsible travel' as a key to 'responsible tourism'. Responsible tourism is an approach to the management of tourism, aimed at maximising economic, social and environmental benefits and minimising costs to destinations (Tourism New Zealand, 2010). Simply put, responsible tourism is tourism "that creates better places for people to live in, and better places to visit" (City of Cape Town, 2009, p. 3). The

2002 Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism in Destinations defines Responsible Tourism as tourism that:

- minimises negative economic, environmental and social impacts
- generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well being of host communities
- improves working conditions and access to the industry
- involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances
- makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage embracing diversity
- provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues
- provides access for physically challenged people
- is culturally sensitive, encourages respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence”

(The International Centre for Responsible Tourism, 2002; Myagmarsuren, 2011)

A responsible tourism approach aims to achieve the triple-bottom-line outcomes of sustainable development, i.e. economic growth, environmental integrity and social justice. The distinguishing characteristic of the approach is the focus on the responsibility of role-players in the tourism sector, and at destinations in general, to take action to achieve sustainable tourism development (City of Cape Town, 2009).

According to the Head of Vietnam Institute for Tourism Development Research, as part of its national tourism strategy for 2011–2020, the government will underline responsible travel development as the biggest priority for the industry (VNAT, 2010c). Responsible travel can bring big benefits to companies, tourists and locals. Tourists can enrich their cultural and social experience via their direct activities with locals, thus helping them improve their behaviour towards the environment. Responsible travel can also help locals take more pride in their own cultural traits and lifestyles (VNAT, 2010c). Responsible travel is quite a new concept in Vietnam, but has for years been developed successfully by many foreign countries, for example in Nepal, where a responsible travel programme has helped that country to

reduce poverty and protect the environment (VNAT, 2010c; Nepal Tours Destination, 2011).

The WTO (2004) identified seven mechanisms or practical ways of delivering tourism benefits to the poor: direct employment, supply chains, informal selling, enterprise development, taxes and charges, voluntary giving and collateral benefits (UNWTO & SNV, 2010). Under these mechanisms, the poor in Vietnam can be given jobs at travel firms or they can provide products and tourism services for tourism businesses as well as sell goods and direct services to tourists (Vietnam Business Forum, 2009a). The development of human resources can help the poor improve their skills, develop new products and raise the quality of existing products, and so gain access to the market. As the result, the tourism sector can contribute to eliminate poverty and reduce hunger in Vietnam.

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism has approved a plan to develop tourism as a key economic sector in the Mekong Delta. The plan, which extends to 2020, will aid in the country's economic transformation and help reduce hunger and poverty, according to the ministry (VNAT, 2010d). Its main goals are to diversify tourism products and fully exploit the country's tourism potential. The plan calls for linkages between provinces and cities in the region and additional investment in tourism projects of international standards (VNAT, 2010d).

### **1.1 The Research Focus: the Cai Rang Floating Market, Can Tho City, Vietnam**

Located in the centre of the Mekong Delta, Can Tho is the biggest city (an urban area with surrounding hinterland) in the region (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2) (Can Tho Investment – Trade – Tourism Promotion Centre, 2010). The southern city of Can Tho plays an important role in terms of economics, society and the development of the entire Mekong Delta (VOV News, 2009). Although the city has undergone economic development and urban construction, many urban inhabitants remain reliant on physically poor infrastructure and face poor sanitation conditions. Other critical problems have also emerged; for example, many investment opportunities have been missed because of inappropriate geographical conditions (Nguyen, 2004). Furthermore, poverty reduction in Can Tho city is still fragile. Although the poverty

rate of the city has reduced in the last few years, a large proportion of the people, more than thirteen thousand households in 2009, still have incomes that are very near the poverty line and more than fifteen thousand households have incomes below the poverty line (Can Tho City Department of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs, 2009). As a result, they can easily fall into poverty when natural disasters or economic crises happen, or even when a household member gets sick (Vietnam Net, 2006). Can Tho is trying to develop its infrastructure and to fight poverty in a bid to become the biggest economic centre in the Mekong Delta region.

Figure 1.1: Map of Vietnam



(Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the Republic of Ukraine, 2010)

Figure 1.2: Can Tho city in the Mekong Delta



(Forum Vietnamese Environmental Journalists, 2009).

The city of Can Tho is quickly becoming a top tourist destination in Vietnam. The flow of tourists to Can Tho, both international and domestic, shows an upward trend. For the period from 2000 to 2009, the average annual growth rate of international arrivals was 11.84% (Can Tho Administrator of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2010b). The number of domestic tourists coming to Can Tho city is much higher than

the international one. In 2009, tourism revenue was more than VND500 billion (US\$23.9 million or NZ\$30.56 million) (Can Tho Administrator of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2010b). Festivals, floating markets, historic sites, southern amateur music, exuberant orchards, immense rice fields and many islets along the Hau River are all appealing tourist attractions. Can Tho city could build on these tourism strengths, using tourism as a potentially strong vehicle for poverty reduction and social development.

## **1.2 Thesis Outline**

This thesis consists of six chapters. Following the introduction, Chapter Two reviews extant literature in the following areas: tourism in developing countries, poverty alleviation through tourism and the role of markets in economic development, as well as giving an overview of tourism and poverty in Vietnam.

Chapter Three depicts the methodological approach adopted in the study. The research explores the attitudes and behaviours of the stallholders on the Cai Rang floating market, a local tourism official in Can Tho city, a tourism professional, a tour guide and tour operators towards the relationship between tourism development on the Cai Rang floating market and poverty reduction. The chapter first outlines the purposes and importance of the case study approach which is used in this research. Then the methods and means of carrying out primary research are examined. The method is based on face to face, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. Sampling issues and data collection are discussed in turn, and the challenges and limitation of this methodology are also discussed throughout this chapter.

Chapter Four provides a further context for the case study. The chapter looks at the background to Can Tho city, its poverty and tourism as well as the Cai Rang floating market context. Key findings from an analysis of the research data are presented in Chapter Five. The chapter provides insights into the perspectives of different stakeholders covered by the semi-structured interviews. This chapter also presents comments and policy recommendations for developing tourism on the Cai Rang floating market in a way that could bring more poverty-reduction benefits for local people.

The concluding chapter summarises the main points and key issues emerging from the study, and provides suggestions as to where actions can be taken to support poverty alleviation through tourism development on the Cai Rang floating market. The concluding chapter also indicates limitations of the research and where future research can be developed.

## **2. Literature Review**

Tourism is widely considered to be an effective contributor to socio-economic development, particularly in less developed countries (Senate Economic Planning Office, 2006; Honey & Gilpin, 2009). Despite the almost universal adoption of tourism as a development option, the extent to which economic and social benefits inevitably follow the introduction and promotion of a tourism sector remains the subject of intense debate (Hall, 2007). The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of tourism and development in the third world and to examine the concept of pro-poor tourism. Focusing especially on the less developed countries and drawing on contemporary case studies, the chapter explores the role of tourism in development and poverty reduction and, in particular, highlights the dilemmas faced by destinations seeking to achieve development through tourism (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). The chapter also includes discussion about the role of markets in development as well as an overview of Vietnamese poverty and tourism.

### **2.1 Tourism and Development in Less Developed Countries**

#### **2.1.1 Criterion to constitute less developed countries**

When attempting to describe the current significance of tourism to many of the world's less developed countries (LDCs), it is important to understand what constitutes a 'less developed' (or 'underdeveloped') country. The term 'less developed country' is, of course, subject to wide interpretation and is often used interchangeably with other terminology such as 'developing country' or 'Third World country' or, more generally, 'The South' (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). A criterion commonly used is to regard as 'developing' or 'less developed' all countries listed by the World Bank as not falling into the 'high income' category (World Bank, 1997, cited in Harrison, 2001). Others prefer to take a more rounded view of 'development' and focus on countries considered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to have either a 'medium' or 'low' ranking in the Human Development Index (HDI) (UNDP, 1999, cited in Harrison, 2001). This contrasts a country or group of countries (the 'developing world') with those that are 'developed', although, similarly, there is no established convention for defining a nation as 'developed' (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008).

The World Tourism Organisation (WTO) is revising its classifications. Until recently, it distinguished between ‘developing’ societies (roughly along the lines of the World Bank classification) and economies in transition, the countries of the former Soviet bloc, a division apparently based on their reluctance (despite not enjoying ‘high income’ status) to be associated with the ‘Third World’ (Harrison, 2001). Nevertheless, the UNWTO used to diverge from the World Bank by treating 20 ‘high income’ countries as ‘developing’ (including Greenland, Guam, Hong Kong, Singapore and the US Virgin Islands) (Harrison, 2001). There can be no denying the limitations of a category that included Singapore, a city state with a per capita income the purchasing equivalent of US\$22,770, (South) Cyprus, where more than 80% of households had a car, 7% had more than three cars, and one in four people owned a mobile phone (Harrison, 2001). However, faced with the choice of using the WTO classifications or retabulating all the tourism statistics of some 150 countries, the value of the WTO listing is substantially enhanced, and the isolation and analysis of trends need not be greatly affected by individual anomalies, which are always likely to be present in some form (Harrison, 2001). Unless otherwise indicated, in this study LDCs will be taken to indicate those classed by the WTO as ‘developing’ or as ‘economies in transition’.

### **2.1.2 Tourism in less developed countries**

In 1950, just fifteen destinations — primarily European — accounted for 98% of all international arrivals (Honey & Gilpin, 2009). Although Europe continues to take nearly 60% of all tourist arrivals, and with the Americas accounts for nearly 80% of all arrivals, during the 1990s these two regions grew relatively slowly, whereas Africa, East Asia/Pacific, the Middle East and South Asia increased their share of the market. During that period, tourism to LDCs increased significantly. According to the WTO (1990), in 1989, LDCs accounted for 85.3 million international arrivals (21% of all tourist trips) and received more than US\$54 billion (26%) from all receipts, excluding the cost of travel to destinations (cited in Harrison, 2001). By 1997, the equivalent percentages were 30.5% and 30% (WTO, 1999, cited in Harrison, 2001). By 2007, there were 898 million international tourist arrivals worldwide, with 360 million of these in the developing countries. This indicates an overall increase of 54%, and an average growth of 6% a year from 2000 to 2007. In



the 50 least developed countries international tourist arrivals increased to 13 million in 2007, an overall increase of 110%, with an average growth of 11% a year during the period from 2000 to 2007 (Tourism Review, 2008).

The increased importance of LDCs is also reflected in the declining market share of Europe and the Americas. Europe's share of the global market had fallen to 57% of all international arrivals in 2007 (Honey & Gilpin, 2009). Conversely, the East Asia/Pacific region has enjoyed spectacular growth in tourist arrivals, overtaking the Americas in 2002 to become the world's second most-visited region that year (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore are among the main destinations in East Asia Pacific, although interestingly, new destinations in the region including Vietnam and Cambodia have successfully developed their tourism sectors (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). Travel and tourism activity was hit hard by the global slump, with GDP from travel and tourism contracting by 4.8% in 2009 (WTTC, 2010). Since then, Asia and the Pacific (-2%) have showed an extraordinary rebound. By region, Asia is expected to continue to show the strongest rebound, while Europe and the Americas are likely to recover at a more moderate pace (UNWTO, 2010). Overall there has been a gradual shift away from the traditional destinations of Europe and North America to other regions of the world.

Although the standardised sun-sea-sand package holiday remains the most popular form of tourism, at least among tourists from the developed Western world, there has been a dramatic growth in demand for the more individualistic, active/participatory forms of tourism providing a broader or more fulfilling experience (Poon, 1993; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). An example of this is the growth in demand for cultural tourism, adventure tourism, heritage tourism and ecotourism. Tourists are now considered to be more flexible, more environmentally sensitive, more adventurous and inclined to seek out more meaningful experiences and, hence, travelling increasingly to different, more distant, untouched and exotic or new destinations (Scheyvens, 2002). Another point of note is that most tourists to LDCs are from developed countries. In other words, tourism to LDCs involves people from relatively wealthy countries visiting relatively poor countries (Harrison, 2001). There is no doubt that changing tastes in tourism demand represent a vital opportunity for

developing countries; the challenge lies in the extent to which they are able to harness this potential means of development.

According to the WTO (2002a), tourism is the leading export earner for one-third of the world's poorest countries. For the world's forty poorest countries, tourism is the second-most important source of foreign exchange after oil (Honey & Gilpin, 2009). Meanwhile, 80% of the world's poor, those living on less than US\$1 per day, live in just 12 countries – and in 11 of these countries, tourism is significant ( $> 2\%$  of GDP or 5% of exports) and growing (WTO, 2002a).

Over time, an ever increasing number of destinations have opened up and invested in tourism development, turning the industry into a key driver for socio-economic development (Mowforth & Munt, 2009). In some instances, tourism may represent the only realistic development path; that is, for some developing countries there is simply no other choice (Brown, 1998, cited in Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). More positively, however, the most compelling reason for adopting tourism as a development strategy is its potential contribution to the local or national economy, in particular to the balance of payments (Stabler, Papatheodorou & Sinclair, 2010). Many developing countries suffer severe balance of payment deficits and tourism may represent a significant source of foreign exchange earnings. The worldwide perception of tourism is that it is an export or basic industry, unlike most consumer services such as retailing, because the consumer must visit the place of production as opposed to the goods being transported to the market (Debbage & Daniels, 1998, cited in Ioannides, 2003).

Tourism is also widely considered to be a labour-intensive industry, and hence an effective source of employment in destination areas, whether as direct employment in hotels, restaurants and so on, or through indirect and informal employment (Scheyvens, 2002). In addition to the possibilities opened by tourism for economic development and for job creation, tourism growth also brings infrastructural changes to destinations. The growth of tourism creates a need for an improved infrastructure in developing economies (WTO, 2002b): transportation systems require a degree of modernisation; water supplies and sanitation arrangements may need improvement; and access roads, airports, telephone systems and other public utilities may have to be extended. In economic terms, many of these services are indivisible in the sense

that if the government provides them for tourists, they are at the same time making them available to local residents (Sadler & Archer, 1975). Improved roads benefit farmers in outlying areas, while airstrips constructed primarily to aid tourism may also open up the economies of remote regions (WTO, 2002b). There is no doubt that tourism can work for development. Development in this context does not simply refer to an economic process; rather, it is a multidimensional process leading to what can be described succinctly as ‘good change’ (Chambers, 1997, cited in Scheyvens, 2002). In recognition of the dependency and lack of power of many Third World nations in the global arena, and the marginalised position of many communities within Third World nations, development herein is seen as embracing values of self-sufficiency, self-determination and empowerment as well as improving people’s living standards (Scheyvens, 2002).

Experiences from various countries have shown that tourism can have significant effects, both positive and negative, on an economy (Senate Economic Planning Office, 2006). The UNWTO has worked towards promoting international tourism as one of the most valuable economic sectors for sustainable development and provides guidance to countries that have made tourism a central element of their economic development and poverty reduction strategy (Ministry of Industry and Commerce Lao PDR, 2007). It is worthwhile to examine the tourism industry as an agent of development, an anti-poverty tool, as well as the actions that need to be taken by governments to support the sustainable growth of this sector.

## **2.2 Tourism and Poverty Alleviation**

With the emergence of development approaches focused on the poor, by the end of the 1990s development practitioners had begun to think about the possibility of applying poverty elimination goals to tourism (Ashley et al., 2004; Mowforth & Munt, 2009). The concept of pro-poor tourism (PPT), which emphasises the theoretical and conceptual recognition of the function of tourism in poverty reduction is relatively new to the tourism research sphere (Bowden, 2005).

### **2.2.1 The concept of pro-poor tourism**

Although the economic significance of tourism for developing countries is long established, it is not until recently that tourism has begun to be exalted as a powerful weapon to attack poverty. Walter Jamieson, a tourism consultant, suggested the need for tourism officials to shift from a situation where tourism arrivals are the primary indicator of tourism success to one concerned with a sustainable approach which improves conditions for the poor through tourism development (Mowforth & Munt, 2009). The convergence of high tourism growth in poverty-stricken countries has generated a large amount of interest in tourism as a poverty alleviation strategy; this is sometimes term ‘pro-poor tourism’ (Goodwin, 2000). Some authors (Sofield, Bauer, Delacy, Lipman and Daugherty, 2004) prefer to use the World Tourism Organisation’s term ‘Sustainable Tourism – Eliminating Poverty’. Other industry sources may refer to tourism as a tool for ‘poverty alleviation’, ‘poverty reduction’ or ‘poverty elimination’ (Chok, Macbeth & Warren, 2007). These concerns are acknowledged but PPT has been adopted in this study to reflect its continued usage in key policy documents.

Pro-poor tourism can be defined as forms of tourism that generate net benefits for the poor (Ashley, Roe & Goodwin, 2001). Economic costs and benefits are clearly important, but social, environmental and cultural costs and benefits also need to be taken into account (Chok et al., 2007). PPT is not a specific product or sector of tourism, but an approach. Pro-poor tourism initiatives seek to achieve greater equity by providing the poorest members of destination societies with the opportunity to benefit from access to tourism market (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). The poor are frequently excluded from the local tourism sector, and thus are unable to sell locally produced products or provide other services. The objective of pro-poor tourism, therefore, is to open up access for the poor to the tourism sector, thereby providing them with a vital source of income (Ashley et al., 2001).

Pro-poor tourism has emerged from the belief that tourism can and should contribute to pro-poor economic growth. Pro-poor growth enables the poor to actively participate in and significantly benefit from economic activity (Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership, 2004, cited in Chok et al., 2007). However, this definition of PPT says nothing about the relative distribution of the benefits of the tourism. Therefore, as

long as poor people reap net benefits, tourism can be classified as ‘pro-poor’ – even if richer people benefit more than poorer people (Ashley et al., 2001). Rather than exploring the intricacies of defining ‘net positive benefits’, this section focuses on PPT principles and strategies that enhance benefits to the poor.

Table 1: Key PPT principles

<b>Participation:</b> Poor people must participate in tourism decisions if their livelihood priorities are to be reflected in the way tourism is developed.
<b>A holistic livelihoods approach:</b> Recognition of the range of livelihood concerns of the poor (economic, social, and environmental; short-term and long-term). A narrow focus on cash or jobs is inadequate.
<b>Balanced approach:</b> Diversity of actions needed, from micro to macro level. Linkages are crucial with wider tourism systems. Complementary products and sectors (such as transport and marketing) need to support pro-poor initiatives.
<b>Wide application:</b> Pro-poor principles apply to any tourism segment, though strategies may vary between them (for example, between mass tourism and wildlife tourism).
<b>Distribution:</b> Promoting PPT requires some analysis of the distribution of both benefits and costs – and how to influence it.
<b>Flexibility:</b> Blueprint approaches are unlikely to maximise benefits to the poor. The pace or scale of development may need to be adapted; appropriate strategies and positive impacts will take time to develop; situations are widely divergent.
<b>Commercial realism:</b> PPT strategies have to work within the constraints of commercial viability.
<b>Cross-disciplinary learning:</b> As much is untested, learning from experience is essential. PPT also needs to draw on lessons from poverty analysis, environmental management, good governance and small enterprise development.

(Adapted from Chok et al., 2007, p. 37).

As an approach, PPT is guided by underlying principles, which are outlined in Table 1. These principles recognise that poverty is multidimensional; they extend beyond income generation to include a range of livelihood impacts from tourism. The lack of a rigid blueprint emphasises the need to be context-specific — such flexibility is governed by an unequivocal core focus on the poor in the South. PPT’s emphasis is on “unlocking opportunities for the poor within tourism, rather than expanding the overall size of the sector” — in other words, ‘tilting’ rather than expanding the cake (DFID, 1999, cited in Chok et al., 2007).

### **2.2.2 Overview of pro-poor tourism strategies**

Strategies for pro-poor tourism can be divided into those that generate three different types of local benefit: economic benefits, other livelihood benefits such as physical, social or cultural improvements, and less tangible benefits such as participation and involvement (Scheyvens, 2002). Each of these can be further disaggregated into specific types of strategies.

Strategies focused on economic benefits include (Ashley et al., 2001; WTO, 2002a, 2004):

- Expansion of employment and local wages via commitments to local jobs and training locals for employment.
- Expansion of business opportunities for the poor. These may be businesses or entrepreneurs who sell inputs such as food, fuel or building materials to tourism operations, or they may be businesses that offer products directly to tourists, such as guiding, crafts, tea shops etc. Support can vary from marketing and technical support (for example, by nearby mainstream operators), to shifts in procurement strategy, or direct financial and training inputs.
- Development of collective community income. This may be from equity dividends, lease fees, revenue sharing or donations, usually established in partnership with tourism operators or government institutions.

In general, staff wages are a massive boost to those few that get them, small earnings help many more to make ends meet, and collective income can benefit the majority,

but can often be misused. All three types of economic benefits are important for reaching different poor families. Strategies to create these benefits need to tackle many obstacles to economic participation, including lack of skills, low understanding of tourism, poor product quality and limited market access.

Strategies to enhance other (non-cash) livelihood benefits generally focus on capacity building, training and empowerment. Furthermore, the strategies also include mitigation of the environmental impact of tourism on the poor and management of competing demands for access to natural resources between the tourism sector and local people. In addition, strategies are needed to address potential conflicts arising from competing uses of natural resources, and to improve social and cultural impacts of tourism as well as improve access to services and infrastructure (for example, health care, radio access, security, water supplies, transport) (Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership, n.d.).

Such strategies can often begin by reducing negative impacts – such as cultural intrusion, or lost access to land or coast. More can be done to then address these issues positively, in consultation with the poor. Opportunities to increase local access to services and infrastructure often arise when these are being developed for the needs of tourists, but with some consultation and adaptation could also serve the needs of residents (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). Strategies for capacity-building may be directly linked to boosting cash income, but may also be of more long-term indirect value, such as building management capacity of local institutions.

Strategies focused on policy, process and participation can create (Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership, n.d.; Ashley, Boyd & Goodwin, 2000; Ashley et al., 2001):

- the development of a more supportive policy and planning framework that enables participation by the poor
- increased participation by the poor in decision-making: i.e. ensuring that local people are consulted and have a say in tourism decision making by government and the private sector
- pro-poor partnerships with the private sector, and

- at the minimum, increased flow of information and communication through meetings, report backs, sharing news and plans. This is not participation but lays the basis for further dialogue.

Implementing these strategies may involve lobbying for policy reform, involving the poor in local planning initiatives, amplifying their voice through producer associations, and developing formal and informal links between the poor and private operators.

In summary, the core focus areas of PPT could be summarised into three distinct but overlapping strategies that include economic benefits, non-economic impacts and reforming the policy process (Roe & Urquhart, 2004). Enhancing the participation of the poor through capacity building and skills transfer, as well as reforming decision-making processes so that their needs are prioritised, are recognised as key. These broad strategies need to be pursued across sectors and levels (both micro and macro) and involve a variety of stakeholders (from governments to international donors and investors, tour operators, tourists and the poor) (DFID, 1999, cited in Chok et al, 2007).

### **2.2.3 Understanding poverty**

According to Mitchell and Ashley (2007), defining how tourism affects the poor and poverty reduction is futile without defining who the poor are, how poverty is measured and what is meant by poverty reduction. From a materialist point of view, income is the most widely adopted (if also narrow) measure of poverty. A consensus among donors has established an international poverty line that distinguishes the 'poor' as those who live on less than US\$2 per day (in 1985 terms adjusted for purchasing power parity), while people living on less than US\$1 per day are classified as 'extremely poor' (Cattarinich, 2001). However, definitions of the poverty line vary considerably among nations. For example, rich nations generally employ more generous standards of poverty than poor nations (Central Intelligence Agency, n.d.). Thus, the numbers are not strictly comparable between countries. Nevertheless, the belief that those who earned less than US\$1.00 per day would be regarded as poor was widely accepted as the basic measure of poverty (Yari, 2003). However, a recent World Bank's report claims the setting of the US\$1-a-day



definition of poverty is arbitrary, and that the definition imposes inconsistent standards between countries, fails to reflect differences in inflation between rural and urban areas; and gives much greater weight to the prices of goods bought by richer people in those countries than by poorer people (New Economics Foundation, 2010).

