

A woman wearing a colorful, patterned headscarf and traditional dark clothing with intricate patterns is kneeling in a field, working with plants. She is wearing large, circular earrings and has a basket next to her. The background shows terraced hills and lush greenery under a bright sky.

# **TRANSMODERN RESPONSIBLE TOURISM AND CULTURAL CREATIVES**

**An Exploratory Study on Tourists Visiting the ‘Roads Less Travelled’  
in Northern Vietnam.**

**Ellen Ruiter**



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*The picture on the front page is made by the author of this research during a trekking in Sa Pa, Vietnam.*

## **Abstract**

This study seeks to contribute to the debate on transmodern tourism as a global phenomenon, given that it is claimed that transmodern worldviews find their expression through the Cultural Creatives or transmodern subculture. This thesis examines tourists travelling through the Northern provinces of Vietnam (with a particular focus on the North-West) in order to identify whether they fit into the emerging Cultural Creatives subculture with emphasis on the concept of responsible tourism. This research applies a mixed method approach in which the quantitative and qualitative results compare the lifestyles, motivations and values of the Cultural Creatives to the tourists travelling through the North of Vietnam. The results of this study show that there are signs that a part of the travellers in North Vietnam who participated in the research fit in the emerging subculture of the Cultural Creatives and have a transmodern line of thought. This research demonstrate that a lot of the respondents think responsible tourism is important and they are conscious of their influence in visited destinations. In order to shape a better world for tomorrow, Cultural Creatives can put emphasis on responsible tourism by being the ones who produce and consume this form of tourism. Further research on this topic could be done by taking on the perspectives of tourists in other geographic areas in the world and also by focusing on non-Western tourists. The local communities could also be considered as they have an important share in responsible tourism.

**Key words:** Transmodernity, Cultural Creatives, Responsible Tourism, North West Vietnam, Lifestyles, Motivations, Values, SNV.

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*“Culture is made in reframing old problems and familiar ideas into whole new forms, new poetry, and new image; and in developing a new sense of identity for those who join the movement for cultural change”*  
(Ray and Anderson, 2000:128).

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# 1. Introduction

This chapter will provide a background of the research by introducing the most important theoretical concepts; identifying the knowledge gap; providing the research objective and research questions. In addition this chapter will go into the type of study and the relevance of the study. At the end of the chapter an outline of the thesis is given.

## 1.1 Background

Tourism and tourists are changing. There is an increasing recognition of the significant shift away from the predominance of the traditional sun, sand and sea holiday towards more experiential vacations. Tourists are seeking holidays which provide them with more than two weeks on the beach and a tan (Goodwin and Francis, 2003).

In this context, the concept of responsible tourism has taken centre stage in the tourism world (Swarbrooke, 1999). A large debate, regarding the success of responsible tourism, is going on amongst scholars in tourism research. In the past the scholars predominantly focused on the production side of tourism rather than the consumption side (Mowforth and Munt, 2003). This research will focus on the consumption side of tourism. Responsible tourism is a mirror of society, not only are people trying to travel more responsible they have embedded it through their whole life (Ray and Anderson, 2000).

Chambers (2008) explains about the trendsetters for tourism in the near future. They are likely to be well educated and have a fair understanding of the consequences of their travelling. Research by Tearfund (a UK development agency) executed in the UK, reveals that tourists do not want to enjoy themselves at the cost of local communities. They are willing to travel with tour operators who offer responsible tourism packages (Tearfund, 2002). This shows that there is a cultural transformation going on amongst tourists at a world level.

This shift in tourism consumption is reflective of broader cultural changes. In 2000, Ray and Anderson published the book: *'The Cultural Creatives, How 50 Million People are changing the World'*. They have studied over 100,000 Americans through surveys and in-depth interviews over a period of 13 years. Since the 1960s, 26 percent of the adults in the United States, 50 million people, have made a comprehensive shift in their worldview, values, and ways of life, their culture, in short. According to Ray and Anderson (2000), Cultural Creatives care about ecological

issues and have a high level of planetary consciousness. In this study the life styles, motivations and values of the Cultural Creatives will be involved. They represent an emerging global subculture and looking at the world through the transmodern worldview. Transmodern tourism, as argued by Ateljevic (2009), is one of the agents through which this shift in global consciousness is exhibited. The Cultural Creatives are interested in responsible tourism and can be placed within a transmodern line of thought.

Currently there is a trend occurring in tourism literature which can be called a paradigm shift. Ateljevic (2009) refers to this paradigm shift with the transmodernity theory. She explains that the transmodern paradigm shift points to the intuitive aspirations for inclusivity, diversity, partnership, sacredness, and quality of life, deep play, sustainability, universal human rights, the right of nature and peace on earth. This paradigm shift is furthermore epistemological and political. The Cultural Creatives show that this shift is really going on in the world. Ateljevic (2009) argues that tourism is actually one of the key indicators that manifest the global shift in human consciousness. Actually, all our 'special interest tourism' clearly reveals the changing mindset of the ever-growing (international and domestic) tourism populations. One of the key-values of transmodernity is the sustainability and interconnectedness of human beings with nature and other cultures which has interesting bearings on sustainable tourism and nature based tourism (Gelter, 2008). It opposes the endless economic progress and obsession with material wealth and instead promotes the concept of the quality of life as a measure of progress.

Because this concept is rather new in tourism studies not much empirical research has been conducted. Groenendaal (2009) is one of the few who made an attempt to make connections within the concept. She researched the link between the transmodernity theory and tourism entrepreneurship in France. She used the concept of Cultural Creatives, which is also embedded in this research. The results of her research show that there is evidence that micro scale tourism entrepreneurs, who conceptualise their enterprise with respect to personal and transmodern values rather than economic values, proposes a platform for like-minded people to interconnect. However, with reference to tourism as a platform for the manifest of shifts in human consciousness, she identifies the need for further research, taking on the perspectives of tourists and local communities (Groenendaal, 2009).

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Currently it accounts for 760 million people. The World Tourism Organisation predicts that in 2020, 1.6 billion will travel

abroad every year (Tearfund, 2002). Especially in low income countries like Vietnam, tourism can be a viable option for economic growth if executed in the right way. Unsustainable tourism can impact the health and well-being of the environment and community (Dodds and Joppe, 2005).

This study will make an attempt to create a connection between transmodernity and the Cultural Creatives subculture by linking it to the lifestyles, motivations and values of tourists using a case study in the Northern part of Vietnam. Vietnam is one of the fastest growing tourism markets in the world, with an annual average growth of 8.7% in 2007. This growing industry can be an entry point for general poverty reduction through the involvement of local communities in tourism services. The Northern Highlands is one of the poorest areas of Vietnam and includes the three poorest provinces in the country and another three provinces that are ranked 5th, 7th and 8th in terms of poverty levels. Tourism is increasingly being explored as an important source to differentiate income by the government (SNV concept note, 2009).

In addition this thesis will provide a case study to SNVs responsible tourism program in Northern Vietnam by researching the profile of the tourists visiting the area. It explores the lifestyles, motivations and values of tourists visiting the destinations in Northern Vietnam, in order to reveal/explore if those tourists manifest the transmodern idea of Cultural Creatives. The transmodern worldview, which contrives the foundation of transmodern tourism, determines the line of thinking throughout the study.

## **1.2 Gap identification**

The focus of my research will be on the motivations, lifestyles and values of the tourists who will visit Northern Vietnam with a particular focus on the North-West area. Connected with the theory of transmodernity and the Cultural Creatives this identifies the following knowledge gap:

*‘Broadening the perspective of responsible tourism by placing it into the context of the cultural transformation of tourists towards transmodernity including the profile of the Cultural Creatives’.*

This can be identified as a problem because the transmodern and Cultural Creative theory need more practical evidence that this shift is actually happening in the world. By placing it in the context of responsible tourism it can furthermore contribute to this debate.

### **1.3 Research objective**

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the lifestyles, motivations and values of the tourists exploring the Northern provinces of Vietnam, in order to identify whether a segment of this tourists reveal a transmodern line of thought, and thus fit into the emerging Cultural Creatives subculture.

### **1.4 Research questions**

To meet the research objective and fill in the knowledge gap the following research questions are formulated:

1. What are life style characteristics of tourists visiting the Northern provinces of Vietnam?
2. Which motivations and personal values form the basis for tourists visiting the Northern provinces of Vietnam?
3. What are the ideas of the tourists concerning responsible tourism?
4. What are similarities in lifestyles, motivations and values of tourists visiting the Northern provinces of Vietnam and the Cultural Creatives?
5. Does the outcome of this study support a transmodern line of thought?

### **1.5 Type of study**

This particular research suits the standards of an exploratory kind of research. The type of approach, allowing the subjects of study to give meaning to their situation, is commonly referred to as an interpretive approach. The interpretive approach generally uses qualitative and quantitative or mixed-method research techniques and provides limited quantitative and a mainly qualitative insight into a phenomenon, this research is based on a mixed method approach. The main character of my research will focus on the case study approach, with Northern Vietnam as the case. This exploratory study is based on empirical data that will be collected in order to be able to explore the objective of the study. The collected data exist of a questionnaire and in-depth (tourists and stakeholder) interviews. The literature review is the theoretical section of this study.

### **1.6 Relevance of the study**

#### *1.6.1 Social relevance*

The Northern part of Vietnam is one of the poorest areas of the country. The Northern Uplands, North Central and the Central Highlands are the three poorest regions in Vietnam, having both the highest incidences of poverty and the deepest poverty, these measurements of poverty are

measuring a minimum level of expenditure required to satisfy basic nutritional and other needs (for example, housing, clothing etc) (Vietnam poverty analysis, 2002). Ethnic minorities belong to the poorest people in the country, who live mostly in the Northern area. Ethnic minorities make up 14 percent of the Vietnamese population but account for 29 percent of poor people in Vietnam (Vietnam poverty analysis, 2002). In some areas of Vietnam responsible tourism projects are initiated and the poverty rate has declined. Responsible tourism has the potential to lift people out of poverty (Ashley and Roe, 2002). As the UNWTO (2009) and Torres and Momsen (2004) state, the tourism industry has the potential to generate foreign exchange earnings, attract international investment, increase tax revenues and create new jobs, if executed in the right way. Developing responsible tourism can have different benefits, e.g. it provides opportunities for selling additional goods and services and it is an important opportunity to diversify local economies. It employs a high proportion of women and values natural resources and culture (Ashley *et al.*, 2000).

This thesis is a case study to the SNV responsible tourism program of Northern Vietnam by researching the profile of the tourists visiting the area. If there is a better understanding of the tourists, tourism developers (such as SNV, provincial government and tour operators) can anticipate on this and support development which is actually market-led. Poverty in North Vietnam will only reduce when tourism is developed in a responsible way and involves both the perceptions of the host community and the tourists. Some topics (information sources, travel patterns, overall experience) which have been integrated in the questionnaires and in-depth interviews will be used for SNV purposes only. They will not be taken into consideration for this research.

### *1.6.2 Theoretical relevance*

This research focuses on the theory of transmodernity in relation to the emerging Cultural Creatives subculture. It critically analyses the arguments of responsible tourism (as described in chapter 2) and the image which is given in literature towards the new tourists. The research will identify if the transmodern paradigm shift is occurring among tourists who visit the Northern provinces of Vietnam by identifying which persons among them fit into the profile of the Cultural Creatives, and particularly if these 'new' tourists (who fit into the Cultural Creatives profile) would follow, or be interested in following, the roads less travelled (as compared to other tourists, who choose 'only' the well-established destinations like Sa Pa). Transmodernity is a relatively

new term in literature and there is not much empirical research executed on this topic using a case study, it gives a local and global perspective on the shift in human consciousness.

### *1.6.3 Policy relevance*

This research will have relevance to SNV and partner organisations because it will create a profile of the tourist visiting the area of North Vietnam, and particularly on their perceptions of the destinations in Northern Vietnam. Other relevant information for SNV will be the travel patterns of the tourists, the information sources used and the overall satisfaction with the experience, which will not been taken into consideration for this research. The knowledge of the tourist perceptions will provide input to SNV, the tourism stakeholders and the provincial governments in their work on a tourism development plan for the area of North Vietnam.

### **1.7 Outline of the thesis**

This paragraph will generally reveal the outline of the thesis and the structure of the following chapters. The second chapter contains a theoretical framework which will explain the different theoretical concept used in this study. The third chapter contains the methodology explaining the process of the research and the fieldwork in the North of Vietnam. Chapter 4 consists of the empirical context and will present the results of the stakeholder interviews. Chapter 5 will reveal the results of the quantitative and qualitative data and link this to the most important theoretical concepts. The final chapter is the conclusion which contains the general conclusions and the recommendations for further research.



## **2. Theoretical framework**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter will provide a literature review of the different theoretical concepts. An in-depth literature study is necessary to get familiar with the different concepts connected to the topic of transmodern responsible tourism. First it will discuss the concept of responsible tourism considering the debate on the definition and the different terminology used in tourism studies. Second the 'new tourists' are highlighted by exploring who these tourists are and how they are described in literature by different scholars. Third the transmodernity theory will be described and explained. The concept will be approached by looking through the lenses of different scholars. The lifestyles, motivations and values of the Cultural Creatives will be linked towards the transmodernity theory and discussed in detail at the end of the chapter.

### **2.2 Responsible tourism**

Tourism is estimated to comprise US\$5,890 billion or 9.9% of the total world GDP, employing more than 22 million people in 2008 (UNWTO, 2009). In recent years tourism has been increasingly recognised for its potential to contribute to poverty reduction. However, if not managed properly, tourism can have significant negative impacts on the environment and host communities (SNV, 2009). Tourism is especially important for developing economies, like Vietnam, which receive about 30 percent of the global tourism expenditure. The sector is thus an important driver of growth and prosperity and, particularly within developing countries, it can play a leading role in poverty reduction (Blanke and Cheisa, 2009).

While representing only 5% to 10% of the overall travel market, responsible tourism is currently one of the most popular and fastest growing tourism markets (Vincent and Thomson, 2002). The demand for responsible tourism has been estimated at 5% of the overall tourism market. Up to 30% of the tourists are interested in responsible tourism but not willing to pay more money for these holidays (UNWTO, 2009). Because there is more awareness for responsible issues this number is expected to increase in the next years (Dodds and Joppe, 2005). According to Chris Thompson, sustainability manager of Travelife, at least 2/3 of tourists walking into a UK travel agency are looking for authentic experiences and giving something back to the local community (SNV documentary, 2009).

Since the mid 1990s there has been a shift towards defining economic performance in terms of the “triple bottom line” – growth that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. Responsible tourism addresses this shift by giving equal weight to the economy, society and the environment – the three pillars of sustainable development. Although different scholars have made an attempt, there is no widely accepted definition of responsible tourism. This can lead to confusion of what the term exactly means. One definition stated by the UNWTO (2009) is generally influential.