In 2008, the World Bank came out with a revised figure of US\$1.25 at 2005 purchasing-power parity (PPP) (Parsons, 2008). While the international poverty line is useful for stimulating political action and for measuring progress according to specific dimensions of poverty, it is based on a reductionist conceptualisation of poverty (ODI & AIRD, 1999, cited in Cattarinich, 2001). Poverty measurement is not only about an economic approach but should also include non-economic approaches such as basic needs, inequality, subsistence and the human development index (Spenceley & Goodwin, 2007; Yari, 2003). ODI and AIRD (1999) define poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon that consists of a 'lack' of certain things upon which human health, well-being, and autonomous social functioning depend, including the ability to meet basic needs (cited in Cattarinich, 2001). This lack may consist of insufficient income, consumption or assets, entitlements, rights or security. In other words, poverty is the shortage of common things such as food, clothing, shelter and safe drinking water, all of which determine the quality of life. It may also include a lack of access to opportunities such as education and employment as well as a lack of marketable skills which aid the escape from poverty and/or allow one to enjoy the respect of fellow citizens (Cattarinich, 2001).

Recent poverty analyses also involve other issues like lack of sanitation, vulnerability, isolation, social exclusion, personal dignity, self-respect, powerlessness, lack of voice, representation and freedom (Spenceley & Goodwin, 2007). Thus, there are both material and non-material dimensions to poverty (Cattarinich, 2001). Furthermore, Tong and Lin (1995, cited in Guo, 2008) suggested that poverty could be divided into two types, absolute and relative poverty. Absolute poverty is when people lack adequate clothing and food and simple production is difficult or impossible to maintain, whereas relative poverty is when people have just-adequate food and clothing but their living standard is below the recognised basic level, and when simple production can be maintained but there is very little or

no ability to extend production (Guo, 2008). These concepts must be kept in mind in order to define the focus for PPT.

Due to the multidimensional nature of poverty, understanding any poverty-related issue is always a challenge because a wide range of interwoven factors, such as economic, socio-political and cultural forces, need to be taken into account. Despite the practical difficulties in studying poverty, this field is obviously worth greater research efforts given that poverty has become one of the biggest enemies of humankind into the 21st century (Hall, 2007). The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a historic pledge to halve the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day by the year 2015 (United Nations, 2000, cited in Hall, 2007). It is believed that tourism, as one of the largest economic drivers in the contemporary world, should and also can play a more active role in achieving such an ambitious goal.

#### **2.2.4 The role of tourism in poverty alleviation**

Tourism is often touted as a route out of poverty for those communities and nations which embrace and promote it. It is particularly presented in this way by First World governments and tourism organisations like the WTO and WTTC. Increasingly over recent years, First World development agencies and United Nations agencies have also come to accept that the industry can be seen as a vehicle for alleviating poverty (Mowforth, Charlton & Munt, 2008). Since the late 1990s, the Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership in the United Kingdom, a collaborative research initiative of the International Centre for Responsible Tourism (ICRT), the International Institute for the Environment and Development (IIED) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), has been committed to investigating ways to tap the potential of tourism in poverty alleviation and is responsible for most of the early research and documentation (Ashley et al., 2001, cited in Zhao & Ritchie, 2007).

For three decades the IMF, WTO and World Bank have promoted a prevailing belief in comparative advantage, forcing Third World countries to produce tropical goods and to exploit their natural resources, but this have given rise to increases in poverty and inequalities (Mowforth et al., 2008). Therefore, the perceived need for change

and the relatively recent use of the tourism industry as a new mechanism are for addressing its failings. Hence, too, the recent rise to prominence of pro-poor tourism initiatives. National governments in the Third World follow this line and view tourism as a means of increasing foreign earnings and as a generator of employment (Mowforth et al., 2008).

At a local level, tourism potential to generate net benefits for the poor, or to be ‘pro-poor’, lies in four main areas. Firstly, tourism is a diverse industry, which increases the scope for wide participation of different stakeholders and businesses, including the involvement of the informal sector (Spenceley & Goodwin, 2007). Secondly, the customer comes to the product, which provides considerable opportunities for linkages to emerging entrepreneurs and small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMMEs) (Honey & Gilpin, 2009). Tourism creates networks of different operations, from hotels and restaurants to adventure-sports providers and food suppliers. This enables tourist centres to form complex and varied supply chains of goods and services. Thirdly, tourism is highly dependent upon natural capital (for example, wildlife and culture), which are assets that the poor may have access to – even in the absence of financial resources (Spenceley & Goodwin, 2007). The poor can use their natural resources and the local culture as an income-generating comparative advantage. Fourthly, tourism can be more labour intensive than other industries such as manufacturing (Spenceley & Goodwin, 2007).

Mathieson and Wall (1982) also mention that since many jobs in tourism require minimal skills, it is possible to absorb a large proportion of the required workforce from other sectors without the major investments in training programmes that are often required by other industries (cited in Ioannides, 2003). Moreover, many tourism jobs are flexible or seasonal and can be taken on in parallel with existing occupations, such as farming, providing extra income for local population (Honey & Gilpin, 2009). As an additional source of income, tourism can play an important part in improving living standards and raising people above the poverty threshold. For example, waged employment from tourism can be sufficient to lift a household from insecure to secure. Casual earnings per person may be very small, but much more widely spread and may be enough, for instance, to cover school fees for one or more children. Work as a tourist guide, although casual, is often of high status and

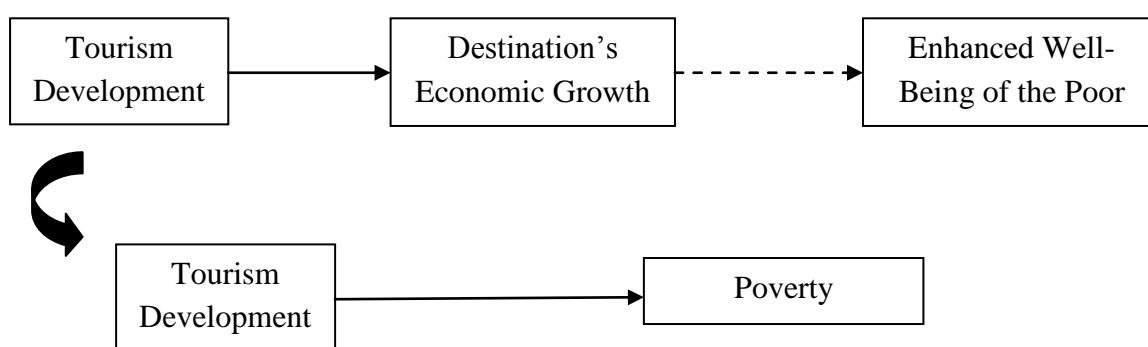
relatively well paid. Examples from Kenya, Namibia and Zimbabwe illustrate that it can match wage income in scale and that in principle it can benefit all residents (Goodwin, 2000). Tourism not only provides material benefits for the poor, but can also bring cultural pride, a sense of ownership and control, reduced vulnerability through diversification and the development of skills and entrepreneurial capacity (WTO, 2002b).

There are a number of reasons to look again at tourism and to assess its potential to promote development and economic growth as well as generate pro-poor opportunities. Compared with most sectors, including extractive industries and manufacturing, tourism-related investments hold the perceived promise of rapid returns (WTO, 2004; Ioannides, 2003). Tourism is an attractive sector for policy makers primarily because of its wealth and job-creating potential, not to mention that ordinary residents have often benefited from tourism-related investments, both financially and through improved amenities (Fainstein & Gladstone, 1999; cited in Ioannides, 2003). Tourism development is normally associated with the improvement of a destination's infrastructure and services (for example, roads, airports, health care facilities and sewage systems) and other facilities (for example, playing fields, sports centres, parks and theatres), all of which ultimately benefit the local population. According to Law (1992, cited in Ioannides, 2003), the tourism-related improvements can also boost a community's image for potential investors seeking locations to establish their business.

Furthermore, localities can use tourism as an invisible export in the same way they may use the production of tangible manufactured or agricultural goods to attract necessary foreign exchange and fulfil their overriding economic goals of wealth creation, employment generation and enhancement of the host population's living standards (Ioannides, 2003). Mathieson and Wall (1982, cited in Ioannides, 2003) maintained that policy makers favour the development of tourism instead of concentrating on export of agriculture products because communities seldom have control over the prices of those commodities. In fact, in many countries with high levels of poverty, receipts from international tourism are a considerable proportion of GDP and export earnings (Roe et al., 2004).

While industrialisation was seen as the main means of economic growth under modernisation theory, the tourism industry was also identified as an important tool for economic development. Once economic growth started to occur, it was assumed that any benefits would ‘trickle down’ to improve the quality of life of the majority of a country’s population (Scheyvens, 2002, p. 23). The improved well-being of the local poor would, in turn, contribute to poverty reduction at the destination. As a result, tourism is considered as a potential tool for poverty alleviation. The confluence of tourism and poverty reflects an essential change in the philosophy of tourism development and poverty alleviation, and is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Tourism and poverty alleviation



(Adapted from Zhao & Ritchie, 2007, p. 10).

With these benefits in mind, the United Nations has identified the development of tourism as one of the methods poorer countries might use to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Thus in an assessment of Nigeria’s potential for tourism, Francesco Frangialli, the former head of the UNWTO, argued that with its “capacity to spread its socioeconomic benefits to all levels of society ... tourism can be a leading industry in the fight against poverty.” (Honey & Gilpin, 2009, p. 2).

### ***Some challenges and limitations of tourism as a tool for poverty alleviation***

Tourism not only brings economic benefits but also imposes direct and indirect costs on host communities. A destination’s resources – land, labour, and capital – are used to provide goods and services to tourists and tourism businesses. Because resources employed in tourism may have other uses, usually a cost is accrued to the community when these resources are diverted from their previous uses and employed in tourism

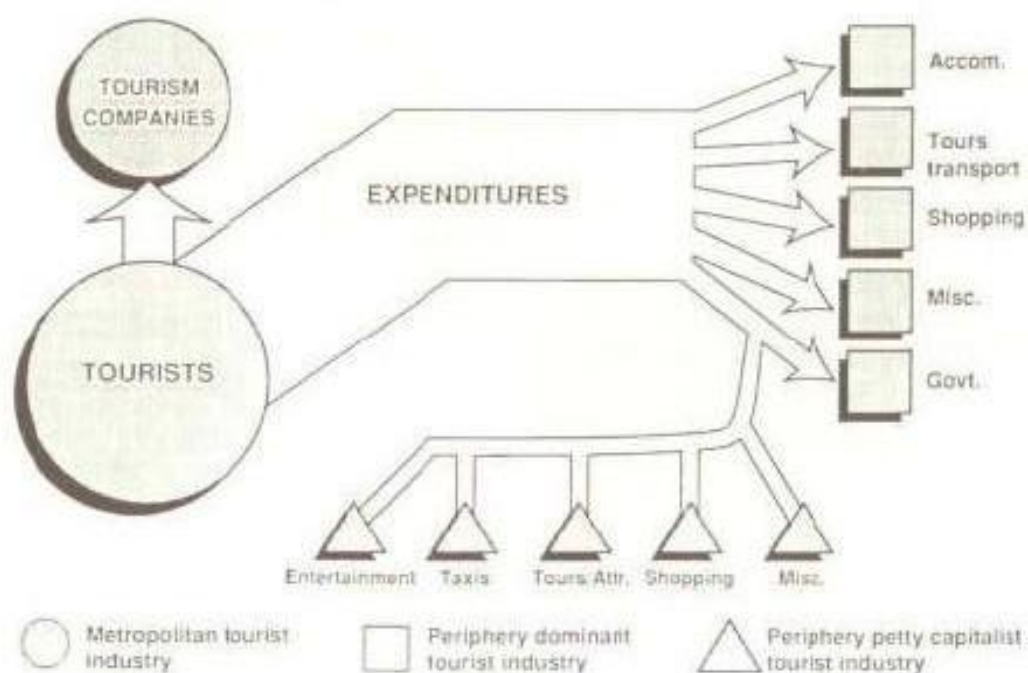
(Mak, 2004). In some developing countries, tourism development can have an adverse impact on traditional agriculture by diverting agricultural labour to tourism. While tourism receipts rise, agricultural output declines. Once the loss of agricultural output is subtracted from the gross tourism receipts, the net economic contribution of tourism may only be a small fraction of its gross receipts (Mak, 2004). Moreover, tourism income usually benefits the local community economically but the associated development often serves as a magnet that attracts labour from outside the area (Smith & Brent, 2001). If there is a shortage of skilled labour then there may be a need to import labour from other countries; this will result in additional economic leakages as income earned from this imported labour may be, in part, repatriated (Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert, Shepherd & Wanhill, 1998).

If tourist facilities and services are owned and managed by foreigners or when foreigners invest in tourism development, there may also be economic leakage as profits are sent back to source nations (UNEP & WTO, 2005). In addition, there could be economic leakage because of the payment for goods and services imported to satisfy tourist needs (Phillips, Ludvigson & Panoho, 2005). The leakage of foreign currency, particularly through imports, is long recognised in the economic impact literature, with reviews by Archer (1996), Fletcher (1989) and Wanhill (1994) (cited in Blake, Arbache, Sinclair & Teles, 2007). McCulloch, Winters and Cirera (2001) estimate that between 55% and 75% of tourism spending in LDCs leaks back to developed countries (cited in Blake et al., 2007). It is clear that some of the tourist receipts in developing countries have no impact on poverty relief because of high leakages.

These economic leakages were also highlighted in Britton's (1981, 1982) model of dependent tourism development (see Figure 2.2) (cited in Milne, 1997). Britton's study, based on the South Pacific island of Fiji, focused on how tourism impacts on the destination economy. His work inspired wide application of dependency theory (Scheyvens, 2002). Britton emphasises that small island states are particularly vulnerable in a global economy dominated by multinational corporations which control a range of tourism products and services, from transport to accommodation. He stresses the inequitable distribution of tourism's economic benefits. The leakage of tourist dollars occurs, for example, when multinational tourism companies follow

centralised purchasing procedures which impede local managers from buying supplies locally (Brown, 1998, cited in Scheyvens, 2002). In addition, the loss of the economic benefits of tourism to a host country is particularly evident when tourists book their travel through Western travel agencies, use Western airlines, and stay in accommodation that is part of a multinational hotel chain. Dependency theory also suggests that local communities can only assume a passive role in international tourism – they can only get ‘crumbs from the table’ (Milne, 1997, p. 288). It is believed that insensitive tourist developments can displace local people and destroy traditional livelihoods, leaving many with no alternative but to take up low-paying and exploitative jobs in the tourist sector (Mak, 2004). However, the dependency theory was criticised in that it failed to acknowledge the importance of local participation in the tourism industry and did not recommend any workable strategies for the destinations to break out of the vicious cycle (Milne, 1997).

Figure 2.2: Key elements of Britton’s model of dependent tourism development



(Milne, 1997, p. 287)

In addition to these challenges for poverty alleviation through tourism, there are limits to what PPT can achieve as a poverty elimination strategy. Firstly, the poor may not have the required skills, knowledge and capital to produce high quality, competitive products. They cannot easily market their products to tourists and

enterprises in the tourism sector. This could lead to a high dependence on foreign input and intervention in developing tourism strategies and creating promotion programmes, as well as loss of opportunities to take jobs at management levels for local people (Chok et al., 2007). Tourism jobs that employ the local poor are often low-paid jobs as the result of a number of factors, including the high percentage of unskilled jobs and the prevalence of seasonal, casual, part-time, transitory and female employment.

Secondly, the PPT approach can be limited because, in some cases, the poor who receive funding from government or NGOs to produce goods and products to sell to tourists may spend the money on other purposes (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). Thirdly, it is said that developing countries have weak bargaining power over the international tour operators in terms of controlling access to tourist expenditures and retention of profits (Chok et al., 2007). Fourthly, there is concern about tourism economic benefits not being spread equally among the poor. It is also believed that the 'fairly poor' would gain more benefits than the 'poorest', who lack the capital and skills to enable involvement in tourism industry (Chok et al., 2007). Finally, powerful stakeholders may also manipulate opportunities to serve their self-interests rather than to help the poor (Chok et al., 2007).

A focus on the negative impacts of tourism development has led some to reject the notion that tourism could be an agent of development (Scheyvens, 2002). However, it seems particularly inappropriate to reject all notions of tourism as a strategy for development when it has been identified by communities as a potential means of improving their well-being. To sum up, although PPT has some limitations, there is evidence that tourism development can potentially help to reduce poverty (WTO, 2006; Ashley et al., 2001). It should also be noticed that pro-poor growth demands considerable time inputs, attitudinal changes and flexibility (Chok et al., 2007). Moreover, co-operation of all stakeholders at all levels is needed to make a PPT initiative successful and sustainable (Roe et al., 2004).



### **2.2.5 Local participation in tourism**

While tourism can be a force to alleviate poverty, much depends on the way the sector is planned and managed (Honey & Gilpin, 2009). One of the criteria often agreed as essential to the conditions of sustainability and development in any 'new' tourism scheme is the participation of local people (Mowforth & Munt, 2009). The WTO (1993) also suggests that it is necessary to involve community residents in the tourism development process. The two words, 'local' and 'participation', are regularly used together to emphasise the need to include and involve local people; and it is this juxtaposition of the two words which implies, paradoxically, that it is local people who have so often been left out of the planning, decision making and operation of tourist schemes (Mowforth & Munt, 2009). As Henkel and Stirrat (2001, cited in Mowforth & Munt, 2009, p. 225) state, "It is now difficult to find a development project that does not ... claim to adopt a 'participatory' approach involving 'bottom-up' planning, acknowledge and claiming to 'empower' local people". Jules Pretty (1995, cited in Mowforth & Munt, 2009, p. 225) points out:

"In recent years, there have been an increasing number of comparative studies of development projects showing that 'participation' is one of the critical components of success ... As a result, the terms 'people participation' and 'popular participation' are now part of the normal language of many development agencies, including non-governmental organisations, government departments and banks. It is such as fashion that almost everyone says that participation is part of their work."

In fact, the agents of tourism development, including the state, private corporations, not-for-profit organisations, and related financial and technical planning organisations, as well as tourists themselves, all have their own values, ideology, goals, priorities, resources and strategies for tourism development (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). It seems that local communities at tourist destinations are often not involved in the tourism development process. It is believed that local communities are often assumed to be represented by their local governments but the governments have their own agenda, usually having to do with earning foreign exchange in order to pay down debt held by foreign banks, but not necessarily related to issues like

regional development and income generation at the local level (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008).

Participation is not, however, without its critics. According to Liu and Wall (2006, cited in Telfer & Sharpley, 2008), without adequate human resource management locals may not have the skills and knowledge to participate. They also suggest that “many, perhaps most communities in the developing world may require an outside catalyst to stimulate interest in tourism development and external expertise to take full advantage of their opportunities” (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008, p. 112). On the other hand, it has been said that the tourism industry has a responsibility to the local community in destinations since it “uses the community as a resource, sells it as a product and in the process affects the lives of everyone” (Murphy, 1988, p. 97).

Local communities should have the rights to voice their support or opposition in the tourism planning and development process as well as receive equitable benefits from the tourism sector. Maximising benefits to local residents can result in the active collaboration of communities and in active support for conservation of local tourism resources (Zimmermann, 2006). For example, participation in tourism planning and management educates the community about the potential long-term benefits of tourism (Scheyvens, 2002). Conversely, a lack of public participation can prove harmful for local people, leading to the damage of natural resources or to the abandonment of traditional occupations and lifestyles – clearly, a loss to locals as well as tourists. The focus on the relationship between tourism, tourists, and host communities recognises that under certain condition it can be a win-win situation for all parties.

The principle of local participation may be easy to promote; but putting it into practice is more complex, and implementation may take a number of different forms (Scheyvens, 2002). Pretty (1995) identified and reviewed six types of participation (see Table 2).

Table 2: Pretty's typology of participation

<i>Typology</i>	<i>Characteristics of each type</i>
Passive participation	People participate by being told what has been decided or has already happened. Information being shared belongs only to external professionals.
Participation by consultation	People participate by being consulted or by answering questions. Process does not concede any share in decision making, and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people's views.
Bought participation	People participate in return for food, cash or other material incentives. Local people have no stake in prolonging technologies or practices when the incentives end.
Functional participation	Participation is seen by external agencies as a means to achieve their goals, especially reduced costs. People participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives.
Interactive participation	People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and formation or strengthening of local groups or institutions. Learning methodologies used to seek multiple perspectives and the group determines how available resources are used.
Self-mobilisation and connectedness	People participate by taking initiatives independently of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over resource use.

(Pretty & Hine, 1999, Pretty, 1995, cited in Mowforth & Munt, 2009, p. 229)

The six types of participation range from passive participation, in which virtually all the power and control over the development or proposal lie with people or groups outside the community, to self-mobilisation, in which the power and control over all aspects of the development rest squarely with the local community. The latter type does not rule out the involvement of external bodies or assistants or consultants, but they are present only as directors and controllers of the development. The range of participation types allows for differing degrees of external involvement and local control, and reflects the power relationships between them. For local people, involvement in the decision-making process is a feature of only the interactive participation and self-mobilisation types, while in the functional participation type most of the major decisions have been made before they are taken to the local community. The only forms of local participation likely to break the existing patterns of power and unequal development are those which originate from within the local communities themselves.

In summary, the voices of Third World people should be listened to regarding both their concerns about tourism and what they hope to achieve through tourism, before carefully considering if there are appropriate means of pursuing tourism, and appropriate types of tourism that will readily meet the needs and desires of local communities (Scheyvens, 2002). There is no doubt tourism needs to work for local communities otherwise they will stop supporting the industry (Milne, 2007).

### **2.3 The Role of Markets in Development**

Since the case study in this research is a floating market, it is important to examine the role that markets can play in local development and PPT. Markets are, by their nature, business incubators (Project of Public Spaces, 2009). One of the greatest things about a market is its ability to generate happiness and goodwill at the heart of a community (Boniface, 2003). Markets can help build community because they are, indeed, about all things local. Markets can be likened to ‘community anchors’ because they provide a way to bring people together, but they are always ‘shifting’ and evolving, just as a community shifts and evolves. They are also invaluable tools to improve low-income communities. Creating their own retail vendor jobs, selling at a market, is an important way to help people with their financial needs (Marten,

2010). Whether a market is selling regional farm products, prepared foods, locally made crafts, or antiques, it must be an economic generator for vendors and a welcoming place for customers. When this connection of commerce and community is achieved markets become catalysts and centres of entire districts, offering a variety of places to shop, live, stroll and be entertained. With the right plan, business mix, and management, a market can represent a real step forward for the enhancement of the local economy and the community it serves (Project of Public Spaces, 2009). In addition, markets are one of the indispensable elements in tours for visitors. Markets are where guests spend money and explore local culture. As Hubert (2001, cited in Boniface, 2003, p. 85) points out:

“To feel the pulse of a village, district, or city, there is no better place than the market. It’s a place of exchange for material goods and intangible realities, a space and time in which human dynamics can take shape and become manifest ... Moreover, they offer the inquisitive visitor a marvellous [sic] opportunity for ‘getting inside’ a different world.”

Markets, of course, differ considerably from each other and can be very interesting for visitors to explore. For example, the Camden Lock market, set on the Regent’s Canal, away from the hustle and bustle of the city, is one of London’s top visitor attractions. Its unique shopping experience and cosmopolitan atmosphere makes it one of the most renowned and busiest markets in London (Fulford, 2005). People visiting Camden Lock come there because of the vitality and atmosphere that the market creates. They also come because of the uniqueness of the area (there are no chain stores/cafes) and to eat and drink by the Regent’s Canal. Camden Lock is primarily a social venue and a meeting place, but once people are here they find it very hard not to shop (Fulford, 2005). Camden Lock market allows customers to see their goods being made – a rare thing in modern London. Goods are still designed and made on site and studios are open to the customers. For young artists, the Lock studios offer a rare opportunity to rent a space where they can sell their work (Fulford, 2005).