According to the UNWTO (2009), responsible tourism means: *“Development which meets the needs of present tourists and hosts while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, and biological diversity and life support systems”*. Another definition stated by Nielsen (2010) gives an explanation of how responsible travel is perceived in Vietnam. *“Responsible travel can be defined as tourism that is respectful of the natural and cultural environment and which contributes in an ethical manner to local economic development”* .

According to Sirakaya, Sasidharan, and Sonmez (1999), who performed a content analysis on 25 of the most widely accepted responsible tourism definitions, responsible tourism is operationally characterised as a form of tourism activities and development that produces (1) a minimal negative impact on the host environment, (2) an evolving commitment to environmental protection and conservation of resources, (3) a generation of financial resources to support and sustain ecological and socio-cultural resources, (4) an active involvement and cooperation of local residents as well as tourists in enhancing the environment, and (5) economic and social benefits to the host community. By incorporating these concepts and activities into the framework of any definition of responsible tourism, a clearer understanding of what responsible tourism is and produces emerges.

There are a lot of words which are often deemed as acronyms for responsible tourism. Words as; sustainable tourism, ecotourism, alternative tourism, environmental friendly tourism, soft tourism and minimum impact tourism (Swarbrooke, 1999). The tourism terms can be divided into two categories. The ones that define market (or product) segments, are based on motivations, and they describe the type of tourism or traveler, for example nature, adventure and cultural tourism. The

other are the ones that define the impact of tourism and are ethical based, for example ecotourism, sustainable tourism and responsible tourism (SNV, 2009).

SNV conducted a research towards 107 outbound tour operator websites. The research showed that the most frequent terminology used, on English sites, is ‘responsible’ used by 32.7% of the tour operators, followed by ‘sustainable’ used by 7.5% ‘ecological/ecotourism’ by 5.6% and ‘ethical’ and ‘fair trade’ terminology used by 3.7% of the tour operators (SNV, 2009). Table 2.1 provides an overview of the different definitions given to the typology of tourism.

**Table 2.1: Typology of Tourism - Definitions** (Chafe, 2005)

Category 1	Market Segments
<b>Tourism</b>	Travel for recreational, leisure, or business purposes.
<b>Mass tourism</b>	Providing leisure activities to large numbers of people at the same time. Coastal resorts and cruises are popular forms of mass tourism.
<b>Nature-based tourism</b>	Any form of tourism that relies primarily on the natural environment for its attractions or settings.
<b>Adventure tourism</b>	A form of nature – based tourism that incorporates an element of risk, higher levels of physical exertion, and often the need for specialised skills.
<b>Urban tourism</b>	The consumption of city spectacles (such as architecture, monuments, and parks) and cultural amenities (such as museums, restaurants, and performances) by visitors.
Category 2	Ethical based Terms
<b>Ecotourism</b>	Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people.
<b>Geo tourism</b>	Tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place-its environment, heritage, aesthetics, and culture and the well-being of its residents.
<b>Pro-poor tourism</b>	Tourism that results in increased net benefit for the poor people.
<b>Responsible tourism</b>	Tourism that maximises the benefits to local communities, minimises negative social or environmental impacts, and helps local people conserve fragile cultures and habitats or species.

<b>Sustainable Tourism</b>	Tourism that meets the needs of present tourist and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future.
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In this research the term of responsible tourism will be used throughout the whole study, because this is the term used by SNV Asia, is used mostly on English tour operator websites (SNV research) and it gives more unity for the overall picture of the research.

The debate on responsible tourism is going on for several decades already. In 1987 Krippendorf placed his argument for responsible tourism in the context of Maslow’s pyramid of needs arguing that we would increasingly see ‘emancipated tourists’, and that once their needs for physical recreation (sleeping, eating and drinking) were satisfied tourists would seek ‘emotional recreation’, pursuing activities and experiences which were not available to them in everyday life. Tourists would increasingly seek ‘the satisfaction of social needs: contact with other people and self-realisation through creative activities, knowledge and exploration’. He envisaged a movement towards a new holidaymaker, ‘an independent and emancipated tourist, a critical consumer not only at home but also when travelling’ (Goodwin and Frances, 2003). Responsible tourism is used as an implicit contrast with regular, mass tourism. The executive director of the International Ecotourism Society said that responsible (eco) tourism is ‘*a profound, indeed revolutionary, concept, challenging the mass tourism industry and travel as we’ve known it*’ (Honey, 2003).

Yet in the contrast to these positive accounts there is a lot of critique on the term of responsible tourism. Mowforth and Munt (2003) argue that more and more tourist facilities apply the label of responsible tourism to themselves, because of the positive and commercially valuable perception of the concept. This means that responsible tourism becomes a brand used to promote tourist destinations as a label for their tourism development policies, even if these products are not really ‘responsible’.

A critique which is often heard about tourism is that host communities are losing land, water and access to public places (Goodwin and Francis, 2003). Furthermore tourism has been associated with serious social abuses such as child sex tourism and the eviction of people from their land (Goodwin and Francis, 2003). There is a substantial body of work that points to the ways in which local populations can be dislocated and disadvantaged in the creation of responsible tourist destinations like parks and reserves (e.g. Akama *et al.*, 1996; Ghimire and Pimbert, 1997;

Hitchcock 1993 in Hitchcock *et al.* 1993; Neumann 1998; 2000, in Zerner 2000). Equally, there is substantial work on the ways in which local people can be led to staging authenticity in their dealings with tourists (e.g. Cohen, 1988; 2002; MacCannell, 1973) as well as on the local strains and disruptions that can be induced by catering to responsible tourists (e.g. Belsky, 1999; West and Carrier, 2004). Responsible tourism can help overcome many of the negative impacts associated with tourism development (Dodds and Joppe, 2005).

When is responsible tourism actually responsible? Although ecotourism is a form of environmental exploitation, one of its aims is environmental protection. Of course, exploitation and protection can be intertwined (Carrier and MacLeod, 2005). With this study I will try to contribute to the debate on responsible tourism by giving the perspectives of the tourists visiting destinations in Northern Vietnam, where responsible tourism is being developed. But who are these tourists? In the next session their image in literature is described.

### **2.3 New tourists**

As Crick (1989) argues, 'human beings', the tourists themselves, are only infrequently the object of consideration in much tourism research. Often tourists are only mentioned in responsible tourism literature as the cause of the 'problem', in terms of the environmental, economic and social impacts of their activities (Swarbrooke, 1999). By developing responsible tourism products more emphasis must be placed on the role and attitude of the tourist (Swarbrooke, 1999). When more knowledge is produced about the tourist, this could benefit the responsible tourism debate in a positive way because it will provide the tourism industry with a clear picture of the responsible tourists which can be embedded in their responsible tourism products.

Mowforth and Munt (2003) have a pessimistic view on the tourists. They mention that tourism is not only something to be enjoyed but it represents a strategy for building a reputation that can be converted into economic capital. In doing this they make a division between the eco-tourist and the ego-tourist, these often overlap and are both negative. The eco-tourist, also called "the new bourgeoisie", is defined as people that are located firmly within the service sector with jobs involving finance, marketing and purchasing. They can afford expensive holidays that are exclusive in terms of price of affordability and the numbers of tourists permitted: private game reserves with luxury accommodation and limited capacity. 'Eco-tourist' has a double meaning however, for not only does it signal an interest and focus on this type of tourist on the

'environment' (ecology), it also indicates the ability to pay the high prices that such holidays command (economic capital).