Another type of market that benefits both visitors and local community is the farmers market. People coming to farmers markets can enjoy the opportunity to buy fresh, locally grown products directly from the farmers. In addition to produce, many markets offer a wide variety of agricultural products including meat, honey, cut flowers, nursery plants, eggs, baked goods and more. Farmers are able to gain a larger share of the dollar from direct sales (Commons News, 2010). Furthermore, these markets hire local people and usually sell local products, so they are keeping those dollars in a local economy (N.C. Market Ready, 2010). It has been said that the mission of farmers markets is to support local agriculture by providing a viable direct market outlet while building community and promoting regional sustainability (Commons News, 2010). Farmers markets not only support the local economy but also encourage healthier meals that feature fresh fruits and vegetables.

In Thailand, there are some floating markets that attract a huge number of tourists, an important source of income for local communities (Vu, 2008). These floating markets are normally located on a spectacular canal system, which was built to serve agricultural activities as well as trade and travel. Floating markets in Thailand include Tailing Chan and Wat Sai but one of the most famous floating markets, which attracts thousands of tourist from Bangkok every day, is the Damnoen Saduak (Vu, 2008). The Damnoen Saduak floating market is located in Ratchaburi province. It is approximately 105 kilometres from the southwest of Bangkok. At the Damnoen Saduak, the banks are full of souvenir and art stalls and those selling agricultural products have also changed their trade methods in order to be more appealing to visitors: fruits are peeled, plastic wrapped and displayed nicely so that the produce looks clean and delicious (see Figure 2.3) (Vu, 2008). According to Vu (2008), the Damnoen Saduak floating market was created primarily to serve tourists and a strong artificial intervention of the Thai tourism industry is very clear.

According to Vu (2008), the market brings a range of benefits for local people. Many tourists come and stay overnight in hotels in Damnoen Saduak in order to be able to come to the floating market in the early morning. Sometimes tourists bargain over prices then go without buying anything, yet they still receive a friendly smile from the sellers (see Figure 2.3) (Vu, 2008).

Figure 2.3: Stallholders - Damnoen Saduak, Thailand



(Source: Vu, 2008)

In Vietnam, markets are also very important for local people, especially the poor. A food seller on the Cai Rang floating market, Can Tho city, Vietnam said her family was very poor; like other poor people, her husband and she had to go ‘down’ the river for a living since they did not have any job or land (Thanh Nien News, 2009, pp.15). For more than thirty years, she has taken her small boat to the market, serving *bun* (noodle) to the locals. The income from selling on the floating market has not only helped this 60-year-old woman to raise her three children well, but also given them a complete education that has changed their lives (Thanh Nien News, 2009). Her children don’t want their mother to continue selling noodles at the floating market at her age, but she cannot quit. She explains: “I am so attached to the market that I feel uncomfortable if I am separated from it.” (Thanh Nien News, 2009, pp.17).

Markets are also indispensable stopovers in package tours. A market is a place for tourists to spend money, make contact with local people and explore the local culture (Hoang & Tran, 2010). Some famous markets in Vietnam include Ben Thanh and Binh Tay market in Ho Chi Minh city, Dong Ba market in Hue, Han market in Da Nang, Dong Xuan market in Ha Noi, Love market in Sapa and the floating markets in the Mekong Delta. The chairman of the Vietnam Cruise Company said that over 20 years working in international travel, he had put markets as a site in the tours to most provinces in Vietnam (Hoang & Tran, 2010). Tourists give good comments every time they visit markets and find them to be one of the most impressive experiences in their journey to Vietnam (Hoang & Tran, 2010). According to the Head of Training, Vietnam Tourism Association, markets are important tourism

resources and, if well designed and managed, markets will become the unique tourism products of Vietnam (Hoang & Tran, 2010).

There is no doubt that if well designed and managed, markets are not only a place for doing business but also an attraction for tourists who want to explore local culture and authenticity. Tourist spending on local products at these markets can also support the local economy and potentially the poor. In simple terms, markets such as Can Tho represent a potentially important place for tourism to support poverty alleviation.

## **2.4 The Vietnam Context**

### **2.4.1 Vietnam poverty measurement**

Vietnam is a densely populated developing country. In the last 35 years the country has had to recover from the ravages of war, the loss of financial support from the old Soviet Bloc, and the challenges associated with a centrally planned economy. In the 1980s, Vietnam was one of the poorest countries in the world (Le & Koo, 2007). Since the Doi Moi ('renovation') policies were adopted in 1986, Vietnam has achieved outstanding results in its economic performance (Cooper, 2000). From a stagnating economy characterised by poor macroeconomic performance, and with low growth, high unemployment and hyperinflation, Vietnam has turned itself into one of the fastest growing economies in the world, with average annual GDP growth of 7.2% during the decade prior to the 2008–2009 economic slow-down (Le & Koo, 2007, World Bank, 2010). Moreover, the Vietnamese Government has successfully translated economic growth into social improvements, lifting some 35 million people out of poverty during that period (World Bank, 2010).

Vietnam's performance in poverty reduction over the last two decade is considered a successful case in poverty reduction among developing countries. The country's poverty rate halved in less than ten years (Vu, 2009): in 1993, 58% of the population lived below the poverty line, but by 2002 this proportion had declined to 29% (Le & Koo, 2007). And this reduction has continued: in 2009 it was estimated that 12.3% of the population lived below the poverty line (Central Intelligence Agency, 2010). The Vietnamese government hopes to decrease the number of poor households to 11% by



2010 (Vietnam News, 2009). Generally, deep poverty has declined significantly in Vietnam and its aim to achieve middle-income status (defined by the World Bank as countries with a per capita income of US\$1,000) is well within sight (Central Intelligence Agency, 2010, World Bank, 2010).

Despite its remarkable achievements in economic growth and poverty reduction, sustaining Vietnam's growth will be challenging, given increasing pressures on the country's natural resource base from a growing population, the exposure of large segments of the population to natural disaster risks, and the expected (adverse) impacts of climate change (World Bank, 2010). Although Vietnam has an admirable history of coping with natural disasters and minimising their effects, the economic and human costs can still be huge (Oxfam, 2008). In the decade between 1991 and 2000, for example, official estimates are that 8,000 people in Vietnam lost their lives as a result of storms, floods, and landslides, while economic losses amounted to nearly US\$3 billion. According to the World Bank's 2008 Global Monitoring Report, Vietnam ranks eighth in the list of the ten countries in East Asia most vulnerable to weather extremes. A staggering 70% of the country's population live in areas subject to water-related natural disasters (Oxfam, 2008).

The poor are more likely to live in areas vulnerable to flooding and other natural disasters, and less likely to live in more robust permanent homes (Oxfam, 2008). There is still a significant number of households living in temporary dwellings, especially in the poor regions. The proportion of households that own temporary dwelling units is 17.7% for the whole country, but the region with the highest percentage is the Mekong River delta, where 29.3% of households live in temporary dwellings (Vu, 2009). Furthermore, the greatest numbers of poor people live in the Mekong River delta; many of them rely largely on agricultural activities, but are vulnerable to increasing land scarcity, insecure off-farm employment and uncertain access to basic services (Oxfam, 2008). Flooding has become almost an annual event in the Mekong Delta (Nguyen, 2007). Floods with strong currents are a danger to human life and property, as well as to public infrastructure (Nguyen, 2007). Floods cause millions of dollars worth of damage and have a catastrophic effect on regional rice crops (Lonely Planet, 2008). Others in the delta include poor fishing communities, who are becoming more at risk to the vagaries of the weather. The

impact of flooding, storms or drought is usually greater on poor people as they have fewer resources to help them recover. Inability to pay off debt or take out new loans, increases in local food prices, and illness due to water-borne diseases can all disproportionately affect the poor (Nguyen, 2007). As a result, challenges remain for those trying to further reduce poverty in Vietnam, challenges which are being exacerbated by climate change.

Although poverty alleviation has been achieved to a large extent, poverty reduction remains a major concern for Vietnamese society. While there is no national statistic on what percentage of the population is living near the poverty line, a significant number of the people have incomes that are very near the poverty line. These people may easily fall into poverty if there were to be an unexpected event such as a natural disaster, crop failure or economic crisis (Vu, 2009; Cities Alliance, 2004). Vietnam faces many other constraints in the development process, including rapid population growth, inadequate basic services of health care, and a large population with low educational levels.

With a population of more than 88 million in 2009 and an estimated population growth rate of 1.13%, Vietnam is working to create jobs to meet the challenge of a labour force that is growing by more than one million people every year (Central Intelligence Agency, 2010). A study (Vu, 2009) showed that less than 50% of households have access to sanitary toilets. The Mekong River delta region, with only 20% of households having access to sanitary toilets, has the lowest percentage access of all regions. These figures are low compared with the National Strategy of Safe Water Supply and Sanitary Environment's target of 70% of households having access to sanitary toilets by 2010 (Vu, 2009).

The rate of literacy calculated for the population aged six years old and over is 94.5% nationwide. The percentage of people who have primary education (from Grade 1 to Grade 5) is 31.5%; lower secondary (Grades 6–9), 41.6%; upper secondary (Grades 10–12), 18.8%; and college and university, 1.8%. Poverty is an important reason why children do not go to school. At least 46.3% of children who have dropped out attribute this to reasons such as lack of labour in the family, and the very high cost of schooling, while the lack of awareness and appreciation of parents

and children of the benefits of education was the reason for 9.5% of the cases (Vu, 2009).

Other concerns regarding poverty reduction in Vietnam include its current low poverty line and the lack of reliable measures of poverty (Vietnam News, 2009; Urban Health Updates, 2009; Can Tho City Department of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs, 2009). The existing poverty line, which was created in 2005, is VND200,000 (approximately US\$10) per person per month in the countryside and VND260,000 for those living in urban areas. There are ten million residents living below this line (Vietnam News, 2009). It is said that the current value of the official poverty line is insufficient to meet minimum basic needs in Vietnam. In fact, with VND200,000 people now can only buy 12 kilograms of rice, which is not enough on which to survive for an entire month. In the context of inflation making the basic cost of living much higher, this poverty line is no longer appropriate: it is too low in comparison with the increase in prices (Urban Health Updates, 2009).

The current low poverty line means many poor people are not officially defined as 'poor' and so fail to access support from the government. Therefore, the Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs has proposed a new poverty standard: for those living in rural areas, the line will be VND350,000 (US\$16.75) or less a month, or for those living in urban areas, it will be VND450,000 (US\$21.54) or less a month (Can Tho Department of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs, 2009). The new level has been based on calculations that will ensure that individuals have enough money for food and basic necessities, said Deputy Director of the Institute for Social Labour under the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA). When the new poverty line comes into effect, it will increase the number of poor households in the country by 7% (Vietnam News, 2009).

#### **2.4.2 Vietnam tourism**

Currently Vietnam is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the Asia-Pacific region and its tourism industry has been growing over the past few years (Footprint, 2010). The tourism industry is increasingly recognised as one of the largest and fastest growing industries in Vietnam, in terms of foreign exchange earnings, income

generation, job creation and share of the gross domestic product. The Vietnamese tourism industry has grown nearly twice as fast as GDP in recent years (Footprint, 2010). The tourism industry is also proposed to strengthen linkages among many sectors of the national economy, to eliminate poverty within the country and connect Vietnam with the world (Vietnam Business Forum, 2010a). The Government's support has been the key driving force for this industry. The Government has been spending readily on the promotional activities all around the world to boost the nation's tourism industry. According to Travel and Tourism Intelligence (2009), there are few countries in the world that have changed so radically over such a short time as Vietnam. Just 35 years after the end of the American War, the country is in the grips of commercial development: new shops, hotels and offices are being built at a rapid rate, street markets are flourishing and cross-border trade with China is booming.

When attempting to understand Vietnam's tourism industry, it is important to trace back the industry's history and development. The American War came to the end when the United States withdrew its troops from Saigon, now called Ho Chi Minh city, in 1975. This devastating war had caused Vietnam's economy to virtually collapse. Despite the return of peace, for over a decade the country experienced little economic growth because of conservative leadership policies. Vietnam was cut off from the flow of tourists from the non-communist world; visitors rarely went to Vietnam for travel or to do business (Mok & Lam, 2000).

Since the enactment of Vietnam's 'Doi Moi' (renovation) policy in 1986, Vietnamese authorities have committed to increased economic liberalisation and enacted structural reforms needed to modernise the economy and to produce more competitive, export-driven industries (Central Intelligence Agency, 2010). With this 'open door policy', restrictions on private investment were gradually lifted and foreign investment and ownership encouraged (Mok & Lam, 2000). However, opening up the economy was not easy in the beginning as Vietnam lacked capital, experience, infrastructure and a trained labour force. Moreover, at that time Vietnam was virtually isolated from the outside world as a result of an American embargo on trade (Cooper, 2000). Vietnam was also faced with difficulties arising from the collapse of the socialist system in the East European states and the Soviet Union.

Despite these problems, the Doi Moi strategy has been effective. Vietnam has expanded its trading relationships to other regions, including the European Union in 1992. In 1994, the United States decided to lift the 20-year-old trade embargo. Then Vietnam was accepted as a full member of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1995 (Cooper, 2000), the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) in 1996, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) in 1998. In January 2007 Vietnam joined the World Trade Organisation (World Trade Organisation, 2007). As a result, foreign investors have flocked to Vietnam and started exploring business opportunities within the country (Mok & Lam, 2000).

The introduction of the Doi Moi strategy has also helped the tourism industry develop almost from scratch since 1987 (Mok & Lam, 2000). In the early 1990s Vietnam began to encourage tourism as part of its general policy of liberalization. The central government determined that tourism was an important economic sector with in-depth cross-sectoral, inter-regional and highly socialised characteristics, and it wanted to develop a tourism sector that would satisfy tourists' demand while making contributions to both the improvement of the community and national socio-economic development (Can Tho Portal, 2007c). To highlight the key roles of the tourism industry and to facilitate its development, the Vietnamese Government set up the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) in 1993; this body focuses on strategic planning and marketing for the tourism industry (Mok & Lam, 2000). At the end of 2007 the new Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism (MCST) was established, which is responsible for the management of culture, sport and tourism sectors at national level. The VNAT is currently responsible for the general administration of tourism, and is under direct control of the MCST (European Commission, 2008). The VNAT controls the planning for tourism development, sets out strategies, collaborates, conducts research and instructs, as well as inspects the implementation of policies and other regulations in the tourism industry.

The Vietnamese Government's determination to develop tourism as a key economic sector cannot be underestimated. There has been considerable investment in airport infrastructure and roads as well as tourism superstructure such as hotels and resorts (Travel & Tourism Intelligence, 2009). The Vietnamese Government has invested VND2,146 billion in infrastructure and management for this sector in the last five

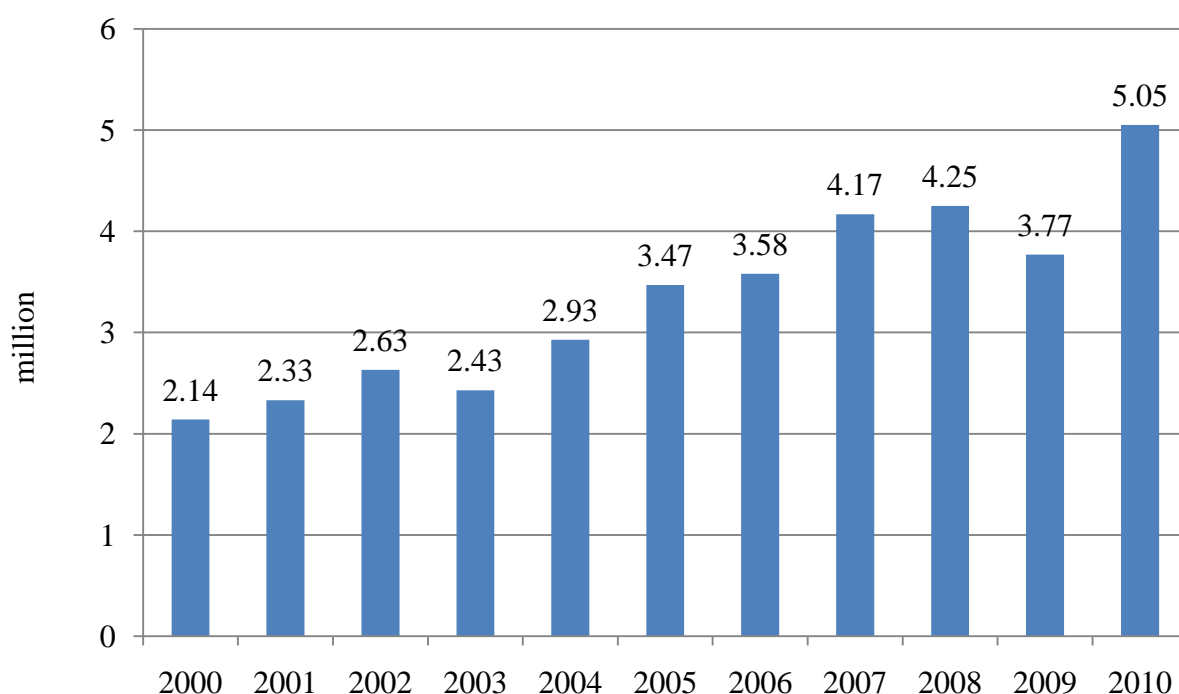
years. During the same period, the government has also attracted 190 foreign direct-investment projects in the tourism industry, with a total capital of \$4.64 billion USD in infrastructure for tourism (Luong, 2005). Furthermore, since the late 1990s, \$1.96 billion USD has been invested in 104 hotel development projects, making tourism one of the country's most important industries (Luong, 2005). Vietnamese authorities have planned to pour 40 billion VND into tourism promotion campaigns abroad in 2010 (Vietnam Business Forum, 2009d).

Vietnam's recent political stability has also made tourism development possible (Mok & Lam, 2000). In order to develop relations with other countries, while at the same time making conditions favourable for the travel of its own citizens, Vietnam has agreed with many countries on visa exemptions (Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in the United States of America, 2001). Visas are issued at the Vietnamese diplomatic offices or consulates in foreign countries. Visas can also be issued at the border gates to those who have written invitations or tourists on tours organised by Vietnamese international travel companies (VNAT, 2005). Recently, to boost tourism and attract more foreign visitors, the State Steering Committee on Tourism is proposing the government exempt visa fees and refund value-added taxes (VAT) for international tourists in August and September 2010. This is part of the tourism promotion programme entitled 'Vietnam – Your Destination' announced by the VNAT in March 2010 (VOV News, 2010b).

In 1990, Vietnam received 250,000 foreign visitors. Within ten years, the number had increased rapidly, to 2.14 million in 2000 (European Commission, 2008). In 2001, the tourism worldwide was hit badly by the terrorist attacks in the United States of America on 11 September, but the number of international arrivals to Vietnam still increased to 2.3 million and was up again to 2.6 million in 2002. However, in 2003, the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) crisis had a devastating impact on Vietnam's tourism industry, with the number of tourist arrivals declining about 8% over previous years, to 2.4 million. Nevertheless, the industry recovered quickly and in 2004, the number of international arrivals had increased to 2.9 million. The Vietnamese tourism industry continued to grow — in 2008, Vietnam received 4.2 million international tourists — until it was hit badly again, this time by the global economic crisis. In 2009, the number of international arrivals to Vietnam

decreased by 11.3% to 3.77 million, and of significant concern is that this decrease was 5% more than the decrease experienced by other countries in the Pacific-Asia region (Vietnam Business Forum, 2009c). However, since then there has been an increase in the number of foreign tourists to Vietnam: in 2010, according to VNAT (2011a), international tourist arrivals to Vietnam grew by 34.8% from a year earlier, to 5.05 million (see Figure 2.4). The sharp increase is attributed to the recovery of the national and world economy and to efficiency of promotion campaigns (Vietnam Business Forum, 2010b).

Figure 2.4: International arrivals to Vietnam for the period 2000–2010



(Source: VNAT, 2011b)

The number of domestic tourists has also increased sharply. In 1990, there were only one million domestic tourists but in 2000, this had increased to 11 million. The numbers continued to grow steadily and reached 17.5 million in 2006 (European Commission, 2008). Domestic tourism grew at a particularly high rate during 2008–2009. According to the VNAT (2010f), while the number of foreign visitors fell more than 11% in 2009, the number of domestic travellers increased sharply by 20%

over the previous year, to 25 million, which helped spur the country's hospitality industry during tough times last year (see Table 3).

According to the Deputy Head of the VNAT, despite the domestic market playing a more and more important role given the current decline in international tourist arrivals, it is contributing around 20% to total revenue of the country's tourism (Vietnam Net, 2009b). VNAT said that it would continue to speed up the growth of the sector for the long-term development and to encourage more local people to travel (VNAT, 2010f). After deciding domestic travellers will be the main driving force for the tourism industry's development, a number of promotional programs have been launched to attract more domestic travellers in 2010. The Ministry would pour more investment in diversifying and bettering tourism services in order to receive about 28 million domestic tourists in 2010 (VNAT, 2009c).

Table 3: Visitors to Vietnam from 2000–2009

Year	International visitors	Domestic visitors
2000	2,140,100	11,200,000
2001	2,330,800	11,700,000
2002	2,628,200	13,000,000
2003	2,429,600	13,500,000
2004	2,927,876	14,500,000
2005	3,467,757	14,900,000
2006	3,583,486	17,500,000
2007	4,171,564	20,000,000
2008	4,253,740	20,833,000
2009	3,772,359	25,000,000

(Source: VNAT, 2011b)



As well as an increase in tourist numbers, the Vietnamese tourism industry has enjoyed a strong growth in tourism receipts. The tourism sector is one of Vietnam's two largest foreign exchange earners (Vietnam Business Forum, 2010a). Over the period 2004–2008, visitor receipts increased by an average annual rate of 26.15%, an increase from US\$1.7 billion in 2004 to US\$4 billion in 2008 (Travel & Tourism Intelligence, 2009). Visitor expenditure has outperformed visitor arrivals (which have increased by an average of 9.8% per annum over the same period). In other words, the average spend per visitor trip increased significantly, from US\$581 in 2004 to US\$940 in 2008. Last year, despite the global recession, Vietnamese tourism revenues were up 9% over a year earlier and the industry was estimated to contribute 13.1% of the GDP to the Vietnamese economy (Vietnam Business Forum, 2010b; Footprint, 2010). This year, the country aims to earn tourism revenues of between \$4 billion USD and \$4.5 billion USD (VNAT, 2009c). The development of tourism has also helped to boost other economic sectors, increasing the service ratio within the national economic structure and revitalising many commercial activities (UNDP, 2005; CIEM, 2005). In many localities, tourism development has fundamentally altered the appearance of the municipality, countryside and local communities. In general, the tourism industry is seen as having a positive impact because of its contribution to economic growth.

### ***Employment***

Tourism is generally regarded as an employment-intensive industry (Travel & Tourism Intelligence, 2009). The impressive growth of the Vietnamese tourism industry has contributed to an expansion in employment. The tourism industry generates direct full-time employment in such formal sectors as hotels, restaurants, transport services, travel agencies and guiding. In 2000, there were 685,000 employees directly and indirectly involved in the tourism industry nationwide; by 2005 this had increased to 799,000 (VNAT, 2008). The Administration of Tourism's survey showed that the number of workers involved in the tourism sector, either directly or indirectly, had reached more than one million by 2008. When comparing these numbers with employment figures from across the country, in July 2008 the number of workers involved in tourism (either directly and indirectly) accounted for 10% of all those working in a service area and 4% of the country's total workforce

(Vietnam Business Forum, 2009a). In 2009, the tourism industry had 1,035,000 workers, of which 285,000 people were direct workers and 750,000 people were indirect workers (Vietnam Business Forum, 2009b). As a 'spearhead' of Vietnam's economy, the tourism sector in Vietnam is expected to employ 1.2 million people by 2010 (VNAT, 2008).

Tourism development has both positive and negative impacts on local residents in terms of employment. For local communities, many people gain benefits from jobs induced by tourism. Families living near tourism destinations often operate tourism-related services such as tea stalls, and food and beverage enterprises, or produce traditional handicrafts or operate souvenir shops for tourists. They even make themselves available as drivers. The income from these kinds of jobs is more stable than working on the farm. Moreover, it is particularly good for the local people because the Vietnamese government does not impose tax on these incomes (Scheyvens, 2002).