The ego-tourist, or new petit bourgeoisie, are not so economically well endowed and must seek out cultural capital in order to establish their social class identity. Ego-tourism is more characteristic of less formalised forms of travel, such as backpacking, overland trucking or small group travel, which often involve longer holiday overseas, especially in the Third World regions. Ultimately it is a competition for uniqueness with which ego-tourists engage. Individualism also underscores why ego-tourists feel they are free from the criticism leveled at much Third World tourism. Ego-tourists easily disaggregate their actions, they are individuals and their actions therefore have no significant impact. They refuse to see their part in a larger entity or mass (Mowforth and Munt, 2003). So this critique is dominantly negative, referring to the tourists as the bourgeoisie only traveling to benefit themselves.

There are also positive voices rising in the debate of the responsible tourist. According to Chambers (2008) the trendsetters for tourism in the near future are likely to be relatively well-educated elites who are familiar with travel and comfortable in culturally diverse situations. They will also have a fair understanding of the consequences associated with global economic development, and will better realise that their participation in tourism comes with a cost to the communities and environments through which they pass. They will see value in tourism experiences that support principles of environmental sustainability, heritage preservation and cultural diversity, and human equality. This generation of tourists will have greater choice of travel venues and access to considerably more information on which to base their travel plans, and they will be more likely to expect travel experiences that have breadth as well as depth and that provide opportunities for self-improvement as well as leisure and entertainment. Vincent and Thomson (2002) describe the responsible tourist as a professional couple who has higher than average income and education compared to other travelers. Carrier and MacLeod (2005) explain that responsible tourists are seen to be more likely than regular tourists to make use of locally owned accommodation and services, and consequently to benefit the local economy. Further, they are likely to pay user fees that support parks and other conservation projects.

Another profile of the responsible tourist is given by SNV, they found that these types of travelers actively plan their holiday, they seek interactive learning experiences and they travel with a purpose. They explain that the profiles of the responsible travelers from Europe and North-



America are similar in different ways: *“they tend to be well educated, include all age groups (with greater concentrations among youths and retirees), are equally divided between men and women, have higher than average amounts of disposable income, come mostly from urban areas, and travel beyond major cities”* (SNV, 2009: 37).

Attitudes are changing, more and more travelers would like to know how their travel affects local people. They want to behave appropriately and bring benefits to people in the destinations they visit. Travelers are also becoming more critical and aware. They do not want that the money they spend while on holiday is at someone else’s expense. Simon Webley, Research Director of the Institute of Business Ethics explains: *“International travel is one of the fastest growing industries, and it is making a growing contribution to international economic development. Many travelers and tourists like to feel that their visits, particularly to developing countries, make a contribution toward this. One way of ensuring this is to find out about the ethical policies of the organisations that provide travel services including those of the partners they use overseas. The more enquiries they receive, the more likely it is that the providers will make sure that their services come up to the highest social, environmental and ethical standards.”* (Tearfund, 2002:11).

A current development is that there is more emphasis on the positive side of responsible tourism and the tourists. Too much attention is paid towards the negative side of responsible tourism, it would be a good development to focus on the positive side and try to make a change. This feeling is shared by Ateljevic (2009) who expresses in her paper; *‘Transmodernity: Remaking Our (Tourism) World?’* the potential of transmodern tourism to help create a better world. This is coincided with a much bigger paradigm shift of values which is described in the following paragraph. Responsible tourism can not be achieved without the active support of tourists. That is why the focus of the responsible tourism debate must focus more on the tourists.

## **2.4 Transmodernity**

Ghisi (2008) describes transmodernity as *“the planetary vision in which humans are beginning to realise that we are all (including plants and animals) connected into one system, which makes us all interdependent, vulnerable and responsible for the Earth as an invisible living community.”* This means that people are more aware of their own life and feel that they need to live together with other cultures. It is also described as the return of values and critical analysis after a period of technology driven development. Transmodernity is linked to modernism and postmodernism. As Ateljevic (2009) points out, transmodernism is critical of modernism and postmodernism

while at the same time drawing elements from each. Ghisi (2008) implies that the concept of modernity is kept while at the same time we go beyond it.

The term modernity contains ambiguity that makes a precise definition difficult. Often it refers to the effects of the growing imposition of Western Christianity, secularism, and technology throughout the world (Olupona, 2004). Giddens (1990) describes modernity as the trend or modes of social life or organisation that emerged in Europe from the seventeenth century onwards, subsequently attaining worldwide influence. Additionally, modernity is associated with the phenomena of colonialism and neocolonialism. As Western nations began to explore and colonise the world, the severely affected the lives of indigenous people at all levels; social-economic, political, cultural, and religious.

In the 90-ties a shift occurred from modernism towards postmodernism. Postmodernist systems of knowledge are less authoritative, less conclusive, and more pluralised than modernist systems of knowledge (Bauman, 1987). Several tourism products are labelled as “post-modern tourism” such as the rise of small and specialised travel agencies, the growing attraction of nostalgia and “heritage tourism”, the flourishing of nature oriented tourism, and the increase of simulated tourism-related environments (Uriely, 1996). Added can be the boom in backpacking and New Age and spiritual tourism (Ateljevic & Hannam, 2008).

Gelter (2008) is giving another definition of transmodernity. He suggests that the new emerging paradigm is a mix on equal basis of rational and intuitive thinking. It is about spirituality, global consciousness, global diversity and interconnectedness, a shift in consumption, a social shift in values and global ecological awareness. To create more clearness about the concept, Ateljevic (2009) explains that transmodernity is about a joint effort of both men and women to fight for tomorrow’s better world by rejecting values of control and domination. It is also essentially post secular in a sense that it redefines a new relation between religions and politics in a way that re-enchants the world towards a new openness to spiritual guidance as a basis for ‘private’ behavior and ‘public’ policy, while rejecting religious divisions and dogmas.

But why is it called a paradigm shift? Reflectively, social scientists, economists, political activists, writers, spiritual leaders and many successful entrepreneurs argue that humanity needs (and is actually going through) a major global mind change and a paradigm shift (Ateljevic, 2009). Transmodernity opposes the endless economic progress and obsession with material wealth and

instead promotes the concept of the quality of life as a measure of progress. This can be linked towards tourism.

Ateljevic (2009) argues that tourism is actually one of the key indicators that manifest the global shift in human consciousness. Actually, all our 'special interest tourism' clearly reveals the changing mindset of the ever-growing (international and domestic) tourism populations. If the contemporary tourism phenomenon indicates the new step in development of human global consciousness, one can easily see the enormous political power of such shift in the public discourse of tourism. By researching the tourists visiting the North of Vietnam evidence of this theory can be collected.

The shift towards transmodernity can mean a lot to the travel industry. This becomes clear in the following quote by Silf (2006:178): *"To travel is to discover that human beings in other lands and cultures are also people with whom we can share our laughter and our tears, and that what we have in common is a great deal more than the sum of all our differences."* By conducting research in the Northern region in Vietnam an attempt can be made to contribute towards the shift in tourism, by researching the consciousness of the tourists who visits this region.

## **2.5 Cultural Creatives**

As mentioned in chapter 1, Ray and Anderson (2000) published the book: *'The Cultural Creatives, How 50 Million People are changing the World'*. They have studied over 100,000 Americans through surveys and in-depth interviews over a period of 13 years. Since the 1960s, 26 percent of the adults in the United States, 50 million people, have made a comprehensive shift in their worldview, values, and way of life, their culture, in short. According to Ray and Anderson, Cultural Creatives care about ecological issues and have a high level of planetary consciousness. The goal of the book is to provide a better understanding of the Cultural Creatives and explain what their existence may mean for the world. Ray (1996) distinguished three different streams of cultural meanings and worldviews: Heartlanders (or Traditionals), Modernists and Cultural Creatives. Ray underpins that Cultural Creatives are in fact transmodern thinkers and actors. The direct connection Ray identifies between the 'Cultural Creatives' and the 'Transmodern Stream' suggests a distinctive, new line of thought in comparison with the existing Traditional and Modern worldview. In the following paragraphs these worldviews will be explained.

### *Traditionals*

Traditionalism is a culture of memory (Ray and Anderson, 2000). The hopes of the traditionals are on the recovery of the small-town, religious America, a nostalgic image corresponding from the years from 1890 to 1930. Today these images are kept alive in small cities. Traditionals hate the lifestyles of the Moderns, for example the role of women in today's world. They want to go back to the time when society had a steady moral compass. The traditional stream encompasses strengths and weaknesses. The political strength is their shared beliefs, principles and values that claim a divine sanction, use of simple images and its nostalgic appeal to tradition. The weaknesses of the traditionals are the tendency to authoritarianism, triggered by ethnic and racial politics, and its use of the Bible as an explanation of all realities. Most people in this stream are less educated, have less skills in urban life and many of them are the elderly who remember a vanished world. Traditionals were the first counterculture to defect from Modernism, because they did not support what was going on in the big industrial cities (Ray and Anderson, 2000). The modernist stream is described in the following paragraph.

### *Moderns*

The Modern worldview emerged five hundred years ago in Europe. It has roots in European intellectualism and in U.S. urbanism and industrialism (Ray and Anderson, 2000). It invented our contemporary world, almost every place on the planet was shaped to meet the needs of the moderns. The modern culture is so strong because it is the dominant culture of the world and is able to set agendas, define the terms of discourse and dominate the mass media. Examples of Modern principles are the struggles for civil and women's rights. According to Ray and Anderson (2000) the modern culture can be subdivided in four groups; the business conservatives, the conventional moderns, the striving centre and the alienated moderns. Modernism has been a dominant paradigm for a long time, but it seems no longer capable of handling the problems of today's world (Ray and Anderson, 2000). A new culture is needed which can handle the complexities of contemporary world.

### *Cultural Creatives*

Rather than defining an old way of life, Cultural Creatives are using the old ways to create a new one. They are involved in the following themes; ecological and planetary perspectives, emphasis on relationships and women's point of view, commitment to spirituality and psychological development, disaffection with the large institutions of modern life, including both left and right in politics, and rejection of materialism and status display. The evidence of the emergence of this

new sub culture goes beyond the United States. Officials of the European Union, hearing of the numbers of Cultural Creatives in the United States, launched a related survey in each of their fifteen countries in September 1997. To their amazement, the evidence suggested that there are at least as many Cultural Creatives across Europe as in the United States.

Important for this research are the travel preferences of the Cultural Creatives. Ray and Anderson (2000) state: *“They define the leading edge of vacation travel that is exotic, adventuresome without (too much) danger, educational, experiential, authentic, altruistic and/or spiritual. They like tours of temples in India, tours to the back country where tourists don’t go, ecotourism, photo safaris, fantasy baseball camps, save-the-baby-seals vacations, help-rebuild-a-Mayan-village vacations. They don’t go for package tours, fancy resorts, or cruises”*. The destination of North Vietnam fits into this picture. This profile of travel preferences is the expression of the behaviors reflecting the Cultural Creatives values.

According to Ray and Anderson (2000), most of the Cultural Creatives think that their worldview, values, lifestyles, and goals for the future are shared by only a few. They have little notion that there are 50 million of them. They do not know that they have the potential to shape the life of twenty-first century America or the world. They have not yet formed a sense of ‘us’ as a collective identity; nor do they have a collective image of themselves. It is as they have had no mirror large and true enough to show them their own face. This study can help to clarify this collective image. The outcome of the study may deliver evidence that tourists visiting North Vietnam can be linked to the subculture of the Cultural Creatives.

## **2.6 Description of main concepts**

The three main topics of this research will be ‘Lifestyles’, ‘Motivations’ and ‘Values’. These concepts will be linked to the findings of this study. In this paragraph these three concepts will be introduced and they will be connected to the theory of the Cultural Creatives.

### *2.6.1 Lifestyles of the Cultural Creatives*

According to Ray and Anderson (2000: 34) *“Cultural Creatives are different in almost everything that concerns lifestyle: “the things they buy, the kind of stores and shopping experiences they choose, the media they listen to, the way their houses look inside and out, their demand for authenticity in their everyday lives, and the criteria by which they tell what’s important and what’s bogus”*.

The characteristics of the lifestyles of the Cultural Creatives can be subdivided in the following categories:

- Books and radio
- Arts and culture
- Stories, ‘whole process’, and systems
- Desire for authenticity
- Careful consumers
- Soft innovation
- The foodies
- Home
- Authentic styling in homes
- The nest
- Interior decoration
- Cars
- Vacation travel/responsible tourism
- Experiential consumers
- Holistic everything

This topic will be further elaborated upon in chapter 5: “The Cultural Creatives in Northern Vietnam”.

### *2.6.2 Motivations of the Cultural Creatives*

For the motivations of the Cultural Creatives the book “The Global Nomad” (2003) of Richards and Wilson will be used. This book will be used because the main topic is cultural change which is also one of the main topics in my research. It will be placed in a broader transmodern concept, by linking it to the Cultural Creatives motivations. So instead of using market based research by putting the tourists in different boxes (backpacker, traveller, tourist) it will look at their motivations in a broader context.

The basic motivations for travelling among the respondents of the research by Richards and Wilson (2003) are a mixture of exploration, excitement and relaxation. They state that motivations can be subdivided in the following topics (2003):



- Learning
- Self development
- Curiosity
- Novelty
- Relaxation

These topics will also be elaborated upon in chapter 5.

### *2.6.3 Values of the Cultural Creatives*

Cultural Creatives have changed their values and worldview. This paragraph will provide an overview of the values of the Cultural Creatives.

#### *Authenticity*

Authenticity means that your actions are consistent with what you believe and say (Ray and Anderson, 2000). Cultural Creatives emphasize on personal experiences, but they also like to see the big picture, often extending the whole planet. They are passionate about both, personal and the condition of the planet.

#### *Engaged action and whole process learning*

“*The kind of learning that Cultural Creatives like is intimate, engaged knowledge that is imbued with the rich, visceral, sensory stuff of life*” (Ray and Anderson, 2000:9). They like “whole process” action, where they can create something from the beginning, middle and end.

#### *Idealism and activism*

Cultural Creatives follow through on their values with personal action. Idealism and altruism are important values for them. According to the research findings of Ray and Anderson (2000) 75% of the Cultural Creatives are involved in volunteering, compared to 60% of the rest of Americans.

#### *Globalism and ecology*

Cultural Creatives are the people most concerned about the condition of the global ecology and the well-being of the people of the planet. They are the key opinion leaders in environmental concerns for ecology and for sustainability. “*Eighty-one percent of Cultural Creatives say that they are very or extremely concerned about “problems of the global environment: global warming, destruction of rain forests, destruction of species, loss of the ozone layer.”*” (Ray and Anderson, 2000:11).

### *Feminism*

60% of the Cultural Creatives are women. They see women's thinking as valid: "*feeling empathy and sympathy for others, taking the viewpoint of the one who speaks, seeing personal experiences and first-person stories as important ways of learning, and embracing an ethic of caring*" (Ray and Anderson, 2000: 12). 89% of the respondents of the research of Ray and Anderson (2000) mentioned that "the caring quality of our relationships with people" is very or extremely important to their lives.