The Vietnamese tourism industry can also have less-positive impacts on employment opportunities for local communities. People may move to the tourism sector from the other sectors and, as a result, the tourism industry does actually create new jobs or reduce unemployment. In recent years, many local governments have established tourist attractions and accommodation around national parks, relics, nature reserves and monuments as well as set up buffer zones to protect them. Local people are moved out or have their living practices restricted in these areas. When tourism development displaces local villagers in this way it can destroy their traditional employment practices (Scheyvens, 2002). It is worth noting also that the private sector has made considerable effort to increase the efficiency of business operations by reducing labour costs in some tourism-related services (Singh, Timothy & Dowling, 2003).

### ***Challenges for tourism development***

Although tourism has been increasing in Vietnam over the past decade, when compared with its neighbours, Vietnam still has relatively few international tourists (Berger, 2005). For example, in 2000, while Vietnam welcomed just more than two

million foreign tourists, Thailand received more than nine million foreign tourists and Malaysia had more than ten million (Sofield et al., 2004). Similarly, in 2008, international arrivals to Vietnam were more than four million, but more than 14 million arrived in Thailand and 22 million in Malaysia (VNAT, 2011b; ThaiWebsites, 2011; Tourism Malaysia, 2010). Moreover, the Vietnamese tourism industry currently has a ratio of 15% for repeat international visitation, which is rather low compared with Singapore, Thailand or Indonesia (VNAT, 2008). Vietnamese tourism revenue is also very low in comparison with its neighbouring countries (VnEconomy, 2009). It is obvious that Vietnam still struggles to compete as a tourism destination with some of its neighbours such as Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia (Bali) and Malaysia (VNAT, 2005). At present, Vietnam tourism is only ranked fifth in terms of international arrivals in South-East Asia (Vietnam Business Forum, 2009b). Furthermore, a report on the Vietnamese tourism sector's competitiveness showed that Vietnam was ranked 97th in a list of 133 countries. In ASEAN, Vietnam was trailing to Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, which were ranked at 7, 32 and 42 respectively, not to mention the other developed countries (Thanh Nien Online, 2010). There is no doubt that tourism in Vietnam, even though it is growing rapidly, is still less well developed than tourism in many other countries.

Nevertheless, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council (2008), Vietnam is predicted to be among the top ten major tourist destinations in the world in the next ten years (cited in European Commission, 2008). In the latest survey by the WTTC, Vietnam moved up from sixth to fourth place in the league table of the world's fastest-growing destinations (European Commission, 2008). Moreover, Vietnam is considered to be a safe destination when compared with Thailand, with its political turmoil, and Indonesia, with its domestic terrorism. A recent release in the *DeMorgen*, one of the biggest newspapers in Belgium, praised Vietnam as one of the safest destinations for tourists and recommended readers visit there (VNAT, 2009d). While in Vietnam for the 22nd session of the Pacific and South Asia Commission and the Commission of East Asia and Pacific, the UNWTO Secretary General assured delegates that Vietnam has huge potential to develop tourism based on its stable political situation and hospitality, and its diverse range of landscapes and relics (Vietnam Business Forum, 2010a). To exploit these advantages and create

beautiful impressions on international friends, Vietnamese tourism industry needs a concrete strategy to ensure that tourism's economic benefits are not only immediate and well distributed, but also that the industry can sustain its impressive growth (Vietnam Business Forum, 2009b).

According to the VNAT, the tourism industry in Vietnam is still not developing to its full potential and has not yet taken up its role as a spearhead for the economic sector (Vietnam Business Forum, 2009b). The professionalism of the Vietnamese tourism service industry remains weak and this is apparent in all areas from management, promotion, advertisement and marketing to the service workforce and infrastructure. Vietnam has not actually created trademarks (Vietnam Business Forum, 2009b). Since tourism is among the country's major economic sectors, contributing to job creation and the alleviation of poverty, the country needs to focus on human resource training and marketing to ensure the long-term growth of the industry (Vietnam Business Forum, 2010a), as well as continue promotional activities in foreign countries. The diversification and improvement of tourist products and services also needs more attention in the years to come. The development of tourism based on regional and territorial characteristics has proven to be effective and the tourism industry should pay more attention to this linkage to create interesting and characteristic tourism products and services that stimulate visitor interest and encourage spending (Vietnam Business Forum, 2009b).

To sum up, the ever-increasing annual number of international and domestic tourists coming to Vietnam has been a significant encouragement to the industry in its effort to promote tourism business development. However, there is more to be done if tourism is to reach its potential, including improving quality of tourism services and products, and marketing and promoting Vietnam's image overseas. It is also vital that the industry be planned and managed in such a way as to enhance sustainable development outcomes and to improve its ability to bring economic benefits to the poorer segments of society.

### **3. Methodology**

This chapter contains a discussion of the methodological approach and research design used to examine the aims and objectives set out in Chapter One. The discussion clarifies the methods, instruments, and specific processes of data collection and analysis as well as the ethical issues involved. It is always important to adopt an appropriate research methodology in order to perform an extensive examination of all relevant areas (Decrop, 1999). With regards to the purpose of this research, a qualitative approach was seen as the most relevant for two reasons. Firstly, as suggested in Chapter One, the research sought to ascertain the perceptions of stallholders at the Cai Rang floating market, local tourism official and tourism professionals about the floating market and pro-poor tourism. Strauss and Corbin's (1990) position that qualitative methods are useful for revealing and understanding what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is known, is supportive of this. Secondly, individual perception will differ to a great extent and is influenced by several factors, and such differences are harder to explain through standardised quantitative methods.

#### **3.1. Case-Study Approach**

Case studies are one of the most common approaches used in qualitative method inquiry (Stake, 2000), providing an empirical investigation of an existing phenomenon in its real-life context (Yin, 1994). The case-study approach is particularly useful in situations where the research topic is required to be defined broadly (Yin, 2003). Jennings (2001) portrayed the advantages and disadvantages associated with case studies; these are summarised in Table 4. One of the key advantages of case studies is that they give access to in-depth data. The case-study approach gives the opportunity for participants to verify the accuracy of the evidence. The possibility of verification by participants also eliminates chances of researcher's bias. On the other hand, a disadvantage of case studies is that they do not reveal the focus of the research at the beginning but provide an emergent focus. The fact that reproduction of the findings may be denied due to verification by participants is also a disadvantage. In addition, since the findings are case sensitive, they may not be able to be generalised beyond the case studied.

Table 4: Advantages and disadvantages of case studies

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Disadvantages</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permits in-depth data</li> <li>• Evidence is grounded in the social setting being studied</li> <li>• Accuracy can be verified by study members</li> <li>• Possible elimination of researcher bias due to member checking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research focus not clearly stated at the start (emergent focus)</li> <li>• Possibility of denied reproduction of evidence due to member checking</li> <li>• Potential of bias in data collection, analysis and findings</li> <li>• Findings are specific to case, non-generalisability to other cases</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Jennings (2001, p. 178)

It is argued that case studies are often the most appropriate method to adopt when analysing the background, processes and practices that are related to a research topic (Yin, 2003; Gillham, 2000; Finn, Elliott-White & Walton, 2000). Most previous research related to pro-poor tourism is also based on case studies. This is because, among other reasons, case studies can demonstrate the ‘richness’ of the experiences and issues involved. Recently, pro-poor tourism case-study research exploring the relationship between poverty reduction and tourism development has been done in China (Guo, 2008). Similar studies were conducted by Harrison and Schipani in Lao, and by Spenceley and Goodwin in South Africa (Hall, 2007). WTO (2005b) also investigated the linkage between tourism and poverty alleviation in Cambodia and Vietnam. Similarly, a case study method was used in this research because it allowed the context of pro-poor tourism to be better understood in relation to the research question.

### **3.2. Qualitative Research Approach**

Qualitative research is defined by Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 10) as “any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification”. In other words, qualitative methods are perceived as distinct from

quantitative ones as they do not produce quantified findings, have measurements or test hypotheses (Goodson & Phillimore, 2004). From this perspective, qualitative methods have sometimes been prone to criticism for what Goodson and Phillimore (2004) call a ‘soft, non-scientific’ and inferior approach to study. It is said that qualitative methods will increase the usefulness for a tourism study if they are accompanied by, or used as a precursor to, quantitative methods. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that researchers must fully understand the weakness and strengths of all methods adopted to avoid potential inherent problems affecting their research design and, thus, their findings. Furthermore, a full understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches will increase the validity and reliability of the research findings, and so enable their findings to be generalised. Some strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative methods are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: Strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative methods

<b>Qualitative Methods</b> (e.g. semi-structured interview)	<b>Quantitative Methods</b> (e.g. questionnaire survey)
<p><b>* <i>Strengths:</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The data is based on the participants’ own categories of meanings</li> <li>2) The results provide understandings and description of people’s personal experiences of phenomena and provide individual case information.</li> <li>3) The researcher is responsive to changes that occur during the conduct of a study and may shift the focus of their study as a result.</li> <li>4) Qualitative methods can be used for describing complex phenomena and can describe, in rich detail, phenomena as they are situated and embedded in local contexts. The researcher also can identify</li> </ol>	<p><b>* <i>Weaknesses:</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The researcher’s categories may not reflect local constituencies’ understandings.</li> <li>2) The researcher’s theories may not reflect local constituencies’ understandings.</li> <li>3) The researcher may miss out on phenomena occurring because of the focus on theory or hypothesis testing rather than on theory or hypothesis generation (called confirmation bias).</li> <li>4) The knowledge produced may be too abstract and general for direct application to specific local situations, contexts or individuals.</li> </ol>

contextual and setting factors as they relate to the phenomenon of interest.	
<p><b>* Weaknesses:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The knowledge produced may not generalise to other people or other settings.</li> <li>2) It is difficult to make quantitative predictions using qualitative methods.</li> <li>3) It is more difficult to test hypotheses and theories using qualitative methods.</li> <li>4) Qualitative methods may have lower credibility with some administrators and commissioners of programmes.</li> <li>5) It generally takes more time to collect and analyse data using qualitative methods.</li> <li>6) The results are more easily influenced by the researcher's bias.</li> </ol>	<p><b>* Strengths:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Quantitative methods can generalise research findings when they have been replicated on many different populations and sub-populations.</li> <li>2) Quantitative methods are useful for obtaining data that can allow quantitative predictions to be made.</li> <li>3) Quantitative methods are useful for testing and validating already constructed theories about how and why phenomena occur.</li> <li>4) Quantitative methods may have higher credibility with many people in power (e.g. administrators, politicians, or people who fund a programme).</li> <li>5) Data collection and analysis is relatively less time-consuming (i.e. relatively quick).</li> <li>6) The results are relatively independent of the researcher (e.g. effect size, statistical significance).</li> </ol>

(Source: Adapted from Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004)

Denzin and Lincoln (1998, p. 7) consider qualitative research as “multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter”. Qualitative methods are best used for research problems requiring depth of insight and understanding, especially when dealing with explanatory concepts. As set out by



Hakim (1987, 2003), qualitative methods involve describing the detail of a setting from the perspective of participants, and understanding actions and meanings in their social context – an approach in which the formulation and testing of concepts and theories proceeds in conjunction with data collection. Qualitative methods are essentially descriptions of people's representations and constructions of what is occurring in their world. These descriptions can take several forms depending on the research objectives.

Qualitative research enabled the researcher to engage in the everyday life of the research participants and, as Malinowski (1922, p. 25) suggested, see the world from the “native's point of view”. Qualitative research, according to Merriam (1988), embraces both diversity and variability, because it seeks to explore the inter-relationship between the participants and their subjective experiences. Yow (2005, p. 7), like Malinowski (1922), suggests that within qualitative research, the researcher “learns about the way of life by studying the people who live it, and, [by] asking them what they think about their experiences”. Qualitative methods' greatest strength lie in their ability to analyse what actual happens in naturally occurring settings (Silverman, 2006).

According to Veal (1997), leisure is a qualitative phenomenon, and so for many researchers, qualitative research is the most suitable technique for leisure and tourism studies. Similarly, Riley and Love (2000) affirm that although tourism research requires quantification, mainly due to the economically driven nature of the industry, qualitative research provides an important perspective from which to view the phenomenon. Qualitative methods also offer a great deal of potential for helping us to understand the human dimensions of society, which in tourism includes its social and cultural implications. Therefore, tourism needs to embrace a general recognition of the legitimacy of a variety of research tools (Walle, 1997). In this regard, it is proposed that no method is privileged over the other, and the ideal method would be the most appropriate one for the task at hand (Veal, 1997).

A qualitative methodology suited this research because it can produce rich and thorough information from a small group of people due to the increased depth of understanding of the case being researched. The researcher attempts to understand

what people in the floating market experience about the linkage between tourism and poverty alleviation. A qualitative approach seems to be the most appropriate approach for answering the research questions, since qualitative data is more powerful in allowing an understanding of the context issues that are the concern of PPT. The qualitative information can be used to explain the influence of tourism on local communities, to gain an understanding of how local populations perceive tourism impacts and the PPT concept, and to study interactions between the various tourism stakeholders who are relevant to PPT strategies.

The qualitative method also allows the participants to speak out and explain their experiences or opinions without being overly constrained by the framework imposed by the researcher (Veal, 1997). In addition, the interview techniques, the sample size and the participant selection criteria, plus the coding and analysis domains were all designed to solicit the perceptions of the participants and their subjective experiences as found within their voice, language and values. Therefore, the researcher could seek multiple perspectives from a range of participants. Although the small numbers limit how much the findings can be generalised, a significant advantage of qualitative research is its liberty from predetermined categories of analysis – this allows openness, detail and depth to the enquiry (Patton, 2002).

Several studies of tourism and poverty alleviation have adopted a Value Chain Analysis (VCA) (Jamieson, Goodwin & Edmunds, 2004; Mitchell & Le, 2007; Mitchell & Faal, 2008; Overseas Development Institute, 2009). While VCA is a useful tool to assist in studies of pro-poor tourism it was not used in this study due to time constraints and the fact that no clear data on existing value chains was available — the researcher would have needed to gain a broader base of general information before a full VCA could be implemented.

### **3.2.1. Semi-structured interviews**

The use of semi-structured interviews as a data collection method starts from the assumption that tourism stakeholders' perspectives are significant, useful, comprehensible, and clear, and that they will positively affect the research and produce rich, detailed data for analysis (Frechtling & Sharp, 1997). Cook & Crang

(1995) argue that semi-structured interviews are a very useful tool for gathering information from tourism professionals and other concerned parties. The semi-structured interview allows more scope for elaboration and general discussion rather than the respondent just being presented with a set of fixed questions demanding fixed responses. Semi-structured interviews can be repeated for each person so that any differences between responses can be compared (Schoenberger, 1991). A good semi-structured interview is the result of rigorous preparation. The development of the interview schedule, the conducting of the interview, and the analysis the interview data all require careful consideration and preparation (Flick, 2002).

The researcher used a semi-structured interview approach which allowed for structured questions in a set sequence with wording that was prescribed, but flexible, to “account for the flow of the conversation” (Merriam, 1988, p. 74). A semi-structured interview has a primary focus, but multiple subunits are studied to help understand the primary case more fully (Yin, 1994). Although this method is more time-consuming and the data more difficult to collect and analyse than the self-completion survey, it allows more freedom during interviews and enables unexpected issues or factors not defined in the questionnaire to be raised.

It is important to remember that information collected by employing the semi-structured interview method is influenced by the personal characteristics of the interviewer, including their race, class, ethnicity and gender; the environment, too, within which interviews are conducted, can also affect the results (Denzin et al., 1994). Others warn that the quality of data elicited is largely dependent on the skills of the interviewer. Thus, to limit the incorrect understanding and reporting of responses, interviewers need to be highly trained; this is particularly so when the volume of information is large, rendering it difficult to transcribe and reduce data (Frechtling & Sharp, 1997; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Silverman, 2006). The ideal number of participants varies amongst researchers. Creswell (1998) suggests that interviews with twenty to thirty participants is reasonable. Others (Gunn & Goeldner, 1994; Neuman, 2000; Kitchin & Tate, 2000) suggest that it is unrealistic to specify the number of participants because the researcher cannot know how many participants will be required to reach saturation of the revealed concepts and make sure that all of the concepts important to the study are coded.

The semi-structured interview format was the best suited to this study because this interview typology minimises the researcher's role yet emphasises the subjective experience of participant input (Bryman, 2004). This method also allowed flexible exploration of the issues under study and reflected the informal nature of the participant–researcher relationship. This relationship better enabled the researcher to interact with the interviewee in their own environment and the participants could tell their own story in a style that was best suited them. By using this research method, the researcher's epistemological assumptions allowed the interview to flow naturally, rather than in a structured manner (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A basic question guide was used for all interviews (see Appendix B), and the researcher used prompts and probes to elicit further information as new issues were uncovered. This approach allows the participants to discuss the issues facing their business in their own language and frame of reference (Henn, Weinstein & Foard, 2005). The semi-structured interview methods also enabled the researcher to understand, rather than have explained, participant perspectives within the data-analysis phase of this work (Bryman, 2004).

In this study, the research included semi-structured interviews with 37 participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a representative of Can Tho city tourism department, a tourism professional and thirty-one stallholders on the Cai Rang floating market, Can Tho city, one tour guide and three tour operators. The interviews were designed to gain a better understanding of the economic significance of the market to local communities and to gain insights into local attitudes towards pro-poor tourism.

The interviews were conducted in Can Tho city over the period 30 November to 6 December 2009. The research was completed on 25 December 2009 by interviews with tour operators in Ho Chi Minh city. The researcher interviewed the respondents in the Vietnamese language then translated the main points into English. The interviews were conducted during the day at the respondent's office or, in the cases of stallholders, they were interviewed at their stalls at a time which suited them. The interviews took anywhere from fifteen minutes to one hour. It is significant to note the time-consuming nature of semi-structured interviews because the willingness of interviewees to engage in such lengthy interview process can be a constraint on using

this type of research methodology. The researcher interviewed the respondents by herself. The interviews were tape-recorded with the agreement of the respondents.

As is usually the case in informal-sector situations, there was no list of stallholders from which a sample could be taken. There was no gatekeeper and no one to introduce the researcher to candidates. An observation of the floating market was initially taken and a thorough daytime inventory revealed hundreds of boats. Subsequently, interviews were conducted with a sample of these stallholders. Interview participants were selected based on 'snowball sampling'. This means after finishing the interview, the participant would recommend another candidate to the researcher. The stallholders on the Cai Rang floating market were purposefully selected in order to include a range of diverse characteristics including: male and female; young, middle-aged and old; and different education and income levels. The researcher had not met any of the interviewees previously. The interviewees were recruited by the researcher meeting them face to face. These candidates were given the opportunity to read concise background materials on the project. Interviewees were given a Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix A) and were required to sign a 'Consent To Participate' form (see Appendix C) prior to the interview; this is in line with AUT Ethics Committee practices (see Appendix D). It is important to note that providing an introduction about the interviewer and their research objectives is one of the most important factors contributing to the interviews' success, helping the interviewer and interviewees to know each other and so creating a friendly environment (Kitchen & Tate, 2000; Bowling, 2002).

The number of interviews was limited to thirty-seven by the time available, cost of the researcher being in the area (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) and the availability of interviewees. No one declined to be interviewed but one did not complete the interview due to the fact that she was busy with her business. Because the sample size was to be small and in-depth qualitative information was required, sample selection was considered to be one of the most important steps in this method. There is a popular misconception that the size of a sample should be decided on the basis of its relationship to the size of population (Neuman, 2000). In fact, there is no exact answer to the question of the sample size, i.e. how many participants are enough to ensure findings from semi-structured interviews are valid and can be generalised.

The sample size for semi-structured interviews depends on several factors such as the level of analysis and reporting, the richness of the individual case, and whether the participants have similar demographic attributes (Gunn & Goeldner, 1994; Kitchin & Tate, 2000). Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, interviews with twenty to thirty participants is considered to be reasonable in terms of robustness (Creswell, 1998).

It is argued that one of the most common problems in gathering information through interviews is that researchers can sometimes use ambiguous and unfamiliar terms and vague concepts (Tourangeau, Rips & Rasinski, 2000). Researchers should keep the questions simple, specific and concise, as well as provide examples when concepts are used. The researchers should also avoid double-barrelled questions and complicated syntax. In this study, the questions used were simplified by different sub-themes, with some easy questions requiring merely Yes/No answers. During the interviews, the participants were also given the opportunity to ask the researcher to clarify any questions.

The interviews began with basic questions about the background of the interviewees, finding out about their education, their position in the organisation, work experience, and their knowledge on tourism development and the linkage between tourism and poverty alleviation. Stallholders were asked first about their own background then about their businesses, such as what services or products they provided, and the business's turnover, employees and capital. They were also asked to give their impressions on tourism, their own role in Can Tho's tourism industry, and forward and backward economic linkages. These first two sub-sections provided the information needed to understand the personal information about the interviewees and their businesses. These questions are also considered to be the 'warm-up' part of the interview, creating interviewee confidence in the researcher before moving on to the main themes of the study. Questions then explored participants' knowledge about tourism and poverty alleviation. The central themes of the semi-structured interviews cover qualitative information about the interviewees' awareness and adoption of tourism in their business.

The interviewees were also asked questions related to barriers and constraints in their adopting tourism strategies into their business practices. Interviewees were

encouraged to put forward their views and recommendations on particular issues raised in the interviews. The role of the interviewer was to listen, and to maintain focus and direction to prevent the conversation from going off on a tangent.

### **3.2.2. Data analysis**

While data collection plays a decisive role in any study's success, data analysis is also a most important factor. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998,) analysis is the interplay between researchers and data. Miles and Huberman (1994) indicate the first most important step in qualitative data analysis is data reduction: the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data that appears in transcriptions and written field notes. Lacity and Janson (1994) state that qualitative analysis assumes that language analysis corresponds to an objective reality and that the researcher merely needs to find this objective reality. Qualitative information analysis is not a neutral description of reality but rather an act that shapes reality. When analysing the qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews, all spoken information was transcribed into meaningful variables in an Excel Package. Much of the analysis of the semi-structured interview data involves summarising the data and presenting the results in a way that communicates the most important features.

Qualitative information was labelled or coded so that the researcher could recognise differences and similarities between all the difference items (Flick, 2002). Initially, a pattern of cross-group differences could be discerned. Later an analysis of responses was performed. The use of interviewee quotes also supported the qualitative analysis.

### ***Changes, challenges and limitations***

Before the fieldwork started, the researcher had planned to recruit 35 candidates, being a local tourism official, a tourism professional and stallholders on the floating market in Can Tho city. Later, the number of candidates increased to 37, as some tour operators and a tour guide from the tourist companies in Ho Chi Minh city that operate tours to the Cai Rang floating market were also interviewed.

The stallholders were very friendly and receptive to an invitation for them to be interviewed. On the other hand, recruiting the official and tour operators to the interview was not easy because they were very busy. There were many festivals at the time the researcher arrived in Can Tho city, and it was hard to arrange a time for the interviews with them. Later, due to the social status and relationship of the researcher's father, an interview with a local tourism official was conducted. In addition, it was the New Year season and so the tour operators were also busy. It was really challenging to invite them to the interviews. However, finally the interviews were conducted.

The researcher had a chance to attend a regional tourism conference and listen to tourism professionals and officers discussing the tourism industry in the Mekong Delta region, including the Can Tho city area. The researcher interviewed a tourism professional after the conference. The tourism professional had shown her deep knowledge about the tourism industry and pro-poor tourism, so the researcher had a short interview with her.

Research in Vietnam is still associated with certain problems, and there is relatively little published research on tourism in Vietnam. Some authors have found that most government organisations are not willing to share information and documents (Suntikul, Butler & Airey, 2010). Many researchers and scholars have been aware of the lack of reliable and accurate basic statistical information data for Vietnam, and the country lacks continuous historical data on the development of tourism.

### ***Ethics***

Ethical approval for the interviews was gained through the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) under application number 09/208 filed in September 2009. This required confidentiality for individual participants throughout the research process. In a relatively small case-study population and due to the nature of the businesses, care had to be taken with selection of interview participants so as not to potentially reveal the identity of an interviewee by default. During the period of active research and subsequent compilation, no ethical issues arose with participants that were brought to the attention of either the researcher or the



nominated contact at AUTECH. Participants within this research were fully briefed within the research structure, as outlined earlier, through the consent and participant information sheets (see Appendices A and C).

## **4. The Case-Study Context**

### **4.1 Can Tho City**

Can Tho city is located on the south bank of the Hau River, the largest tributary of the Mekong River. It is 75 kilometres from the South China Sea, 1,877 kilometres from the capital city of Vietnam, Hanoi, and 169 kilometres from Ho Chi Minh city in the north (by road) (Can Tho Portal, 2007a). Can Tho city is contiguous with five provinces: An Giang on the north, Dong Thap on the northeast, Vinh Long on the east, Hau Giang on the south, and Kien Giang on the western border (VNAT, 2009a). Can Tho city was created in the beginning of 2004 by a split of the former Can Tho province into two new administrative units: Can Tho city and Hau Giang province (Nguyen, 2004). Can Tho city has four urban districts — Ninh Kieu, Binh Thuy, Cai Rang, and O Mon —and four suburb districts — Phong Dien, Co Do, Thot Not and Vinh Thanh (Mekong Life, 2009). The city's climate is tropical and monsoonal with two seasons: the rainy season lasts from May to November, and the dry season from December to April. The annual average temperature is 27oC, humidity 83%, and rainfall 1,635 millimetres (Can Tho Portal, 2007a).

Can Tho city is in a region accumulated by alluvia from the Mekong River over centuries, and plain terrain features. The city stretches 65 kilometres along the river and has an interlacing system of rivers and ditches. The name Can Tho comes from 'cànm thi giang' which means 'river of poems' (VNAT, 2008). In Can Tho, the residential areas are situated along banks of rivers and canals, and densely concentrated in hubs of waterways and roads, just like in neighbouring provinces in the Mekong Delta (Nguyen, 2004). Many economic and cultural activities closely relate to rivers and canals, which are like 'streets' (VNAT, 2009a).

### **Population**

Can Tho city has an area of 1,401.6 square kilometres and a population of about 1.2 million people. This means the population density is approximately 856 people per square kilometre (Can Tho Investment–Trade–Tourism Promotion Centre, 2010). In 2004, the urban population accounted for 52% and suburb population for 48% of the total population. In the same year, there were 696,000 labourers in the city, with 373,540 people (53.67%) in agricultural production and the remainder in non-

agricultural sectors (Can Tho Portal, 2007b). A high percentage of labour is working in informal sectors in urban districts in Can Tho, which is common in Vietnamese cities and in developing countries (Nguyen, 2004).

## **Economy**

Can Tho has seen considerable changes since 2004. The city now is the delta's most important centre for trade, tourism, culture, science and technology, attracting lots of business people, investors and tourists (Wikipedia, 2010). Can Tho's economic structure has been shifted positively, with its annual income per capita exceeding US\$1,400 in 2008 (VOV News, 2009). Economic growth in Can Tho for the period 2004–2008 was stable, averaging 15.64% (compared with an average rate of 12.36% for the entire Mekong Delta region), and the city contributed 10.9% of the GRP of the whole region (VnEconomy, 2009). Total revenue from sales of goods and services is estimated at VND42,113 billion. Foreign currency revenue from services is estimated at US\$27.2 million in 2008, up 5.74% over the previous year. One other important indicator, the rate of urbanisation of Can Tho, has averaged about 10% per year compared with an urbanisation rate of 4.35% for the whole region (VnEconomy, 2009).

Can Tho city is an important industrial centre. Its industrial production ranks first in the Mekong Delta and the twelfth of the whole country, with average growth rate of 19% per year approximately, contributing nearly 32% to the gross production of the city and its surrounds. Industrial production values reached VND15,160 billion in 2008. Can Tho city is concentrating on the industries of food processing, electricity, electronics and informatics, garments, footwear, chemicals, machinery and construction materials (Can Tho City — Trade and Investment Co-operation Potential and Opportunity, 2009).

Can Tho city has an agricultural area of approximately 1,150 square kilometres, which is mainly used for paddy cultivation, other farm products and fruits. The city has long been considered a rice centre of the south-west region and it is now the main place of rice production and rice export for the whole country. Annually, it produces more than 1.2 million tonnes of rice, and processes between 500,000 and

600,000 tonnes for export. In 2008, 420 thousand tonnes of rice, worth US\$236 million, was exported from Can Tho (Can Tho City — Trade and Investment Co-operation Potential and Opportunity, 2009). According to the Department of Trade and Industry in Can Tho city, in the first eight months of 2009, enterprises exported nearly 442,000 tons of rice (reaching 83.3% of the plan for the year). This is an increase of 34.7% over the same period of the previous year, although the export value of this rice, US\$184 million, was only an increase of 0.8% from the same period. Rice exports currently account for 36% of the total export turnover of the city (Can Tho Portal, 2009). In addition, Can Tho city is also rich in aquatic resources such as shrimp and fish, and has an abundance of tropical fruits. It produces about 110,000 tonnes of fruits, 90,000 tonnes of aquatic products and 20,000 tonnes of beef and chicken every year (Can Tho City — Trade and Investment Co-operation Potential and Opportunity, 2009).

Can Tho city possesses a strategic location at the convergence of many important roads, waterways and airways. There are five national roads going through the vicinity of Can Tho city, connecting the city to other provinces in the Mekong Delta and the rest of the country (Can Tho Investment–Trade–Tourism Promotion Centre, 2010). In April 2010, construction of the Can Tho Bridge was completed, connecting the important road axis from Can Tho city to Ho Chi Minh city and to the Mekong Delta provinces. It is the longest cable-stayed bridge in South-East Asia, and directly benefits more than 16 million residents south of the Hau River who, for almost 100 years, had had to travel between Can Tho and Vinh Long province by ferry (The Saigon Times, 2010). The opening of the bridge will create a fresh impetus for social, cultural and economic development in the Mekong Delta and particularly Can Tho city.

The improvement of the city's infrastructure also includes the construction of Cai Cui international seaport and the upgrade of Can Tho airport (VOV News, 2009). There are daily hydrofoils between Ho Chi Minh city and Can Tho city (VNAT, 2009a). Furthermore, the Ministry of Transport has assigned the Vietnam Railways Administration to carry out a US\$4 billion high-speed rail-line project linking Ho Chi Minh city to Can Tho city. Once completed, the line will run for approximately

100 kilometres and be able to carry passenger trains at a maximum speed of 350 km/h (VNAT, 2009b).

#### **4.1.1 Can Tho city poverty measurement**

Can Tho city's economic growth rate is higher than the average for the whole country. In 2008, the city's industrial production was up by 16.9% and export revenue increased by 57.5 % compared with the previous year (Can Tho Investment – Trade – Tourism Promotion Centre, 2008b). This high economic growth has helped poverty reduction programmes in Can Tho city. In the last few years, Can Tho city has effectively carried out programmes for hunger eradication, poverty reduction and job creation for local people. The city has created more than 40,000 jobs each year and is trying to reduce the unemployment rate to less than 5% of its population during the period 2011–2015 (Can Tho City Guidance of Poverty Reduction Programme, 2008).

In Can Tho city, 8,434 households moved out of poverty between 2006 and 2008 (Can Tho City Guidance of Poverty Reduction Programme, 2008). Using the national official definition of poor households, in 2008 the city had 17,777 poor households, representing 7.13% of the total number of households in the city; this is a decrease from 8.46% in 2007. Last year, the poverty rate decreased further, to 5.96% or 15,569 poor households. This year, the city plans to invest VND137 billion into poverty-reduction activities with an aim to decrease poverty rate to 5% by the end of 2010 (Vietnam Net, 2006, Can Tho City Department of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs, 2009).

Despite the opportunities for socio-economic development, Can Tho city is still struggling with poverty alleviation. In 2004, a part of Can Tho province became Can Tho city while the rest became a part of Hau Giang province, and this separation of the administrative area impacted the progress of hunger and poverty reduction and job creation programme due to changes in the personnel administering them. Other reasons for struggling with poverty alleviation include lack of funding from the national government, and the policies and methods of supporting the poor are not specific and unsuitable. Meanwhile, some of the poor have not been active in finding

jobs or doing business — they still rely on the support of the government and the community. In addition, a proportion of the poor do not receive the benefits from the government's policies because there is a lack of reliable data about poverty rates in some areas.

The vice-chairman of Can Tho City People's Committee shared the experience on urban development and poverty reduction. Currently, the risk of fast population growth in the city is considerable (Vietnam Business Forum, 2008). Moreover, local labour is huge but of low quality and not capable of meeting the industrial production demands (Vietnam Net, 2006). Owing to economic development and urbanisation, the city is now faced with problems of widespread poverty, unemployment and lack of housing (Cities Alliance, 2004). During times of socio-economic development and investment into industry and the service sectors, rural inhabitants rush to urban areas for better job opportunities, yet they will actually find it more difficult because of their insufficient qualifications and skills. Unemployment and poverty have more adverse impacts on urban living quality than on any other factors (Nguyen, 2004).

In the past, natural calamities and diseases have continuously affected lives and production of residents in Can Tho city, especially those who depend on agriculture for a living. Currently, nearly 2,500 households in Can Tho are faced with the risk of landslides. The city needs an investment of nearly VND148 billion for the construction of dykes and other infrastructure in new, safer resettlement schemes for the residents who live in flood- and landslide-prone areas. However, due to a lack of government funding, the completion of resettlement schemes for them has been impeded (Vietnam Net, 2010).

Many inhabitants in Can Tho city do not have permanent accommodation and have to seek temporary shelter. Statistics from the city showed that in 2008, 5% of the 249,164 households needed dwelling support. However, within a year this had almost halved, with 2.72% of households needing dwelling support in 2009, and it was estimated this would reduce further to 2% in 2010 (Can Tho City Guidance of Poverty Reduction Programme, 2008). However, Thuy and Slingsby (2002) stated that unofficial figures for temporary houses were much higher due to those living in the city on a temporary basis without official registration. Their study also indicated

that many houses did not have access to their own sanitation facilities (Thuy & Slingsby, 2002).

Although the majority (95%) of Can Tho's inhabitants are no longer officially defined as poor, the number of households live just above the official poverty line is high and even increasing: last year, 13,619 households (5.2%) lived just above the official poverty line up from 10,911 households (4.38%) in 2008. This number has been estimated to reach 16,638 in 2010 (Can Tho City Department of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs, 2009). Furthermore, there is no doubt that when the new poverty line comes to effect, the number of poor households will increase. While a large number of households have been pulled out of poverty in the last few years, many of them live just above the poverty line and it would not take much to push them back into poverty. A large proportion of households, who depend on agricultural production, animal breeding and aquaculture, can easily slip into poverty when they are affected by natural calamities (Vietnam Net, 2006).

Natural calamities, flood and disease occur frequently, especially in poor communes, and cause difficulties for the poor through damage to their production, property and dwellings (Can Tho City Guidance of Poverty Reduction Programme, 2008). Furthermore, while the percentage of poor households has reduced, the high population in Can Tho city means that the absolute number of poor people in the city is still very large. To summarise: the results of hunger eradication and poverty reduction activities in Can Tho city can still be improved, a large number of households live just above poverty line, and the risk of falling into poverty again is high.

One key area that Can Tho is focusing on for economic development and the creation of new jobs and economic opportunities is the tourism sector. In particular, there is hope that this industry can grow on the basis of a number of attractions – including the Cai Rang floating market.

## **Tourism**

The geographic advantages, unique cultural and ecological features, and the hospitality of local residents create great potential for Can Tho to develop a tourism industry. With its natural strengths, the city has created four types of tourist attractions:

- ecological river/water-based tourism: travelling to the isles and floating markets
- traditional cultural tourism: visiting cultural and historic sites such as museums, ancient houses in Binh Thuy, Ong pagoda, Can Tho ancient market and craft villages
- garden tourism: visiting Bang Lang stork garden/sanctuary, and fruit orchards, and
- MICE tourism: meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions.

(People's Committee of Can Tho City, 2005)

The tourism business in Can Tho has enjoyed some growth not only because of the city's good infrastructure (for example, hotels, telecommunications, roads and waterways, port, airport, and branches of major banks are all more developed in comparison with neighbouring provinces), but also because the region is rich in tourism resources such as beautiful natural landscapes, and many historical and cultural sites. Coming to Can Tho city, tourists can enjoy ecotours that allow them to take part in local life, taste fruits picked directly from trees, or study local ways of living. Many ecotourism sites have been developed, including My Khanh, Thuy Tien, Xuan Mai and Bang Lang stork sanctuary (People's Committee of Can Tho City, 2005). Tourists can also listen to folk music and songs performed by amateur singers, or visit hamlets, orchards, craft villages, shrimp ponds, fish cages and vast rice fields to see the blessings endowed by nature and the assiduous labour of southerners of many generations (Can Tho Portal, n.d.).

In addition to the system of isles that are located on the Hau river, Can Tho also has 14 cultural and historic sites which are ranked as national relics, like the tomb of patriotic poet Phan Van Tri, Bui Huu Nghia, and the ancient village of Binh Thuy (VnEconomy, 2009). Tourists may be inspired to explore the ancient architecture of



well-known pagodas such as Ong pagoda, and they can enjoy shopping at Can Tho old/ancient market hall with its unique products of the western region. In addition, from Ninh Kieu Wharf on the Hau river, visitors can enjoy a cruise to the isles and have a chance to discover the floating markets by sampans and long-tail boats (Can Tho Portal, n.d.). The wharf itself is worth a separate visit: it is the meeting point of Can Tho and Hau rivers, and visitors can enjoy a spectacle of boats going and coming busily in a green, clean and beautiful environment (Can Tho Investment – Trade – Tourism Promotion Centre, 2008a).

### ***Tourist arrivals***

In 2008, the city attracted 817,250 tourists, an increase of 18% from 2007 (Can Tho Administrator of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2010b). In 2009, due to the global economic crisis, the number of tourists visited Can Tho city decreased to 723,528. However, the city still saw an 11.6% increase in turnover (VNAT, 2010c). At present, not many international tourists visit Can Tho (about 4% of foreign tourists visiting Vietnam) but this group has increased over years. In 2008, international arrivals were 175,094, nearly triple that of the 2000 figure of 60,584. For the period from 2000 to 2009, the average growth rate of this group was 11.84% a year (Can Tho Administrator of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2010b).

The number of domestic tourists coming to Can Tho city is much higher than the international figure because tourism resources in Can Tho are more suitable to serve the domestic tourist and also because domestic travel demand is increasing (People's Committee of Can Tho City, 2005). Most of these tourists come from other provinces in the Mekong Delta; tourists from HCM city and other zones represent only a small percentage and most of them go to Can Tho on business (Pham, 2006). According to the Can Tho Administrator of Culture, Sports and Tourism (2010b), the volume of domestic tourists rose almost four-fold from 164,592 in 2000 to 642,156 in 2008 (see Table 6). The average growth rate of this group for the period from 2000 to 2009 was 15.5% a year. Generally, the flow of tourists, both international and domestic, shows an upward trend. With this rapid increase in domestic tourist numbers and with a suitable strategy to develop the tourism industry, Can Tho will attract not only more

tourists but also investors in the coming years because most of its potential has not yet been exploited fully (Pham, 2006).

To serve an increasing number of visitors, tourism infrastructure in Can Tho has developed quite rapidly and its quality has also improved. In 2005, there were only 95 tourist accommodations, providing 2,328 rooms and 3,844 beds, and there was no 5-star hotel (People's Committee of Can Tho City, 2005), but by April 2010, Can Tho city had 165 tourist accommodations, providing 3,855 rooms and 5,979 beds (Can Tho Administrator of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2010a).

In recent years, the number of people working in the tourism industry has increased continuously. In 2000, there were 1,221 people working in the tourism sector, and this was estimated to have increased to 2,300 by 2005 (People's Committee of Can Tho City, 2005). The average growth was about 14.47% each year.

Table 6: Tourists visiting Can Tho city from 2000–2009

Year	International visitors	Domestic visitors	Tourism Revenue (VND million)
2000	60,584	164,592	79,739
2001	72,704	190,376	102,417
2002	90,496	209,649	133,715
2003	74,367	280,951	155,536
2004	86,648	320,682	189,143
2005	104,841	357,300	231,260
2006	121,221	422,429	270,980
2007	155,735	537,320	365,090
2008	175,094	642,156	455,198
2009	150,300	573,228	507,938

(Source: Can Tho Administrator of Culture, Sport and Tourism, 2010b).

With an increase in the number of visitors to Can Tho, tourism revenue has also increased. In 2000, annual tourism revenue was only VND79,739 million, but it had increased rapidly to VND507,938 million by 2009. This revenue comes from both direct and indirect tourism sectors. Most tourist expenditure (about 71.57% in 2009) is on food and accommodation (Can Tho Administrator of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2010b), with much less being spent on entertainment, transportation and shopping. According to tourism statistics, the average tourist expenditure in Can Tho was only US\$28 per day in 2005 — an international tourist spent approximately US\$25–US\$30 a day while domestic tourist expenditure was about US\$23 per person per day (People's Committee of Can Tho City, 2005).

Despite the fact that the number of tourists has increased, their length of stay in the city is rather short (1.29 days on average for international tourists and 1.23 days for domestic ones) and most of them are not returning visitors. This indicates that tourism products and services available in Can Tho city are not diverse and attractive enough to persuade tourists to stay longer or to return (People's Committee of Can Tho City, 2005). In general, there should be more investment in improving the quality of tourism products and services in order to increase tourists' length of stay as well as their expenditure (People's Committee of Can Tho City, 2005).

### ***Challenges for tourism development in Can Tho***

Can Tho city is relatively unknown to people in many other cities and provinces, especially from the central region outward. While international tourists will often have heard about the Mekong Delta, their awareness of Can Tho city is likely to be very limited (People's Committee of Can Tho City, 2005). Furthermore, tourists may be discouraged from travelling to Can Tho city due to its long distance from other key tourism destinations. For example, tourists normally feel tired when they travel from Ho Chi Minh city to Can Tho, a journey of 200 kilometres that takes almost five hours.

Poor hygienic conditions at tourist sites make tourists feel uncomfortable. To travel to some tourist sites, visitors have to pass through squalor, which may reduce their enjoyment of the experience and discourage them from returning.

In addition, other provinces and Can Tho city in the Mekong Delta region offer similar tours, which tend to simply ‘copy-cat’ other attractions (Can Tho Portal, 2007c). A tour guide said that by visiting just one province in the Mekong Delta, tourists can experience the whole region; they don’t have to travel around the thirteen provinces and city (Can Tho Tourist, 2009). The impression of tourists about Can Tho city is not much because the city’s tourism products are not unique. This may be due to the spontaneous involvement by local people in the industry. While it is good to have local involvement, the city needs to develop standardised but unique products that suit to a range of tourist needs (People’s Committee of Can Tho City, 2005).

Despite improvements, transport links remain a constraint on tourism development in Can Tho city. Highway 1A is the only road from Ho Chi Minh city to Can Tho. A vast canal system supports water transport, but it is not easy to find a stable route for a high-speed boat. Even the boats which are used to carry travellers across the rivers are of low quality. The lack of professionally skilled personnel in the sector and the resultant poor customer service are also reasons that Can Tho city is not the first choice of higher-yield tourists. Furthermore, although there are plenty of festivals throughout the year, they have never been properly exploited. Thus, it can be said that the slow development of Can Tho tourism is not due to its resource deficiency, but to the limited methods being used. The biggest threat to tourism in Can Tho city is the current lack of co-ordination and organisation between the government, tour companies, and local residents.

In order to develop the tourism industry more efficiently and so benefit local communities, there are still many things that need to be done, including developing unique tourist products, providing high-quality tourism products and services, and focusing on marketing, promotion and advertising. Furthermore, it is important to raise the awareness of local government officers and communities about the role of tourism in the socio-economic development of Can Tho city. There is also need for co-operation and co-ordination between government departments at all levels, local authorities and local communities, tourist enterprises and other related stakeholders such as tourists and NGOs.

#### 4.1.2 The Cai Rang floating market

Cai Rang floating market is one of the most famous and biggest floating markets in the Mekong Delta. It is also a living museum of the southern traditional culture that has been fostered by the Mekong Delta's interlacing waterway systems (Thanh Nien News, 2009). The market is on the Cai Rang river. It is five kilometres by road from the centre of Can Tho city (see Figure 4.1) (Can Tho Portal, 2007d). It is a wholesale market, selling fruit, vegetables and other agricultural products from Can Tho city as well as from 13 neighbouring provinces in the Mekong Delta region (see Figure 4.2) (Vietnam Net, 2009a).

Figure 4.1: Map of Can Tho city with the location of Cai Rang floating market



(Adapted from People's Committee of Can Tho City, 2005)

Figure 4.2: Stallholders on the Cai Rang floating market



(Source: Can Tho Tourist, 2009)

Cai Rang floating market is much more geared towards locals than tourists; therefore, it doesn't have souvenirs stalls like the other markets. Unlike the land-based markets, the shops and stalls at Cai Rang floating market are boats of different sizes (Can Tho Investment – Trade – Tourism Promotion Centre, 2007). The market was born hundred years ago from the local people's habit of travelling and doing business by boat on the region's interlacing waterway systems. In the south-western region, boats and rafts are important means of transportation, like motorbikes and cars are in other regions. Cruising through the river in a boat, local vendors conduct all their business right on the water (Vietnam Net, 2009a). All the goods are transported to the market by rafts and boats. The floating market is not only a place where rural products are sold but also unique features of life are found on these boats. The market constitutes a 'canal civilization': many traders live on the river and some link their lives with their boats. On the deck of the boats, visitors can see generations of one family, children or babies, and even some dogs, pigs, and chickens, as the boats are the families mobile homes (Figure 4.3) (Can Tho Portal, 2007d).

Figure 4.3: Stallholders with child and dog on their boats



(Source: Author, 2010)



(Source: Author, 2010)

Figure 4.4: Concentration of small boats at the Cai Rang Floating market



(Source: Luong, 2001)

The floating market has made a contribution not only to cultural exchange but also waterway economic development. The market opens every day from sunrise until evening and the busiest time is from dawn until 8 a.m. (VOV News, 2010a). In the early morning, the waterway becomes a maze of hundreds of boats and junks of all sizes are anchored along the river for kilometres; all carrying a variety of seasonal fruit and vegetables (see Figure 4.4). Traders come to the market to buy fruit and vegetables and then bring them to other markets or export them to China and Cambodia (Can Tho Portal, 2007d). Unlike shops and stalls in ordinary markets, sellers cannot cry out to advertise their wares since it is impossible to be heard



amidst the noise of running boat engines (Thanh Nien News, 2009). That is why it is essential for each boat to display a long upright pole at its bow on which the sellers hang samples of their products (see Figure 4.5). If they sell bananas and durian, they will hang bananas and durian on the pole so that buyers can see what items are on sale from a distance (Vietnam Net, 2009a). This way of selling is simple but has existed for nearly a hundred years.

Recently, to meet the demands of traders and visitors throughout the market, many new services have been created. Going to the market now, visitors not only find people buying and selling agricultural produce but also find floating restaurants, floating bars, floating gas stations, and many other floating shops which sell breakfast, coffee, beer, soft drinks, wine and even cigarettes (see Figure 4.6) (Can Tho Portal, 2007d). These boats are often small, so they can move through crowded areas to serve people. Boats also operate like ‘taxis’, very convenient for tourists to hire and travel around the floating market.

With the advent of several new road networks and bridges over many rivers, as well as the setting up of supermarkets on the mainland, the indispensability of floating markets has been dented somewhat, but the waterways still offer the only route to several rural remote areas in the Mekong Delta region. Many locals still prefer floating markets, which have been a part of their daily lives and livelihoods for generations (Thanh Nien News, 2009).