### *Altruism, self-actualisation and spirituality*

Cultural Creatives have a well considered optimism about the future. They have strong beliefs in altruism, self-actualisation and spirituality. 91% of the respondents of the research of Ray and Anderson (2000) consider "helping other people" to be very or extremely important.

Above I summarised the values of the Cultural Creatives, but of course there are also values which the Cultural Creatives reject. This are: "*materialism, greed, me-firstism, status display, glaring social inequalities of race and class, society's failure to care adequately for elders, women and children, and the hedonism and cynicism that pass for realism in modern society*" (Ray and Anderson, 2000: 17). What they also reject is the intolerance and narrowness of the social conservatives and the Religious Rights. And they are critical towards big institutions like corporations and the government.

Followed on the change of values the Cultural Creatives is their change in worldview. Your worldview is according to Ray and Anderson (2000:17): "*the content of everything you believe is real- God, the economy, technology, the planet, how things work, how you should work and play, your relationships with your beloved – and everything you value*". Most people only change their worldview once in a lifetime. When this shift is occurring you change your sense of who you are, what you are willing to see and how you interact with it, your priorities for action and the way you want to life.

### **3. Methodology**

This chapter will provide an insight in the methodology used for this research. First, the research design is explained including the paradigm, the kind of research and the approach. Second, the data collection, divided in four phases will be presented. Third the data analysis, including quantitative and qualitative research methods, will be explained. Finally this chapter will cover the constraints of the research and the positionality of the researcher.

#### **3.1 Research design**

Research studies can be described and classified in terms of a number of characteristics (De Vaus, 2001). Research designs are often equated with qualitative and quantitative research methods. Social surveys and experiments are frequently viewed as prime examples of quantitative research and are evaluated against the strengths and weaknesses of statistical, quantitative research methods and analysis. *“Case studies, on the other hand, are often seen as prime examples of qualitative research – which adopts an interpretive approach to data, studies ‘things’ within their context and considers the subjective meanings that people bring to their situation”* (De Vaus, 2001:10). For this research an exploratory case study with an interpretive approach is chosen. According to Philips and Jorgenson (2002:4) *“The view is that different perspectives provide different forms of knowledge so that, together, they produce a broader understanding”*. So by using these different perspectives a broader understanding of this research will be produced.

##### *3.1.1 Paradigm*

The type of approach, allowing the subjects of study to give meaning to their situation, is commonly referred to as an interpretive approach. The interpretative approach maintains that the view of the world that we see is the creation of the mind. This does not mean that the world is not real, but rather that we can only experience it personally through our perceptions which are influenced by our preconceptions and beliefs; we are not neutral, disembodied observers (Walliman, 2006). The interpretive approach requires qualitative and quantitative or mixed-method research techniques and provides limited quantitative and a mainly qualitative insight into a phenomenon.

##### *3.1.2 Exploratory research*

This particular research suits the standards of an exploratory kind of research. Exploratory research focuses on why questions. (De Vaus, 2001). It explores a topic of which relatively little

is known and it provides the researcher with a basic, preliminary understanding of the research topic. According to De Vaus (2001) the purpose in exploratory research is to develop and evaluate causal theories. This exploratory study is partly empirical since new data will be collected in order to be able to explore the objective of the study. The collected data will exist of surveys and in-depth interviews. The literature review is the non-empirical section of the study.

### *3.1.3 Mixed method approach*

According to Greene and Caracelli (1997) mixed methods can be used to test the consistency of findings obtained through different instruments, to clarify and build on the results of one method with another, and to show how the results from one method shape subsequent methods or research decisions. The four most important types of mixed method designs include triangulation design, embedded design, explanatory design and exploratory design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). This research is an explanatory design by using questionnaires and in-depth interview. Mixed methods explicitly value the depth of the experiences, perspectives and histories of research participants (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Essential in this study are the experiences and perspectives of the tourists traveling through the North of Vietnam.

### *3.1.4 Case study*

The main character of this research will focus on the case study approach, with Northern Vietnam as the case. A case study approach signifies a small number of research units, labor intensive data collection, more in-depth than extensive, selective research, qualitative data collection and an open observation on the site (Verschuren and Doorewaard, 1999). According to De Vaus (2001) case studies seek to achieve both more complex and fuller explanations of phenomena. Another goal is that they seek to achieve idiographic as well as nomothetic explanations. Finally they also try to achieve causal explanations.

Case studies make use of a wide variety of data collection methods and they are particularly suited to using a diverse range of units of analysis, which for this particular research are the tourists visiting the destinations in Northern Vietnam. Another important point is that case studies in social sciences research should be fundamentally theoretical (De Vaus, 2001) which is applied in this research.

A case study design can be qualitative or quantitative (Yin, 1993). There are different types of case studies; explanatory, descriptive and exploratory (Yin, 1993). The current study is a single

exploratory case study using the Northern part of Vietnam as the research area. Studying the whole area of the North was too extensive in the time available for the research. That is why a few locations in the North are researched which establish a good sample that can be generalised for the larger region.

For this research a theory testing approach is chosen. De Vaus (2001) approaches the case by theory testing with the purpose of testing the theory in a real life situation. He explains that theory testing start with a theory regarding a particular phenomenon. In this research that points to the transmodern theory connected with the Cultural Creatives lifestyles, motivations and values. On the basis of a theory you can predict that a case with a particular set of characteristics will have a particular outcome (De Vaus, 2001). This study predicts to discover that a particular share of the sample will fit into the Cultural Creatives lifestyle, motivations and values and that they will have a transmodern line of thought.

### **3.2 Data collection**

The data collection is executed in four different phases, using different methods. The first phase is a literature review, exploring the theoretical concepts. The second phase consists of in-depth stakeholder interviews conducted with (responsible) tour operators and hotel managers. The third phase comprises the questionnaires and the fourth phase are the conducted semi-structured in-depth tourist interviews.

#### *3.2.1 Phase 1: Literature review*

The first phase of the research consists of a literature review. An elaborated literature research was carried out on the concepts of responsible tourism, new tourists, transmodernity and the emerging subculture of the Cultural Creatives. The lifestyles, motivations and values of the Cultural Creatives are elaborately explained. This analysis has generated an overview of the theory and gives an insight on topics which have to be highlighted in other phases of the research. The literature varies from scientific articles, books and internet sites, to non scientific material conducting information about Vietnam, travel guides and material provided by SNV and other organisations.

#### *3.2.2 Phase 2: Stakeholder interviews*

In the first phase of the fieldwork semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with different stakeholders like tour operators and hotel managers. In total 5 stakeholders are interviewed. Goal of these interviews was to get an insight in the current tourism industry in the

North-West region, the tourists visiting this area and responsible tourism. Table 3.1 provides an overview of the interviewed stakeholders. In appendix 1 the stakeholder interview is presented, in appendix 2 the transcripts of the stakeholder interviews are enclosed.