Figure 4.5: A pole on the boat of a stallholder on the Cai Rang floating market



(Source: Vietnam Tourism, 2005)



Figure 4.6: A child sells fruit and soft drink on the Cai Rang floating market



(Source: Author, 2010)

Unlike floating markets in Thailand, floating markets in Vietnam, including Cai Rang floating market, have evolved naturally over hundred years or more. Thus, they are not only markets but also bring with them features of traditional culture (Nguyen, n.d.). This specific feature of the floating market attracts both Vietnamese people and foreign tourists. According to the Director of Can Tho Tourism Department, the market attracts 300–500 visitors each day (Loc, 2009). Trading activities at the Cai Rang floating market are an occasion for tourists not only to buy indigenous specialties but also to sense the hardships of the sellers and learn more about the local peoples. A visit to the Cai Rang floating market is a great way to experience how the local population uses the river canals for transportation and commerce.

There are other floating markets around the region such as Cai Be floating market in Tien Giang province, which is only about one hour's drive from Ho Chi Minh city, but Cai Rang floating market is by far the largest and is worth travelling the distance. The market was named as one of the 60 greatest places in the world (Project for Public Spaces, n.d.). Its unique cultural characteristics will give tourists unforgettable memories.

However, there are challenges facing the market in terms of it being a significant tourism destination. The discharge of waste into the river can cause negative experiences, particularly for international visitors. Another issue is safety for tourists: recently there have been many high-speed passenger boats that travel too quickly in the crowded areas at the Cai Rang floating market, and this is very dangerous for

visitors (Vietnam Tourism, 2005). Furthermore, the researcher observed many unregistered boats carrying tourists without life jackets.

## 5. Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents and discusses the findings from the semi-structured interviews with 31 stallholders on the Cai Rang floating market, 1 local tourism official, 1 tourism professional, 1 tour guide and 3 tour operators (see Appendix B for a copy of interview questions). The findings are discussed under five main headings: the stallholders, the local tourism official, the tourism professional, the tour guide and the tour operators. For each of these headings, a brief description of the respondents is presented first, followed by their work that relates to tourism and then their opinion about how the Cai Rang floating market as a tourist product might help to reduce poverty for local people. The data from the interviews will be compared with the findings of prior studies from literature. Quotations taken from the interview transcripts are presented in the findings with pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants. The implications, limitations of the research and further research are presented in the next chapter.

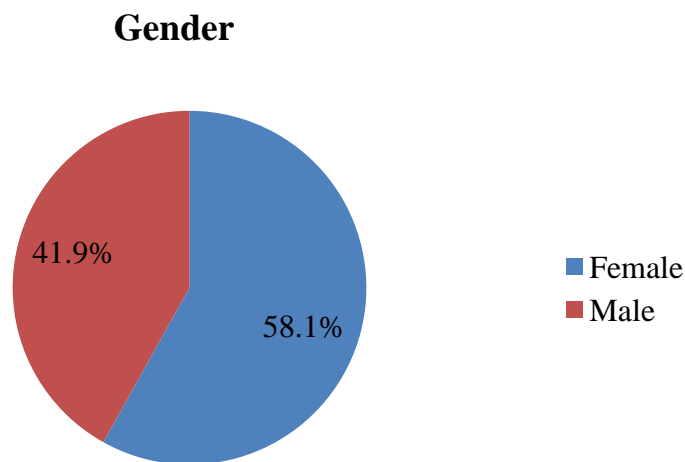
### 5.1 Findings

#### 5.1.1 The stallholders

##### *Demographic characteristics of the stallholders on the floating market*

Eighteen female and 13 male stallholders participated in the research (see Figure 5.1)

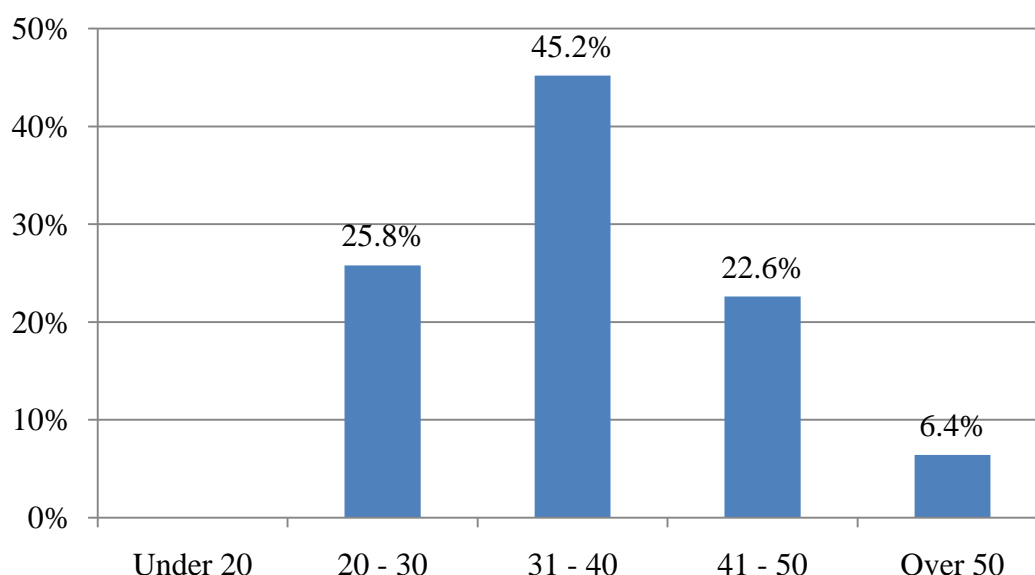
Figure 5.1: Gender of stallholder respondents



The majority of the interviewed stallholders (23 respondents) were more than 30 years old (74.2%). This suggests a mature collection of stallholders who would have a deep knowledge about the floating market. There were only two respondents (6.4%) aged over 50 (see Figure 5.2). It was explained in some interviews that when people get older, health reasons mean it is no longer suitable for them to be stallholders on the floating market; therefore, most stallholders are youthful or middle-aged. A quote from the following respondent illustrates this point:

“I have been saving money to open a dairy on land because when I get older I could not row the boat.”

Figure 5.2: Age groups of stallholder respondents

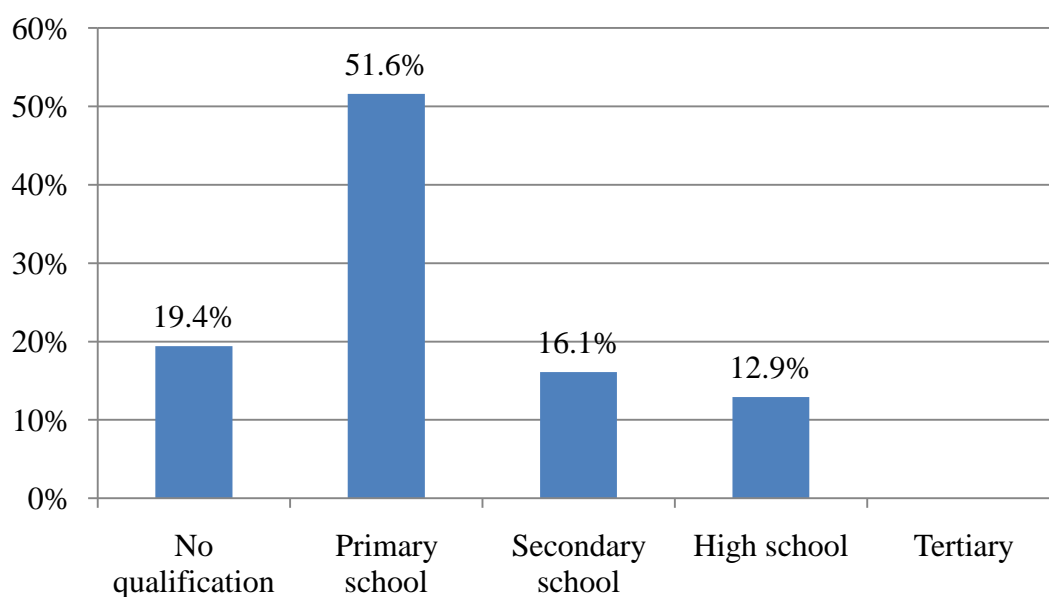


There were six respondents (19.4%) who had never had a school education. Sixteen interviewed stallholders (51.6%) had completed primary school, five (16.1%) had had some lower secondary school education and a further four (12.9%) had completed upper secondary school (see Figure 5.3). None of the respondents had tertiary qualifications.

A respondent explained why he did not attend school when he was young:

“My house was very far from school and it was more important to earn a living than to go to school”.

Figure 5.3: Level of education of respondents



Some common reasons for not going to school were because their families were poor, they could not afford to go to school or they had to work, or because their house was too far from the school. Another respondent, about 35 years old, pointed out that:

“There were many people who did not go to school, just like me, when I was at school age. The American War ended just 35 years ago and there was limited access to education during that time.”

As Figure 5.2 indicated, most respondents were more than 30 years old, so it is not surprisingly they had low education levels. The respondents that had completed high school were all less than 30 years old.

More than three-quarters (77.4%); of the respondents (24 stallholders) are residents of Can Tho city; the rest (7 stallholders, or 22.6% of those surveyed) are from neighbouring provinces. Of those who are residents in Can Tho city, most live near the floating market; even so, it can take up to one hour for some local stallholders to go to the floating market from home. For those stallholders that live in other provinces, it can take from three to ten hours to go to the Cai Rang floating market. Although this floating market is far from home, they still prefer to be stallholders

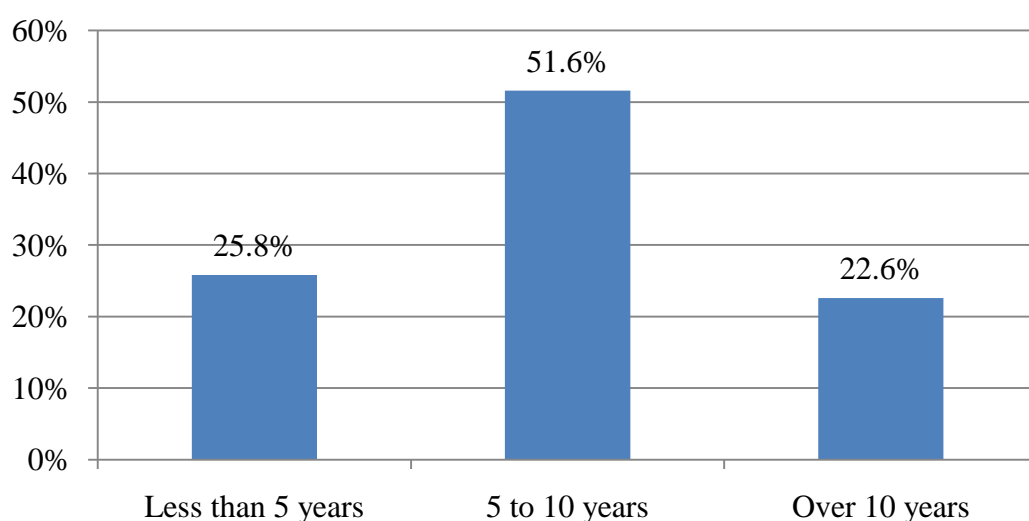
there because it is one of the biggest floating markets in the Mekong Delta region, and many have been selling products there for five or more years. A respondent said:

“I sold fruits on another floating market in Can Tho before, but it was not as busy as the Cai Rang floating market, so I moved to the market since six years ago in order to generate more business.”

### ***Stallholders and their business on the Cai Rang floating market***

Most (23) of the respondents have been stallholders on the floating market for more than five years (74.2%) (see Figure 5.4). The others have started their businesses on the floating market within the last two or three years, one even just started two months ago. Overall, the respondents have a long-standing involvement in doing business on the Cai Rang floating market, with an average period in the business of 6.5 years.

Figure 5.4: Length of being stallholders on the Cai Rang floating market



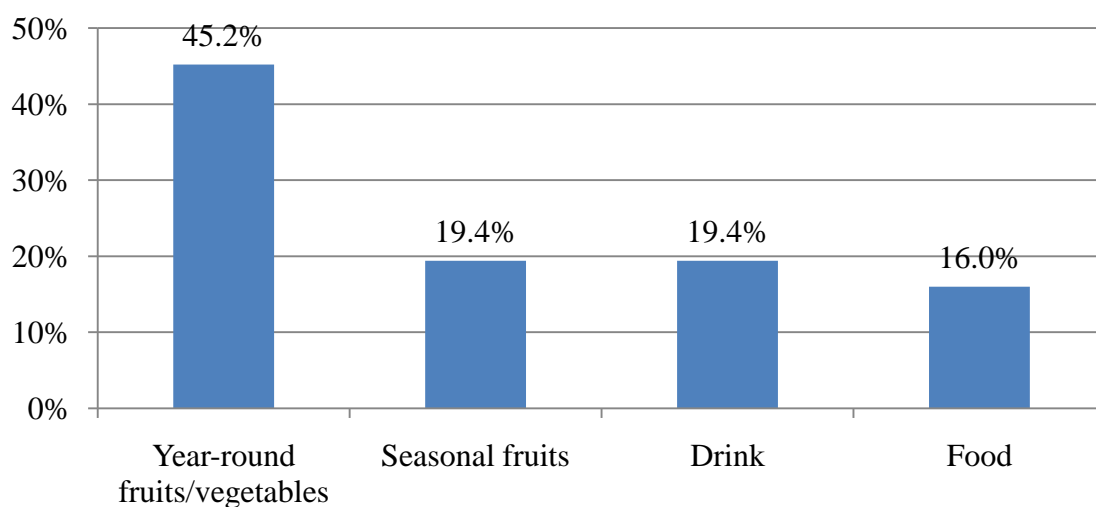
More than half (58.1%). of the respondents (18 stallholders) come to the market to sell products every day. The rest of them sell on the floating market four to five days a week or until their products are sold out. The latter group then go to farms or orchards to buy products. A stallholder stated:

“When the fruits are sold out, I go home to take a rest for two or three days. Then I go to a fruit gardens to top up stock, and come back to the floating market.”

The stallholders may be away from the floating market for up to two weeks due to the time it takes to go to other provinces to buy fruits and vegetables which may not be available in Can Tho city.

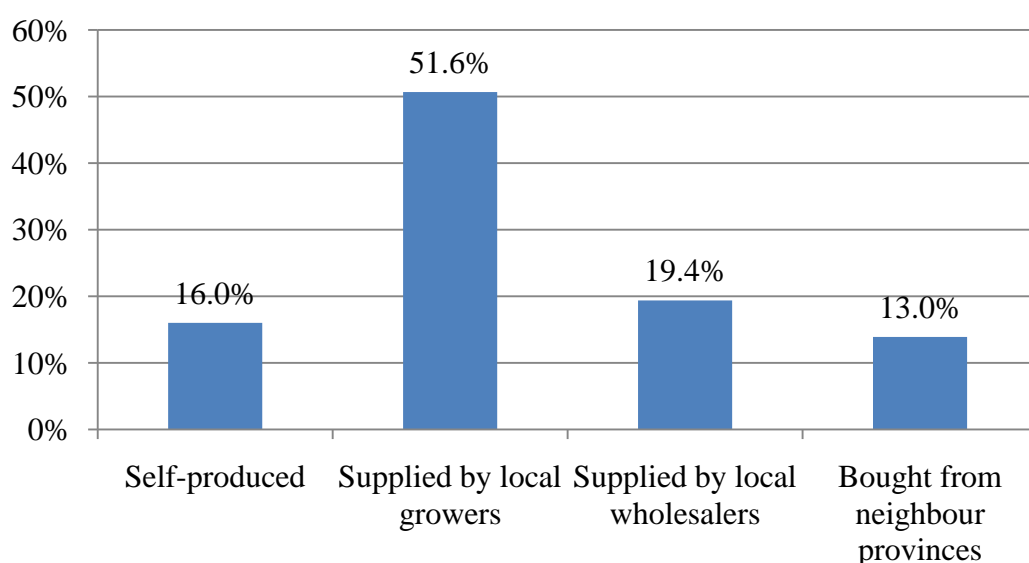
Nearly half (45.2%) of the interviewed respondents (14 stallholders) sell year-round fruits and vegetables, a further 19.4% of respondents sell seasonal fruits, and another 19.4% sell soft drink and coffee. The remaining five respondents (16%) sell prepared food such as noodle, rice gruel, Vietnamese style cake and dried fruits (see Figure 5.5)

Figure 5.5: Products for sale on the floating market



All the stallholders who sell prepared food prepare the products themselves. However, the majority (84%) of stallholders (26 respondents) don't produce the products they sell: more than half (16 respondents) buy the products from local farmers, a further six stallholders are supplied the products by local wholesalers (these were stallholders who sold soft drinks), and another four stallholders buy products from outside Can Tho city (Figure 5.6). Nonetheless, it is worth noticing that the soft drinks are not locally produced. Therefore, it could be considered that only 66.7% stallholders sell products that are from local sources.

Figure 5.6: Sources of products



When asked about jobs they had done before becoming stallholders on the floating market, 24 respondents (77.4%) said this was the only job they had ever had. A further 22.6% had done other jobs before such as working in paddy fields, selling rice, or working in a company. The main reason for changing jobs was because they got married and had to take care of their children. An interviewee said:

“I prefer to work in a company because I completed high school, I have a qualification. An office job, monthly-based salary, would be better for me. However, being a stallholder on the floating market, I can come to the market to sell products in the morning, and then come home to look after my child in the afternoon. Next year, when my child grows up and starts to go to school, I will look for company work again.”

Another respondent stated that: “I always want to do business on the floating market rather than farming.” She went on to explain why: “Being a stallholder would earn more income than working in the paddy fields.”

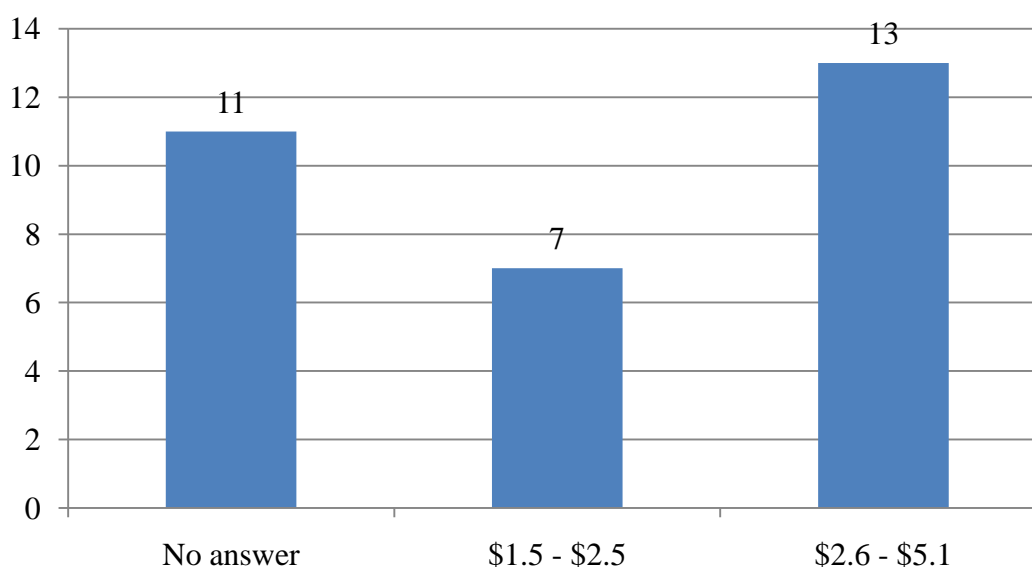
It does not require huge capital to get started at the market, and there is no need for qualification or registration to be a stallholder on the floating market. Furthermore,



stallholders don't have to pay income tax; they only pay a daily levy to the local government. This levy is usually between VND2,000 and VND5,000, but as the amount paid depends on the size of their business, many stallholders on small boats don't pay any fee at all.

When asked about how much they earn each day, 11 interviewed stallholders (35.5%) did not wish to disclose details about their income. Covin and Slevin (1989) also found that respondents are reticent about divulging financial information. The research found that seven interviewed stallholders (22.6%) earn approximately VND30,000 (about US\$1.54) per day, and 13 respondents (41.9%) earn from VND50,000 to VND100,000 per day (about US\$2.6 to US\$5.1) (see Figure 5.7). The findings indicate that by international agency standards the majority of stallholders cannot be considered poor since their income levels are above the national poverty line and as well as the new international poverty line of the World Bank: US\$1.25. It is important to note, however, that not all of the respondents work every day. Furthermore, in some cases this is the only income for the whole family, including a husband, wife and children: stallholders who sell food and drink work on the floating market by themselves, whereas stallholders who sell fruits and vegetable often have their spouse or their children on the stall to help them, and there is no wage or salary paid to those family members.

Figure 5.7: Stallholder daily income levels



A stallholder, who is a fruit wholesaler, said:

“When the business is good, not much competition, I could earn more than VND100,000 per day. However, if there are many competitors, I could make a loss of up to VND100,000 per day”.

The interviews clearly showed that income earned from stallholding on the Cai Rang floating market is unstable; however, this is the main source of family income for 20 of the respondents (64.5%). Eleven respondents (35.5%) had other sources for extra income, with four stallholders (12.9%) having another job, and seven (22.6%) having spouses that had their own jobs and income.

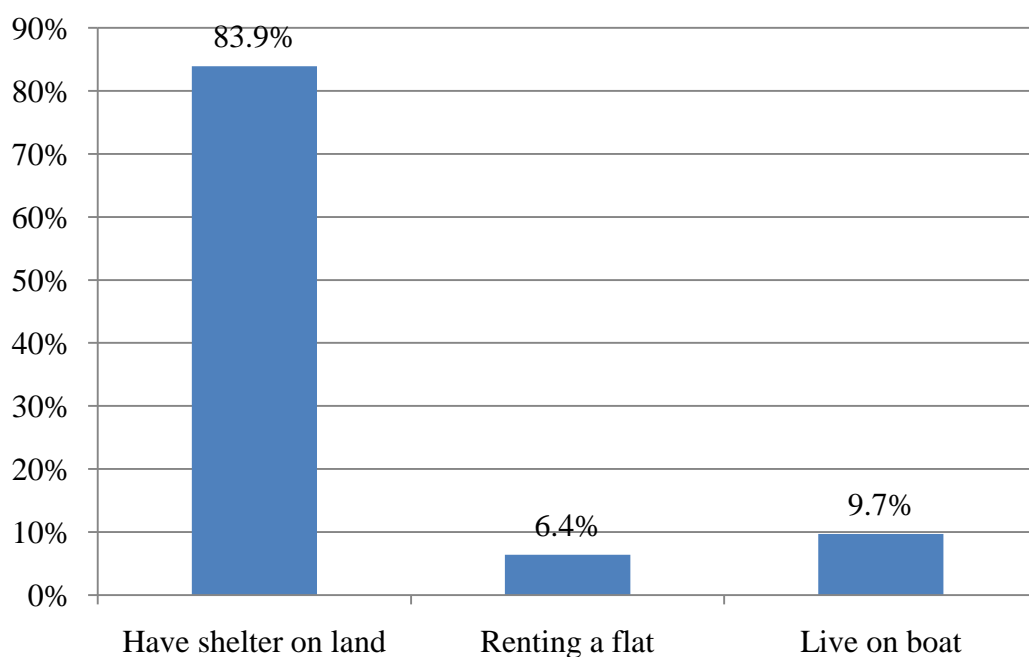
The research also finds that 27 (87.1%) of the interviewed stallholders are married, with nine respondents (29%) have one child and a further 13 (41.9%) having two. Since income derived from stallholding is quite low and unstable and given that only 35.5% respondents have extra sources of income, it is worth considering whether this income is sufficient for stallholders to support a whole family, paying for basic needs such as food, tuition fees of their children, and fees to see a doctor when a family member is sick.

The research reveals that 26 respondents (83.9%) have shelters on land, two respondents (6.4%) rent a flat, and three (9.7%) live on boats (see Figure 5.8). It is worth noting that while several of the respondents consider they have shelters on land, these may not be their own, belonging instead to parents or extended family members. The research findings suggest that although the interviewed stallholders may not meet international classifications of poverty, they do have characteristics of the poor such as lack of access to education, insufficient and unstable income, shortage of shelter and lack of capital to start a business.

In term of difficulties in accessing basic needs (such as basic education, health care and clean water), a respondent explained that:

“My children could not go to school because our family lives on the boat. We are floating around and the children have to follow us to go to neighbour provinces to buy fruits and vegetables.”

Figure 5.8: Types of shelter in which stallholders are living



Another respondent said:

“I have to leave my children with their grandparents who live on land, so they can go to school.”

According to one stallholder, because she lives on her boat she cannot listen to the radio or watch television, and so she cannot update her knowledge. Another stallholder said that the income she earned each day was just enough to feed her family for a day; she could not save any money.

While the income gained from selling products at the Cai Rang floating market is not high, most (71%) of the stallholders, 22 respondents, don't plan to do other jobs or have other businesses: they would continue to be stallholders on the floating market until they are old and could not row a boat. Nor do they have a business plan for their

sales on the floating market. The other nine respondents (29%) expressed that they might do other jobs later.

It is noticeable that all four stallholders (12.9%) who had completed high school have plans to do other jobs or to build a bigger business. One stallholder has plans to become a fruit wholesaler, transferring fruits to Ho Chi Minh city to sell to the wholesalers there. Some respondents said they would be stallholders until their children finished school, then they might do other jobs. Another stallholder stated that when their children got married, they would do business on land. All these plans are just in the respondents' minds; they are not written down. In general, many interviewed stallholders are less likely to have plans for the future of the business or a desire to expand it.

Respondents were asked about resources that they turn to when they need advice related to their business. Most (71%) of the interviewed stallholders, 22 respondents, just work out the issues by themselves, while a further nine respondents (29%) would seek advice from a spouse, family members or friends. None of those interviewed made use of a professional service provider.

### ***Stallholders and tourism development on the Cai Rang floating market***

None of the respondents see themselves as being 'in the tourism industry'. All the stallholders were somewhat unsure of their answers when asked about tourism-related issues such as what proportion of the customers are tourists (international or domestic); whether tourists come in a group, package tours or free independent tourist; and what percentage of their income is earned from foreign tourists. Nevertheless, all the stallholders said they sold products to both locals and tourists (domestic and international). The customer mix changes with the seasons: the number of tourists coming to their stalls increases in the dry season, while there is more reliance on locals over the rainy season. In general, stallholders sell more to locals and domestic tourists than to international tourists. This can be explained by the fact that international tourists do not buy fruits and vegetable to take home because these products do not stay fresh for long and can be bought anywhere. Another issue raised is that international tourists only come in the morning, whereas

stallholders can trade with local people throughout the day. In addition, stallholders don't aim to attract tourists to their stalls; rather it is the tourists who come to them.

One stallholder mentioned: "I prefer to trade with domestic tourists because they do not bargain much like international tourists".

Nevertheless, he is the only respondent who expressed this sentiment. As one stallholder noted:

"Foreign tourists are very nice and friendly. They often say good things about the local fruits".

However, sometimes stallholders are busy with the local regular customers, and they don't have time to serve international tourists who buy just small quantities. A respondent said that:

"Sometimes tourists come to buy my product but I refuse to sell because in the early morning, I prefer to trade with a person that buys a lot of fruit like wholesalers or retailers rather than just sell a pineapple to a tourist."

Despite the fact that none of the interviewed stallholders speak a foreign language, this is no barrier to them trading with international visitors: they can use body language, or if tourists come in a package tour, there would be a tour guide for translation. None of the respondents feel that tourism is currently vital for their economic well-being and, as a result, they don't have any strategies to attract foreign tourists to their stalls to buy their products. Nor do they have any business relationship with the tourist companies either, even though they would like to see more foreign tourists.

When discussing local government's support to stallholders, a respondent said:

"The government doesn't support the stallholders in any way. Some government officers even asked for some extra money for themselves."

The stallholders (many of them local residents) don't have any input into tourism development strategies in Can Tho city. The government designs and makes decisions without extended consultation. Stallholders are so busy trying to earn a living that they don't pay attention on what is going on in the tourism industry. A stallholder said:

“I don't know anything about the tourism industry. Sometimes I listen to the radio and know that Can Tho is developing tourism industry but I am not very clear what the government is doing, what their plan is.”

Another respondent stated: “I am too busy with work. I have no time to care about what is going on with the tourism industry.”

The interviewed stallholders don't know anything about Can Tho city tourism development strategies, and as a result they cannot comment about the current strategy. Because the stallholders don't have much knowledge about the tourism industry, including benefits that tourism can bring, they cannot comment about whether tourism could potentially help to reduce poverty. These findings confirm literature which suggests that local communities are often not involved in the tourism development process at a destination (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). In fact, it is these stallholders who need to be engaged in planning and development initiatives as they play a valuable role in the supply of tourism activities or products, but are currently not participating in this arena fully.

The research found that stallholders were too busy earning a living to pay attention to the tourism industry. Besides, they don't have enough knowledge to participate in tourism development strategies. This finding is supported by similar findings drawn by Liu and Wall (2006) (cited in Telfer & Sharpley, 2008), namely that locals may not have the skills and knowledge to participate. Special attention should be paid to improve the livelihood of the local community. When their living standards are improved and they don't have to worry about hunger and poverty, they will have more time to upgrade their knowledge and may contribute useful opinions and creative ideas for tourism development strategies.

### **5.1.2 The tourism officer, professional, tour guide and tour operators**

#### ***Local tourism officer***

The researcher interviewed an officer of the Can Tho city Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism. He has been working in this department for more than five years. The officer provided useful information about the market. Stallholders on the Cai Rang floating market pay a fee to the Cai Rang district. The waterway police department manages the registration and safety requirements of all the boats. This includes boats for personal use, those used by stallholders for their business on the floating market, and boats that are used to carry tourists.

The officer shared his opinion:

“Although the Cai Rang floating market attracts a growing number of tourists their length of stay is not long, just about one or two hours, and the tourism revenue from the floating market is not a significant contributor to the local economy. As a result, the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism in Can Tho city doesn’t have any plan to invest, improve or develop this site to be a tourism product. The floating market is a spontaneous market, just let it develops by itself, if there is any problem, we will solve it.”

The Cai Rang floating market is very important to local community as it is a place for trade. On the other hand, the market is just a long-standing cultural feature; it doesn’t impact on the tourism revenue of Can Tho city. The tourism officer stated that:

“Can Tho city doesn’t have unique tourism product. The city is planning to develop MICE tourism, ecotourism, orchard tourism and water-based tourism, including Cai Rang floating market.”

Can Tho city is an important transport hub in the Mekong Delta region, with many important roads, waterways and airways, connecting the delta to other regions and countries. It also has better quality hotels and restaurants with larger capacities

compared with those in its neighbouring provinces. Both these factors are advantageous when planning to develop MICE tourism. The other tourism products found in Can Tho city are not unique to that location, but duplicate those found in the neighbouring provinces. For example, tours to fruit gardens and floating markets are also available elsewhere.

The officer also acknowledged:

“Can Tho city has an experienced human resource but is likely out of date, couldn’t catch up with the current tourism trend, could not give creative and impressive ideas.”

Furthermore, the officer claimed that the city doesn’t have financial resources for research into tourism development. The tourism department does not do its own research; instead, it collects data reported by local hotels and restaurants. Therefore, this data might be different from the actual data due to the hotel and restaurant owners wanting to pay less tax.

To summarise, the tourism industry in Can Tho city is underdeveloped: it does not bring many economic benefits to the city or to the local people. The industry needs much more investment from the central government to improve infrastructure as well as funding for tourism research and for training. In addition, it is necessary for central government to advise how to develop the tourism industry in ways that will maximise the benefits for local communities. Currently, there is no local community input in tourism development strategies of Can Tho city.

When asked about strategies to use tourism as a tool for poverty reduction, the officer said:

“It is believed that when there are tourists, there would be tourism revenue, however the revenue may be not much.”

The officer also acknowledged that tourists love to make contact with local residents. Many foreign tourists enjoy watching local residents engage in their daily activities.



Some of the visitors' other favourite pursuits, according to his observations, include working in the rice fields, netting fish, picking fruit and riding bicycles. He added that tourists also love fresh fruits and they enjoy watching the fruit-seller cutting fruits, which they can then consume there and then, right at the floating market. The officer stated that it is obvious that tourism has potential to create jobs for local people and to bring extra income for them.

The tourism department in Can Tho city doesn't have any strategy to use tourism as a tool for poverty reduction. He explained:

“Poverty alleviation is the responsibility of the Labour, War Invalid and Society Department. The Tourism department works separately, independently from the Labour, War Invalid and Society Department. We do not have strong links with other departments in Can Tho city. Each department has their own responsibility and we don't have much chance to sit down together and discuss about co-operation to develop tourism industry in Can Tho city.”

### ***The tourism professional***

The researcher interviewed the director of a tourist company in Ho Chi Minh city. The director has worked in this position for more than five years. She shared her opinions about tourism in the region:

“Tourist products must be different from daily products for local people. Tourist products need to be packed in a nice and attractive package, and must be compliance with health and safety standards.”

She also pointed out that:

“We have put so much effort to export local farm products and aquatic products but there are many difficulties and barriers to do so. Why don't we think of tourism as an export, tourists consume those products right at the destination. Tourists come to Vietnam more and

more each year. Last year we welcome four million international tourists and thirty million domestic tourists. This is a huge amount of consumers.”

She suggested that there should be unique souvenirs for tourists to take home as gifts for family, relatives and friends who could not travel or had never been to the Mekong Delta region. These souvenirs not only remind tourists about a destination that they have visited but are also a good way to promote the Mekong Delta region as a tourist destination, including Can Tho city. The tourism professional also pointed out that tourism had not developed correspondingly with the Can Tho city’s potential. It is necessary to develop niches for ecotourism, water-based/river tourism and to put more effort into promotion of those local unique tourism products, she said.

At the moment, tourists come to the Mekong Delta region and focus largely on sightseeing; they do not get involved in daily activities of local people. Tourists come mainly to consume fresh fruits and taste honey, but there is nothing else to do. She said:

“We could learn from other countries how they create, develop and promote their tourism industry but it does not mean copy what they are doing. We need to know our strengths and build tourism products upon those strengths”.

The tourism professional acknowledged that the local community did not seem to be very aware of the tourism industry and did not realise the importance of this industry. According to her, Cai Rang floating market is a unique cultural attraction but it is not as good a tourism product as the floating markets in Thailand. She shared her experience:

“The floating markets in Thailand were established to serve the tourism industry. The products being sold on their floating markets are packed very nicely and there are many souvenirs for tourists to take

home. In addition, stallholders on the floating markets in Thailand are very friendly and they are always happy to serve tourists.”

On the other hand, she said, the Cai Rang floating market is a spontaneous market. Tourists just come to have a look or may consume some fresh fruits then go — they don’t spend much money or stay long at the market. Stallholders just do their daily work; they don’t think about producing tourist products and how to attract more tourists to their stalls. Normally, the tour guides take tourists to the stalls or tourists come there by themselves. As a result, the products being sold on the Cai Rang floating market are not packaged nicely and there are no souvenirs. Some stallholders even refuse to trade with tourists. Consequently, visitors commented that they had changed some money into Vietnamese currency and would have happily spent some of it while they were visiting the famous floating market in Can Tho but the wholesale fruit and vegetable people was not aimed at tourists at all. This seems generally true of this area: virtually no attempts are made to extract the tourist dollar from their wallets (Action Aid, 2007).

As evidenced by the quote of a stallholder, which was mentioned earlier, in the early morning, she preferred to do a wholesale trade with the first person who came to her stall, rather than just sell a pineapple to a tourist. This is a Vietnamese belief that the first person who comes to buy the product or service at the beginning of the day is very important. This person could bring good luck and the stallholder could sell a lot during that day. However, if they start the day by selling just a pineapple to tourist, they may only sell a few fruit during that they. Most Western tourists don’t know about this belief, and so it can lead to a misunderstanding between the tourists and the stallholders. Although it is not that the stallholders don’t like to trade with tourists, but some tourists may feel that they are not welcomed by local people and this could impact on their overall satisfaction about their trip to Can Tho city. The findings show that the involvement of local people in tourism contributes a unique flavour which is of particular value to the visitor experience. This is supported by Dowling’s study (2003, p. 213):

“The attitudes of a host community’s residents are a key component in identifying, measuring and analysing the impact of tourism. Resident

perceptions of tourism may be one factor in shaping the attractiveness of a destination, and negative attitudes may be one indicator of an area's ability (or inability) to absorb tourism.”

The local community plays a central role in the success of any tourism destination. The role of the community as ambassadors for the attractions of their hometown must start with an awareness of the attraction and the value visitors place on the experiences provided. Local people need to look at their hometown and what it offers through the eyes of the visitor to appreciate it. Visiting Cai Rang floating market is a unique experience for tourists. Local communities need to understand how the tourism industry in Can Tho city could improve their quality of life. However, the need for communities to understand how tourism benefits them, and for locals to become involved in interacting with the visitor travelling through Can Tho city, is a somewhat vague concept for stallholders. The interviewed tourism professional suggested:

“There needs to be more co-operation between local tourism businesses and officers. Local people should not only be encouraged to participate in the tourism industry but also need to be guided how to engage with tourism through their daily life.”

Daily activities could be transformed into tourism products as many foreign tourists enjoy watching local residents engage in their daily activities. As the local tourism officer said, some of the visitors' other favourite pursuits include 'working' in the rice fields, netting fish and picking fruit. Local people do their daily work aimed for the local market, but if they were to develop their activity for the tourism market they would need to have plans for production with more technological procedures and also packaging. The tourism professional suggested:

“The local community may make dried fruits and vegetables and then pack those nicely to sell to tourists. These dried products must follow health and safety standard. The package may also be written in English. However, local residents do not seem to have enough

knowledge and capital to do all these things by themselves. There need to be guidance and support from the government.”

She also stated that it is necessary that all the departments in Can Tho city work together, creating strong links and co-operating to develop tourism in a better way. Nevertheless, the tourism department may only follow the guidance of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism but the Ministry does not have the power to create a network to link the tourism department with other departments within the city.

The tourism professional said:

“Can Tho is a rice basket. The government may not see tourism as a key economic sector in this city. Meanwhile local tourism officials don’t have knowledge about pro-poor tourism. As a result, tourism may not be considered as a potential tool for poverty alleviation in Can Tho city.”

To develop the Cai Rang floating market into more of a tourism product and so bring more benefits to the local community, there are lots of things that need to be done. The tourism professional explained:

“The co-operation of all stakeholders at all levels (e.g. international aid agents, donors, national and local government, tourist companies and local community) is very important, and the mindset of the local government and residents in Can Tho city about the role of the Cai Rang floating market and tourism industry should also be changed.”

### ***The tour guide***

The tour guide interviewed for this research is about 70 years old. He has worked in the tourism industry for most of his life. He worked for another tourism company in Ho Chi Minh city before he took his current job. He is now at the age of retirement but he still wants to work in this industry. He shared his experience that:

“The price of products on the floating market was not cheap as before, when farmers came to the market to sell their products directly. Now, many stallholders are wholesalers, they come to farms or gardens to buy fruits and vegetables, then sell these products on the floating market. As a result, the price was increased.”

He suggested that prices should be controlled so they do not increase as tourism grows. According to the tour guide, although the Cai Rang floating market is very important to the local economy and for local residents, it could not be developed further because the land transport system has improved in recent years and is more convenient and faster than using the waterways. These days the floating market is just a cultural remnant of a region with an interlacing system of rivers and ditches. He also pointed out that:

“The floating market starts quite early in the morning and less crowded after 8 a.m. However, tourists normally come after 8 a.m. Because they are on holiday, tourists often don’t wake up early. They only come to the floating market after they finish their breakfast. Therefore, tourists could not see the floating market at the time it is most crowded with a lively spirit.”

The tour guide then acknowledged that although the Cai Rang floating market is a unique cultural site, it does not attract as many tourists as tourist destinations in the middle region of Vietnam, where tourism is developed and managed better. Tourism in the Mekong Delta region, including Can Tho city, develops in a spontaneous fashion rather than with any co-ordinated planning or control. Local residents see tourist demand and so they provide products and services to the tourists in order to earn extra income. They don’t have much knowledge about the tourism industry. The tour guide stated:

“Some local residents might see the family next door earning extra income from tourists, they then copy the way of their neighbour to provide tourist products and services. Consequently, the supply might

exceed tourist demand while the quality of provided products and services might not up to tourist satisfaction.”

Besides, some of the products offered are not local and unique. For example, in some tourist fruit gardens, traditional Chinese clothes were displayed to sell to tourists, not Vietnamese clothes. The tour guide explained that the Vietnamese in the Western region tend to prefer foreign products and they think Vietnamese traditional clothes are too countrified. Local people don't appreciate that international tourists come to the Mekong Delta seeking natural scenes and local authentic, unique tourist products. Nor does the local government understand tourists: according to the tour guide, the local government has planned to build more 4- and 5-star hotels instead of simple, clean and tidy lodges more in keeping with the local environment and culture. These plans were made and imposed in a familiar top-down fashion by the government without locals' input.

The tour guide feels strongly that local community participation is very important in the tourism development process. Local residents know a great deal about their home town and their contribution in planning for tourism development would be very useful. He added his concern, though, that even when locals' comments are right, if the government had made a decision, it would not be easy and might cost a lot to change the plan.

The tour guide did not know about the Can Tho city tourism development strategy but his opinion about developing the Cai Rang floating market as a tourism product was different to that of the tourism official's. The tour guide explained:

“Cai Rang floating market is a unique cultural tourist site, the image of the floating market was promoted overseas. It was neglectful to not have a strategy to develop the floating market as a tourist product that brings more benefits for Can Tho city and its residents.”

Likewise, the tour guide disagreed with the tourism professional about making dried fruits to sell to tourists. He said tourists coming to the Mekong Delta, especially the

Cai Rang floating market, prefer fresh fruits to dried fruits. Dried fruits, he added, can be bought anywhere in Vietnam, and even overseas since they are exported.

He suggested organising events and activities on the river to attract more tourists; for example, boat racing, or mini-competitions where the tourists could try their hand at being sellers and see who the best seller is. Another idea would be having competitions where tourists make cakes, fruit salads or smoothies from local fruits and vegetables: tourists would have to row the boats and buy the fruits and vegetables by themselves to a budget. Alternatively, tourists could learn to make animals from fresh fruits. According to the tour guide, these activities would result in more local fruits and vegetables being sold, so bringing more economic benefits to the local people, while the tourists would enjoy their time at the floating market more than if they were merely sitting on a boat and consuming fresh fruits. These activities should be promoted widely so that more and more visitors could know and come to Can Tho city.

The tour guide was not aware of the concept of pro-poor tourism. When discussing tourist companies supporting local poor people, he said tourist companies only organised tours for visitors to travel to the destinations and that poverty alleviation was a responsibility of the government. In other words, ‘the business of business is business’: tour operators exploit tourism resources for business purposes, there is no charity or helping to reduce poverty at the destination. He added:

“The government also doesn’t have sufficient finance to support local people to do tourism business. They only encourage every household in Can Tho to do tourism business in order to earn extra income. The extra income from doing tourism business may not be much but it could help to stabilise local residents’ living.”

### ***Tour operators***

The three respondents from tourist companies are all female and in the age group from 25 to 35. They have worked in the companies for at least three years while their companies have operated in the tourism industry for more than ten years. They don’t have tertiary qualifications but they can speak English — most of their customers are



foreigners. This is the respondents' main job and they have never had any other job. All businesses represented in the interviews are independently owned and owner-operated. The owners saw other people open tourist companies along the street so they did the same. Their companies only have two to three staff as they are small companies. The tour guide and bus drivers are their contractors.

According to the three tour operators, tours to the Mekong Delta are divided into three types: one-, two- and three-day tours. Tourists had to come to the company office to begin their journey, and they travelled to the Mekong Delta by bus. There are many small tourist companies along this street and they create links with each other. One interviewee said:

“I would send my customers to other companies if I do not have enough space left on my own daily tour.”

The operators understand the benefit of businesses supporting each other. The companies open seven days a week. They not only organise tours for travellers but also offer foreign exchange and provide computers with Internet service. The tour price for Vietnamese tourists is about US\$2 cheaper than the price for international tourists. The tours operate daily.

There may be two or three tourist buses in a tour but only one tour guide. The tour guide would stay on one bus and after visiting the first site, he would get on the second bus, and then the other one. The tour guide works for them casually and does not need to have a qualification in tourism; he needs only to be able to speak English. When the one-day tour finishes, the tour guide continues the journey with the tourists on the two- and three-day tours while the tourists on the one-day tour return to Ho Chi Minh city. Tourists on the one-day tour are provided with lunch while those on the other tours are provided with accommodation and meals. Since the companies provide meals for tourists, it depends on the tourists whether they want to buy local fruits, vegetables or food and make contact with local people. A tour operator indicated:

“The company does not have business relationship with the stallholders on the Cai Rang floating market. We only organise for tourists to travel around the floating market about one hour then leave for other sites but we do have business relationship with some hotels and restaurants in the Mekong Delta region.”

Profit is an important motivation for running the business for all three respondents. None of the respondents would tell how much they earn each day, nor what proportion of their clients are international tourists. Their reluctance highlights the point raised by Covin and Slevin (1989) that respondents can be reticent in divulging financial information. The companies' business is to organise tours for travellers; they don't do any charity work or help poor people at the destinations, including Can Tho city. They don't know and don't have any comment about using tourism as a tool for alleviating poverty. Likewise, they don't know anything about tourism development strategies in Can Tho city. They don't know nor care about what events or festivals are taking place in Can Tho city at any particular time: their tours are always the same, and the operators do not change anything because of an upcoming event or festival. They don't think about organising a tour for tourists to join those festivals. If tourists travel to Can Tho at the time of a festival and they want to join that festival, they can stay in Can Tho for longer — but by themselves. This means the tourists have to organise their own accommodation, meals and transport around Can Tho city as well as a means of returning to Ho Chi Minh city.

Tour operators could potentially network and co-operate with other tourist stakeholders, such as local government and stallholders on the floating market, in order to organise better tours, that provide tourists with a unique 'sense of place' experience. It may be necessary to raise awareness in these tourist companies of the fact that the tourism industry has a responsibility to the local community at destinations since it “uses the community as a resource, sells it as a product and in the process affects the lives of everyone” (Murphy, 1988, p. 97).

## **5.2 Comments and Policy Recommendations**

The review of current developments in Vietnam indicates that tourism as an economic sector has witnessed rapid growth over the last decade. The country has experienced a significant increase in both the number of international arrivals and domestic tourists. The sound performance of the sector has resulted in it contributing significantly more to the country's GDP and total public revenue. Such increases have been expected to generate significant employment opportunities and enhanced incomes for local households. Tourism also brings in foreign exchange, and unlike other foreign-exchange earners, tourism does not face the many export requirements and restrictions placed on, for example, aquatic and farm products. This research has argued that Cai Rang floating market in Can Tho city has the potential to be a tourism product that could bring more benefits for local communities, especially the stallholders, the local poor.

However, though designated as a major growth engine for economic development and poverty alleviation, the tourism sector does not necessarily automatically fulfil this role. The bulk of investment, both governmental and private, remains concentrated in the more economically advanced areas rather than in the poorer countryside. As a consequence, the distribution of tourism benefits to disadvantaged groups such as the rural poor, who are also the ethnic minority, appear to remain minimal. Furthermore, due to a shortage of investment capital, poor infrastructure and lack of social networking, participation in tourism by the local poor households remains modest. Other factors such as lack of skills and knowledge also leads to the current situation where much of the benefits generated from the tourism sector bypass the poor, especially those living in the regions with the higher poverty incidence.

The question of how pro-poor tourism strategies can be commercially feasible and include the private sector is most challenging. Since tourism is a commercial industry it is subject to market forces; hence the private sector will be very reluctant to change its behaviour if this affects profits. In the case of Can Tho city, which has major logistical problems, the secret of pro-poor tourism is to develop local quality products and raise the awareness of local people about the tourism industry. For pro-

poor tourism to be commercially feasible, there also needs to be a strong demand from tourists themselves. If tour operators were to adopt pro-poor tourism codes of practice and explain to tourists how they function to benefit the poor, tourists will demand them (Scheyvens, 2002; Ashley et al., 2001).