**Table 3.1 Conducted in-depth stakeholder interviews**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Company</b>
Pankasj Prandham	Head of Operations	Buffalo Tours
Son Dang Xuan	Co-Founder, Product Manager	Footprint travel Vietnam
Dang Duc Hoa	Operational manager	Mai Chau Lodge
Hijaaz Latheef	General manager- Operations	Mai Chau Lodge
Anton Jurgens *	Adventure Department Manager	Exotissimo Vietnam

*\* The interview with Anton Jurgens was conducted by email because of time limitations.*

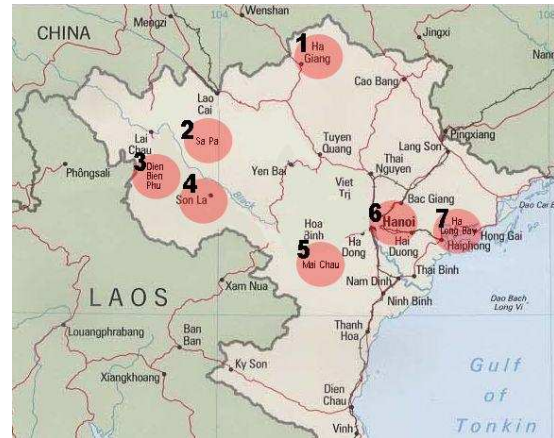
### 3.2.3 Phase 3: Questionnaires

The first part of the surveys was conducted in the North-West of Vietnam. The goal of the questionnaires was to get an insight into the lifestyles, motivations and values of the tourists. The questionnaires are conducted in the North-West of Vietnam in the destinations Sa Pa, Mai Chau and Dien Bien Phu (table 3.2). Because there were not enough questionnaires conducted after visiting the North-West area the decision was made, in collaboration with SNV, to conduct the other 50 surveys in the major tourism destinations of Ha Noi and Ha Long Bay, this way a larger sample could be reached. The surveys were slightly adapted to these areas. The research still focused on the North-West area. Throughout the analyses of the results the tourists who did not travel the North-West were taken into account. In some areas hotels and tourism departments were asked to help, by asking their guests to fill in the questionnaire. In total 101 questionnaires were filled in, table 3.2 provides an overview of the conducted questionnaires, figure 3.1 shows a map of the visited research destinations. The questionnaire is enclosed in appendix 3, the results of the questionnaire are included in appendix 5.



**Table 3.2 Conducted questionnaires North Vietnam**

Destination	Number of questionnaires
2 Sa Pa	23
3 Dien Bien Phu	3
5 Mai Chau	25
6 Ha Noi	19
7 Ha Long Bay	31
<b>Total</b>	<b>101</b>



**Figure 3.1 Map of visited research destinations** (Adventure vacation trip, 2010).

*3.2.4 Phase 4: Tourists interviews*

In total 9 in-dept semi-structured tourist interviews are conducted. The interviews focused on the tourists visiting the North of Vietnam using an analytical approach. Conducting the in-depth interviews was the most challenging of this research. Because most travelers do not have a lot of time to sit down and talk for an hour when they travel around. Table 3.3 shows the conducted in-depth tourist interviews. Two versions of the interview were used; one for the tourists who did travel to the North-West of Vietnam and one for the tourists who did not travel to the North-West of Vietnam. The real names of the respondents are used, after permission was given by the tourists. The interviews have been sent to the tourists so that they could check if everything they said in the interview was interpreted correctly.

**Table 3.3: Conducted in-depth tourist interviews**

	Destination	Name	Age	Nationality	Visited in the NW
1	Sa Pa	Aline	60	Canadian	Sa Pa and the North-East
2	Sa Pa	Katie	30	American	Only Sa Pa
3	Sa Pa	Chris	43	American	Only Sa Pa
4	Sa Pa	Robert	63	Canadian	The whole NW by four-wheel drive
5	Sa Pa	Mai-Anh	23	German-Vietnamese	Only Sa Pa
6	Sa Pa	Stefan	24	German	Only Sa Pa

7	Sa Pa	Stephanie	24	German	Only Sa Pa
8	Mai Chau	Bert	60	Dutch	Tour leader Fox Netherlands, Mai Chau
9	Ha Noi	Frank	31	Dutch	Remote areas in the NW on motorbike

As shown in table 3.3 it was difficult to find tourists who visited more than one location in the North-West region. Most tourists only visited the tourism hubs like Sa Pa or Mai Chau. Some interviews were conducted on a personal base, others were conducted together. The tourists are interviewed about their life, lifestyles, values, motivations for travelling, their ideas about responsible tourism, knowledge of responsible travelling, if they fit in the ‘responsible tourist’ picture, their contact with the local community etc. In appendix 6 the two versions of the in-depth tourists’ interviews are presented, in appendix 7 the transcripts of the tourist interviews are enclosed.

### 3.3 Data analysis

This study exists of a mixed method approach, using quantitative and qualitative research methods consisting of questionnaires and semi-structured in-depth interviews. The data analysis is divided into two parts, a quantitative analysis of the 101 questionnaires and a qualitative analysis of the 14 in-depth interviews.

#### 3.3.1 Quantitative analysis

All 101 questionnaires were statistically analysed with the assistance of the computer program ‘Statistical Products and Service Solutions’ (SPSS), version 17.0. A codebook (appendix 4) was developed to analyse the questionnaires. The main topics were put in graphs and tables to get an overview of the given answers. Chapter 5 will give the results of the questionnaires combined with the results of the in-depth tourists’ interviews.

#### 3.3.2 Qualitative analysis

The qualitative research will be used as an analytical approach. Qualitative research is based on information expressed in words such as descriptions, feelings and opinions (Walliman, 2006). The different interviews with local stakeholders and tourists are recorded with the help of an audio recorder. The tapes are transcribed manually and almost literally, breaks and gaps were ignored. This makes it easier to analyse them and compare them to other transcripts. By

comparing transcripts, contradictions or resemblances on certain topics did appear. After looking for contradictions or resemblances an extended answer can be provided for each research questions. In chapter 4, the empirical context the results of the stakeholder interviews are presented. In chapter 5, the results of the tourist interviews are linked to the lifestyles, motivations and values of the Cultural Creatives.

### *3.3.3 SNV*

Some topics which are engaged in this research are meant for SNV purposes only. These topics, like travel patterns, information sources and overall experiences are also embedded in the questionnaire and in-depth interviews, so SNV can use this for their own research and projects. These results will not be taken into account for this research because they will not contribute to the search of the transmodern shift in culture and are dominantly market-based.

## **3.4 Constraints of the research**

This research faced some challenges that should be considered.

### *Time limitations*

The research was conducted in a relative short amount of time. If there was more time a larger sample could have been researched. Two months was a relatively short period of time to conduct a research in an area that was new to me, especially considering the difficulty to travel in the provinces in the North-West. The transportation was unstable and in some areas there was a need for research permit to enter the provinces, which also took up some of the time.

### *Tourist numbers*

January-February is not a high season for tourism in Vietnam and I came across relatively low numbers of tourists, especially in the 'new' and not much developed destinations. That is why the second part of the survey is eventually conducted in Ha Noi and Ha Long Bay but still with emphasis on the North-West area.

### *Language*

I only conducted interviews with English speaking tourists. Sometimes tourists were not able to fill in my survey because their English skills were not good enough. A part of the tourists which travelled through Vietnam is therefore excluded from my research. Because of the language

barrier I was not able to interview domestic tourists and other international tourists from Asian countries, that is why I chose to research the International Western tourists only.

#### *Tet (Lunar New Year)*

Because of the Lunar New Year celebration, the most important holiday in Vietnam, it was difficult to travel around for one week. That is why I did not visit some destinations I planned to visit for my research.

### **3.5 Researchers positionality**

It is important for a researcher to reflect on his or her own positionality because there is always a part of the researchers live, experiences and worldviews that has impact on their studies (Tribe, 2005). This is also called reflexivity, reflexive researchers are explained by Tribe (2005:6) as “*looking and reflecting inwards upon themselves as researchers, and outwards upon those that they research.*” Especially with qualitative research this is important because it always contains a level of subjectivity. Morrow (2007) argues that it is common for mixed methods and qualitative researchers to make their assumptions, biases and motivations public.