According to the WTO (2002a), mainstreaming a focus on poverty across the tourism industry would be a formidable challenge. But given the importance of tourism in many very poor areas, it is surely worth rising to this challenge (WTO, 2002a). A combination of different activities at different levels is required, including intervention at the policy level to influence legislation, raising awareness amongst tour operators and tourists, and community-level initiatives working directly with the poor.

### **5.2.1 Concept, policies and strategies**

Based on what has been learnt in the previous sections, in this section some initial policy recommendations are made. These are strategic and practical options that would facilitate policy dialogue and support initiatives linking tourism and poverty reduction.

- Formal linkages need to be strengthened between national and local departments, and their related action plans. It is critical that greater effort is made to mainstream pro-poor concerns into the tourism sector's strategy and development planning. Similarly, tourism development concerns need to be mainstreamed into the overall economic management policies and activities of Can Tho city. To this end, development activities in the tourism sector should focus on several high-priority activities that would also address poverty outcomes at both national and local levels, especially those activities pertaining to the provision of employment and income. More PPT projects should be formulated and implemented in Can Tho city, particularly those focusing on improvement of livelihood, better access to communication, health and education services, and on activities in areas where large proportions of the population are poor, such as at the Cai Rang floating market.

- Institutional capacity should be enhanced to integrate the poverty–tourism relationship into national policy and planning frameworks. Furthermore, support should be provided to VNAT to strengthen its policy-making capacity, to build essential working relations with development agencies, and to apply various tools for assessing and improving development and poverty reduction strategies and action plans, as well as to integrate pro-poor considerations into sector policy, planning and programmes. More urgently, support should be provided to Can Tho city tourism department and other concerned ministries and agencies in the preparation of their five-year sector plans and action frameworks.
- Furthermore, it is appropriate to consider:
  - a) Creating a more equitable distribution of tourism benefits in favour of the less developed tourism areas in Can Tho. Reallocation of the public investment flows to less advantaged tourist sites and destinations in the countryside (including Cai Rang floating market) could be a first step in this direction.
  - b) Improving physical infrastructure such as roads, wharves and tourist boats, because a lack of sufficient infrastructure is reported as being one of the main barriers preventing tourism from accessing poorer areas.
  - c) Providing local residents and tourism officers in Can Tho with support to enhance tourism human capacity building and training.
  - d) Applying appropriate economic and other incentives (for example, tax exemptions, cheap loans, or right on application of environment user fee or entrance charge) to encourage private-sector participation and entrepreneurship in local tourism in Can Tho city.

### **5.2.2 Tools and approaches for tourism and poverty linkages enhancement**

It is vital to increase community participation in tourism management policy and planning processes at all levels by expanding public access to tourism information, decision making, and justice and address dimensions of tourism-poverty nexus, by ensuring that poor people in Can Tho are fully integrated into the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of poverty reduction strategies and related policy reforms.

Mechanisms for sharing information need to be developed and implemented to improve the effectiveness of strategies on tourism–poverty linkage for Government at all levels: local communities in Can Tho city, the private sector and the general public

It is important to develop also a set of national and local tourism-poverty reduction indicators to measure how tourists can affect the livelihood of the poor at Cai Rang floating market in Can Tho city.

## 6. Conclusions

This thesis aimed to explore the potential linkage between poverty elimination and tourism using the case of the Cai Rang floating market, Can Tho city, Vietnam. The major research questions it has addressed are:

- What is pro-poor tourism (PPT)?
- What are the challenges and limitations of using tourism as a tool for poverty reduction?
- What is the role of markets in local community development?
- What is the structure of the tourism industry in Can Tho city and the structure of tourism in Cai Rang floating market?
- How does/can tourism contribute to poverty reduction among participants in the Cai Rang floating market?

This chapter presents the main conclusions of the study and discusses their broader significance. A summary of the findings and discussion about the tourism industry in the city of Can Tho and its responses to the PPT approach in the case of Cai Rang floating market are presented. The remainder of the chapter is then dedicated to exploring the contributions and implications of the study; the limitations of the research are also presented. Finally, a possible research agenda for the study of responses to the PPT initiatives in Can Tho city, Vietnam is suggested.

By the end of the 1990s development practitioners had begun to think about the possibility of applying poverty elimination goals to tourism (Mowforth & Munt, 2009). A large number of studies have been conducted to examine how tourism could contribute to alleviating poverty in developing countries and these have become among the most discussed topics in the study of PPT over the last decade (WTO, 2006).

The World Tourism Organisation is convinced that the power of tourism, one of the most dynamic economic activities in recent years, can be more effectively harnessed to address the problems of poverty more directly (WTO, 2002a). Likewise, this thesis has shown in its review of the literature that tourism has the potential to play an important role in making a more decisive contribution to the Millennium

Development Goals, especially regarding poverty reduction. There is much evidence to suggest that tourism is important and growing in many of the countries that suffer from poverty (WTO, 2002a). International tourist arrivals to developing countries have been increasing at a higher rate compared with those to the developed world. Although the growth in international tourism receipts for developing countries is lower than for developed countries, its contribution to the national economic development is significant for the developing world.

Other reasons for tourism to be better placed than many other sectors in meeting the needs of the poor were also discussed in this thesis. Tourism is consumed at the point of production. It also opens up the opportunity for additional purchases to be made. In addition, many of the poorest countries are actually at a comparative advantage over developed countries in this sector: they have assets of enormous value to the tourism industry, such as culture, landscape, wildlife and climate. Furthermore, tourism contributes to a geographical spread of employment opportunities. It can be particularly relevant to rural areas where the above assets are often found. Tourism can sometimes provide a source of income in such locations while few other industries can. Moreover, tourism is a more diverse industry than many others. It has potential to support other economic activity by providing flexible, part-time jobs which can complement other livelihood options. In addition, tourism is labour intensive and it reduces vulnerability through diversification of income sources. The infrastructure required by tourism, such as transport and communications, water supply and sanitation, public security and health services, can also benefit poor communities.

Some authors argue that while the PPT approach sounds like a good idea, it is hard to achieve poverty alleviation in practice (Richter, 2001; Mowforth & Munt, 2003; Telfer, 2003). Economic growth from tourism often does not spread equally to benefit the poor (Scheyvens, 2007). In addition, critics are concerned that leakages minimise the economic benefits of tourism. It is estimated that leakages can be as high as 70% (Milne, 1990, cited in Scheyvens, 2007, p.29; Pluss & Backes, 2002). There are further concerns that small local investors or businesses cannot compete against overseas companies and investors who come into a country under pro-globalisation policies (Mowforth & Munt, 2003). However, there are a number of



case studies that appear to demonstrate the real advantages and benefits to the poor that arise from tourism (WTO, 2006). As advocates of PPT understandably maintain, while in absolute terms the scale of benefits may appear small, they can be relatively very significant when viewed from the perspective of the beneficiary groups (Mowforth & Munt, 2009).

The idea of a tourism–poverty synergy is apparent in the main current tourism-related policy documents of the Vietnamese Government. However, very important policy and institutional disparities still remain. Although some tourism-related paragraphs are included in the policy documents, it appears that the poverty alleviation process is not well known amongst those in the tourism sector (Nguyen et al., 2007). The shortcomings may be because the poverty targets, although mentioned frequently in the policy documents, have remained something of ‘secondary importance’ rather than being a critical matter requiring urgent and decisive policy actions. Similarly, not many ideas and messages about poverty and hunger alleviation can be seen in the action plans of VNAT. These practices squarely indicate that inadequate attention has been given to poverty reduction targets in the sector’s strategic plan.

Due to a lack of sufficient capacity and any reasonable alternatives, a major proportion of poor people, especially those in the mountainous areas and remote countryside, have little access to and opportunity to gain from tourism. This makes poverty in these areas difficult to overcome. Other factors such as a lack of skills and knowledge also lead to the current situation where much of the benefits generated from the tourism sector bypass these poor, especially those living in the regions with high rates of poverty (Nguyen et al., 2007).

Conversely, empirical evidence from PPT projects in Africa, Lao and Cambodia (and from other cases as well) has indicated that participation in tourism is a good way to escape from poverty (WTO, 2006; Cambodia Development Resource Institute, 2007). Tourism undoubtedly has a role to play in the global fight against poverty but this will vary in its extent and configuration from place to place (WTO, 2006).

The thesis focuses on the Cai Rang floating market and is based on interviews with a range of stakeholders associated with or linked to the market. The review of the literature revealed that markets are a site where tourism can have a clear and direct impact on the lives of the poor, and can also indirectly impact suppliers to the market. Markets are also critical reflectors of local culture, identity and sense of place and therefore offer considerable potential for tapping into more ‘interactive’ (and hopefully higher-spending) tourists who are seeking an authentic local experience. The market case-study was also chosen as it represents an example from which other localities in Vietnam can gain some insights.

The researcher faced a number of challenges that have led to limitations in the thesis. It was a challenge to access actual and accurate tourism research figures. The tourism data provided by the local government was based on incomplete information submitted by local hotels and restaurants or, in some cases, was simply estimates. A further limitation of this study was it could not indicate the proportion of income that was gained from tourists. People’s lack of willingness to discuss income-related questions is not surprising but the lack of co-operation in this respect was unexpected. Nevertheless, the semi-structured stallholder interviews have allowed the researcher to gain important insights into the limited awareness that people have of tourism, and the relatively minor role that tourism currently plays in the economic lives of many at the market. Time and accessibility issues limited the number of interviews with tourism operators, government officials and professionals, but nevertheless there was an opportunity to gain some insights from these stakeholders.

## **6.1 Key Findings**

This research finds that although stallholders on the Cai Rang floating market are not considered to be ‘poor’ by a number of standards, they do have characteristics of the poor such as unstable incomes, limited income-earning options, lack of access to education, lack of shelter, limited safe drinking water and sanitation, vulnerability, powerlessness and a lack of voice (Cattarinich, 2001; Spenceley & Goodwin, 2007). Their businesses are predominantly small and generate a mixture of primary and secondary income streams. They are owner-operated, and many rely on family members for support and extra staffing.

The small size of their businesses means stallholders can be flexible about their operating hours and the types of products they sell. Eighteen of the 31 interviewed stallholders come to the Cai Rang floating market to sell products every day, and the rest sell on the floating market for four or five days or until their products are sold out. Most of stallholders sell seasonal fruits and vegetables year round while some sell food and drink. The majority of products sold at the market are produced locally.

Many stallholders on the Cai Rang floating market have significant social ties to Can Tho city, with the majority being long-term residents. They continue to represent an authentic taste of the Mekong Delta region's culture, particularly Can Tho city. This can potentially have positive implications for the provision of authentic tourism experiences embedded in the local natural environment, culture and society. However, none of the interviewed stallholders considered themselves as working in a tourism-related business. They were unable to give an accurate picture of what proportion of their customers are tourists, or how much they earn from selling products to tourists. Although stallholders do not aim to attract tourists to their stalls, the majority of them like to trade with tourists.

The research shows that despite considerable numbers of tourists coming to visit the unique cultural product that is Cai Rang floating market, tourism does not bring much revenue to the local people or the local government. As a result, local authorities do not have plans to develop the floating market into more of a tourist product. The findings of this study, however, show that other stakeholders believe there is potential to develop the Cai Rang floating market further, especially as a tourism resource. However, the market also faces pressure from the growing number of people using road transport and the development of roadside markets. It may be that an increase in tourist numbers, and subsequent income from these visitors, could offset some loss of local revenue to roadside markets.

The research results suggest that Can Tho city needs to find unique tourism products with rare qualities in order to attract more tourists and gain more tourism benefits for local communities. Local communities also need to become more involved in tourism activities. Can Tho city could learn from successful tourism development

cases in other countries. However, it should not copy these — Can Tho must develop tourism based on its own unique attractions, such as the Cai Rang floating market.

The study demonstrates that there appears to be a lack of co-ordination between government departments and other tourism stakeholders, especially with local communities. Poverty reduction is the responsibility of the Labour, War Invalid and Society Department. The Culture, Sport and Tourism Department does not have any strategy to exploit the potential of tourism as a tool for eliminating poverty. The pro-poor tourism approach is relatively new in Vietnam, and was not well understood by the local tourism officer in Can Tho city. In addition, the research reveals that local market participants are not very knowledgeable about the tourism industry or aware of its benefits. The study also confirms that some local government staff do not appear to place great value on local participation in the tourism-development process.

To sum up, the findings of this study offer some explanations for the limited links currently existing between tourism and poverty alleviation in the Cai Rang floating market. These explanations include lack of appropriate skills and only basic involvement in tourism by local people, low financial capacity, lack of awareness of tourism benefits and tourist demand by local stallholders, and officials. Furthermore, among other key shortcomings resulting in the under-performance of tourism as a potential poverty alleviator are duplicate tourism products, inappropriate tourism development plans and lack of local participation in tourism development strategies as well as weak linkages between the tourism and non-tourism economic sectors and the absence of appropriate so-called enabling policies.

This study suggests that it is possible to adapt tourism to make it more pro-poor in the case of Cai Rang floating market. Certainly it is possible to include poor stallholders in the provision of tourism commodities such as vegetables, meat, eggs, fruit, honey, handicrafts and so on. It is also possible to involve them in cultural shows, floating market tours and in unskilled casual labour; for example, as boatmen. To better achieve poverty alleviation through tourism, it will be necessary to both increase awareness and improve the attitudes of all tourism stakeholders towards PPT practices. The emphasis is on the commitment and ability of the government to

harness tourism and use broader public policy to redistribute its benefits. Without policy-level changes, practical pro-poor tourism actions will bring only limited benefits to the market. Similarly, changes in policy alone are likely to be ineffective without practical action on the ground.

In Can Tho city, efforts need to be focused on ‘the poor’ at the destination, in order to raise their capacity to provide the services and products required by the tourism industry. The secret of pro-poor tourism is to develop local quality products. In addition, local communities need to train and upgrade their skills so that they can market themselves to tourists and participate in tourism development strategies. Furthermore, there needs to be co-ordination between tourism stakeholders as well as between the tourism and non-tourism sectors.

## **6.2 Future Research**

This thesis provides a baseline set of information that gives preliminary perspectives on the links between tourism and poverty alleviation at the Cai Rang floating market. This was a small study of a particular case study . Logistical constraints mean that it is only a start in terms of potential PPT research at the Cai Rang floating market, in particular, and in Can Tho city, in general. My hope is that I may be able to pursue further research in this area and that others may also begin work in this important area — including local government. Some key areas for future research development could be:

- Research into how to spread awareness and change the attitudes of local authorities and communities towards the benefits of tourism and its role in poverty reduction in order to be able to maximise its benefits for locals.
- Identification of programmes related to PPT mentoring and trailing of selected methods in the city. From this, a mentor system for PPT could be developed, upskilling the poor so they can take up opportunities to be involved in tourism.

- Research on the private sector is critically needed. The private sector is fundamentally concerned with customers and profits and, to a large extent, its engagement in PPT is driven by commercial opportunity, not by a sense of ‘helping the poor’ (Ashley & Jones, 2004). So a question that needs close attention in the future is: How can impoverished destinations create an attractive investment environment to motivate the private sector to participate in PPT development?
- There is also a crucial need to understand and address the concerns of tourists interested in philanthropy, especially the barriers that limit their opportunity to pursue philanthropic behaviours, for example safety and security.
- The use of a questionnaire survey with tourists about their attitudes towards PPT and tourism development at Cai Rang floating market, Can Tho city would be an area for future research. The results would provide an additional demand perspective to the supply-side dimensions that have been discussed in this thesis.
- There is great potential to conduct further research in the area of value chain analysis; in particular, it would be good to explore the use of participatory VCA (Jamieson et al., 2004).

This thesis argues that it is potentially possible to adapt tourism to make it more focused on the poor stallholders at Cai Rang floating market, but so far there are few examples to demonstrate this. The extent to which tourism can be made pro-poor at Cai Rang cannot be ascertained from this initial research. However, there are positive indications that participation in tourism is a good way to escape poverty. Certainly it is possible to involve poor stallholders in provision of tourism commodities such as vegetables, meat, eggs, fruit and honey or in participating in cultural shows and village tours. It is definitely worth the effort of focusing on pro-poor tourism in preference to relying simply on ‘trickle down’ from existing tour companies and their activities.

Without policy-level changes, practical pro-poor tourism action at the Cai Rang floating market, and more generally in Can Tho city, will have limited impact. Similarly, changes in policy alone are likely to be ineffective without practical action ‘on the ground’. To start with, efforts need to be focused on ‘the poor’ at the Cai Rang floating market, in order to raise their capacity to provide the services and products required by the tourism industry. In addition, co-operation between national ministries, local government departments, the private sector and local communities is very important in the implementation of the PPT approach at the Cai Rang floating market.

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## **Appendix A: Interview Participant Information Sheet**

### **Participant Information Sheet**



**Date Information Sheet Produced:** 20/11/2009

#### **Project Title**

The Cai Rang Floating Market, Vietnam – Towards Pro-Poor Tourism?

#### **An Invitation**

I am a Master student at Auckland University of Technology. I am doing this research as part of my Master thesis. As a local market stallholder, local tourism official and local government representative, you are a very important part of Can Tho city economy and poverty reduction. You are invited to participate in this research. Participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

#### **What is the purpose of this research?**

The main aims of the research project are: to gain a clearer picture of stallholder perceptions of the market and pro-poor tourism; to provide recommendations for local tourism officials, policy makers and local communities on future opportunities to develop the market as a tourism product and tool for poverty alleviation; and to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on pro-poor tourism and community development.

This research is being conducted as part of my Masters of Tourism Studies at Auckland University of Technology.

#### **How was I chosen for this invitation?**

As a local stallholder, local officials who may involve in tourism industry, you are invited to participate in this research. You are purposefully selected in order to include a range of diverse characteristics including: male and female, young, middle age and old, education and income levels. You have been living and working in this region for long time so you must have a deep knowledge about this market and local poverty alleviation strategies.

**What will happen in this research?**

This part of the research involves interviews with market stallholders and local officials.

**What are the discomforts and risks?**

You may feel you are not an expert on some of the areas discussed.

**How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

All questions are optional, and you may choose not to answer some questions. There are no right or wrong answers. Any information you provide will be interesting.

**What are the benefits?**

This research will result in a better understanding of the issues which face the stallholders on the floating market as barriers for them to involve in tourism industry and their attitude about pro-poor tourism. It will offer insights into how Can Tho city's strategies can address the needs of local poor community, remove any barriers and open up access for the poor to the tourism sector, thereby providing them with a vital source of income. Through this research, the participants will have their voices to be listened.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

All answers are confidential and your answers can in no way be linked to your personal details. The results will be presented in aggregate and no individual will be identified in any of the publications relating to this research.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

This interview will take approximately half an hour.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

The researcher will contact you in the next week to see if you would like to be interviewed, and if so, to make an appointment to visit you at a place and time that suits you. You will have time to consider the invitation before accepting.

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**

To participate in this research, simply confirm an appointment time when I contact you next week by face to face or via telephone. You will need to sign a Consent Form prior participate in the interview.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

A summarised copy of the results of this research will be available in the local government office late year 2010.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Simon Milne, email: [simon.milne@aut.ac.nz](mailto:simon.milne@aut.ac.nz), phone (64) 9 921 9245.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTECH, Madeline Banda, [madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz](mailto:madeline.banda@aut.ac.nz) , (64) 9 921 9999 ext 8044.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?*****Researcher Contact Details:***

Bich Tram Huynh, email: [bichuy17@aut.ac.nz](mailto:bichuy17@aut.ac.nz)

***Project Supervisor Contact Details:***

Simon Milne, email: [simon.milne@aut.ac.nz](mailto:simon.milne@aut.ac.nz), phone (64) 9 921 9245.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 15 October 2009, AUTECH Reference number 09/208.

## Appendix B: Interview Question Guidelines

### Example of Indicative Interview Questions



#### *Indicative interview questions for local officials*

1. How long have you been working in this organisation?
2. What is your highest qualification?
3. Do the stallholders have to register in order to sell products on the floating market?
4. Do the stallholders have to pay tax or rent while they sell products on the floating market?
5. What are the safety requirements for stallholders to sell products on the floating market? (e.g. driving license, boat registrations, life jackets)
6. Do locals have to register their boats that are used for carrying tourists with local authorities?
7. What do you know about tourism industry on the Cai Rang floating market?
8. What are the positive and negative impacts of tourism on the Cai Rang floating market?
9. What are the strategies to attract more tourists to the floating market?
10. What are the barriers for developing the floating market as a tourist product?
11. How to overcome those barriers?
12. What do you think about tourism can potentially help to reduce poverty in this city?
13. What are the strategies of Can Tho city to support poor local stallholders?
14. What age group do you fall into?
  - ☐ 20 – 39
  - ☐ 40 – 59
  - ☐ 60 and over
15. Are you: ☐ Male ☐ Female

*Indicative interview questions for stallholders*

1. Do you live in Can Tho city ? or elsewhere
2. How long have you lived (in Can Tho city)? \_\_\_\_\_ years
3. What is your highest qualification?
4. What is your main job?
5. Tell me a little about jobs you have done before this one (if any)
6. How long have you been a stallholder in this floating market?
7. How frequently do you come to the market to sell products?
8. Who else works with you at the market (paid/non-paid)
9. What kind of products are you selling?
10. Where are the products produced? (i.e. do they purchase supplies/goods from local sources)
11. How much do you earn on a busy/quiet/average day from sales of products?
12. What proportion of your tourist customers are from overseas?  
\_\_\_\_\_ %                      Not Sure
13. What percentage of your income is earned from foreign tourists? \_\_\_\_\_ %
14. What do you think about doing business with foreign tourists?
15. What are the barriers in doing business with foreign tourists?
16. What are your strategies to attract foreign tourists?
17. How important is tourism to your economic well-being.
18. Do you know about the Can Tho city Tourism Strategy?
19. If yes – what can you tell me about the strategy?
20. Did you have any input into the development of the Can Tho city Tourism Strategy? (please explain
21. What age group do you fall into?  
☐ 20 – 39  
☐ 40 – 59  
☐ 60 and over
22. Are you: ☐ Male                      ☐ Female

## Appendix C: Interview Consent to Participate Form

### Consent Form



*Project title: The Cai Rang Floating Market, Vietnam – Towards Pro-Poor Tourism?*

*Project Supervisor: Simon Milne*

*Researcher: Bich Tram Huynh*

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 20/11/2009.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one):  
Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

.....

Participant's name:

.....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Date:

## Appendix D: Ethics Approval

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 15 October 2009, AUTECH Reference number 09/208.

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*



# MEMORANDUM

*Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTECH)*

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To: Simon Milne

From: **Madeline Banda** Executive Secretary, AUTECH

Date: 15 October 2009

Subject: Ethics Application Number 09/208 **Understanding and enhancing the economic yield of the Cai Rang Floating Market - Towards pro-poor tourism?**

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Dear Simon

Thank you for providing written evidence as requested. I am pleased to advise that it satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTECH) at their meeting on 14 September 2009 and that I have approved your ethics application. This delegated approval is made in accordance with section 5.3.2.3 of AUTECH's *Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures* and is subject to endorsement at AUTECH's meeting on 9 November 2009.

Your ethics application is approved for a period of three years until 15 October 2012. I advise that as part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTECH:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-ethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 15 October 2012;



- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-ethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 15 October 2012 or on completion of the project, whichever comes sooner;

It is a condition of approval that AUTECH is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTECH approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are reminded that, as applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

Please note that AUTECH grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to make the arrangements necessary to obtain this. Also, if your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply within that jurisdiction.

When communicating with us about this application, we ask that you use the application number and study title to enable us to provide you with prompt service. Should you have any further enquiries regarding this matter, you are welcome to contact Charles Ginter, Ethics Coordinator, by email at [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz) or by telephone on 921 9999 at extension 8860.

On behalf of the AUTECH and myself, I wish you success with your research and look forward to reading about it in your reports.

Yours sincerely



Madeline Banda

**Executive Secretary**

**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**