My choice for a study on responsible tourism and cultural change derives from my interest on this topic and projects and researches I have done in the past. During my bachelor degree, Leisure and Tourism management studies, I noticed that tourism was dominantly perceived as a commercial phenomenon. It was all about making money and there was little reflection on what this means for local communities and the environment, which absolutely did not correspond to me. That is why I decided to take a course on Sustainable Tourism. This showed me a completely different side of the agenda. I found a subject within the tourism studies which was critical on what tourism can destroy but also can bring to local communities and areas. That is why I decided to write my bachelor thesis on community-based and pro-poor tourism. I initiated a project in community based tourism in fisherman villages in the South of India, which were damaged because of the tsunami of 2004. To be able to help the people with the knowledge I gained on university was very satisfying.

The choice for a topic on responsible tourism for my Master thesis was therefore a logic continuation. I still wanted to get to know more on this topic but instead of a market-based research which I conducted during my Bachelor I wanted to place the topic in a broader concept. By reading about transmodernity and the Cultural Creatives I got very excited and wanted to

connect these theories to responsible tourism by doing research in a part of the world. The theories really appealed to me because it connects to the basic of why responsible tourism is existing. It shows that there is a large percentage of the world population (especially in the USA and Europe) who really care about the planet, culture and nature. It was like all the parts got together. I think that a lot of the values and lifestyle characteristic of the Cultural Creatives are also applicable to me, that is why I wanted to focus on this topic and I wanted to talk to people on their lifestyles, values and motivations. I was very driven to try to understand people's motivations and points of view while talking to them.

Doing the fieldwork in Vietnam has been an important learning experience in my life. I had the opportunity to combine my research with a project of SNV which provided me with contacts and a starting point. To be able to combine my research with a development agency was really important for me because this way my research will contribute by implementing new responsible tourism projects in the North-West of Vietnam. The first week I stayed in Vietnam I had the opportunity to travel with SNV to the province of Ha Giang. I travelled together with Vietnamese colleagues and this provided me with a local perspective of the area. I was able to ask questions to the local community and listen to their point of view. This first week I have been indulged in the culture of some of the Northern Vietnamese tribes which has been very wonderful and essential.

After having seen the perspective of the local community I wanted to talk to some important stakeholders and partners of SNV to get an inside in the area and prepare for my research and travel to the North of Vietnam, this was very useful. The first destination I have been visiting for conducting the questionnaires and the in-depth tourist interviews was Sa Pa, this is a relatively large tourism destination in the North-West. Because there were a lot of tourists in this area it was not difficult to find respondents. It even happened that during my lunch one of my respondents asked me if she could have lunch with me. So instead of me as the researcher making the contacts, the people came to me to talk. I think this also had to do with the fact that I was travelling alone and very open to contact and meeting people. Because I was travelling I used my research also for making contacts and new friends. Most of the respondents were very interested in the research and willing to cooperate. So by creating a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere the respondents were willing to talk about their life and answer very profound questions on their lifestyles and personal values.

After Sa Pa I visited Dien Bien Phu. The travel to this area has been very rough, I had to make a bus trip of 9 hours which was on very bumpy roads. During this travel we got stopped by the police and had to wait for two hours in the heat. There were some tourists in this bus during the travel and because we had this intense experience together it was good to talk with them about their other travel experiences and values. Unfortunately in Dien Bien Phu and Son La there were very little tourists and I felt quite lost in a mountain area in which people lived very basic and nobody was able to speak English. That is why I decided to travel to Mai Chau which was really good for my research. By getting in touch with the managers of Mai Chau lodge I was able to do a lot of questionnaires and interviews in the hotel. I was truly amazed by the friendliness of the people and the willingness to help me carrying out my research.

Because I see myself as a responsible tourist, always trying to consider the impacts I make at a destination I was very interested in the perspectives of other travelers on this subject. I was pleasantly surprised to see that most people travelling to the North of Vietnam share my values and were very conscious of their impacts. I only have been disappointed a few times by people who seemed very indifferent and uninterested in the destinations they visited.

This experience truly enriched me because I have been able to talk to a lot of people with different cultural backgrounds and positions. They all opened up to me and were willing to share their life stories.

### **3.6 Connecting theoretical and empirical variables**

Table 3.4 shows the connection of the theoretical concepts with the empirical variables translated into questions. It shows the questions of the stakeholder interview, the questionnaire and the tourist interview. The four main theoretical concepts are lifestyles, motivation, values and responsible tourism which are incorporated in the table. This table is used to analyse the data in chapter 4 and chapter 5.

**Table 3.4 Theoretical and empirical variables**

Theoretical variables	Empirical variables
<b>Lifestyles</b>	<p><i>Questionnaire</i>  <b>What is important to you when travelling?</b>                      (Please indicate for all aspects to which level they apply to you on a scale of 1 to 5.): Protect the environment, Support local charities, Support the local economy/ industry, preservation of heritage, benefit the poor, poverty reduction, good local working conditions, respect local cultures, behave responsible, local development, improve quality of life of host communities, meet and interact with locals, authentic experiences, learn about other cultures, minimal impact on destination, conserving energy, water and minimising waste, behave and dress appropriately.</p>
	<p><i>Tourist interviews</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you tell me something about your life in your country? Daily activities? What is important for you back home?</li> <li>• How would you describe yourself (in a few words)?</li> <li>• How does your lifestyle reflect your choice of Vietnam as a travel destination?</li> </ul>
<b>Motivations</b>	<p><i>Questionnaire</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why did you choose Vietnam as your travel destination?</li> <li>• What are the reasons why you will not be visiting destinations outside of Sa Pa, Dien Bien Phu and Mai Chau while you are in the North-West? (version 1)</li> <li>• What is your reason for visiting the remoter areas in the North-West Highlands? (version 1)</li> <li>• What is your reason for visiting the North-West area of Vietnam? (version 2)</li> <li>• What are the reasons why you will not be visiting destinations in the North-West area of Vietnam? (version 2)</li> </ul>
	<p><i>Tourist interviews</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why did you choose Vietnam and North-West Vietnam as your travel destination?</li> </ul>
<b>Values</b>	<p><i>Questionnaire</i>  <b>Which of the following values and beliefs are important to you?</b>                      (Please indicate for all aspects to which level they apply to you on a scale of 1 to 5.): Environmentally conscious, adventurous, active, materialism, social, contentment, optimism, politically aware, relationship/network oriented, feeling of freedom, ability to enjoy, spirituality, success, creativity, sustainability, authenticity, idealism, religion, activism, self-actualisation, self-awareness, altruism.</p>
	<p><i>Tourist interviews</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are important values in your life?</li> <li>• What are important values for you when travelling?</li> </ul>

<b>Responsible Tourism</b>	<p><i>Stakeholder interviews</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you consider to be responsible tourism?</li> <li>• Do you work in the responsible tourism business?</li> <li>• In your opinion, do you think there is a responsible tourism industry in North-West Vietnam? (Yes/No) Can you please explain your answer?</li> <li>• In what way can the tourism industry in North-West Vietnam become more responsible? (Things to improve)</li> <li>• Do you know of any good examples where tourism development has led to poverty reduction, or where tourism companies have initiated any poverty reduction projects (in NW Vietnam)? How does your organisation look at that?</li> </ul>
	<p><i>Questionnaire</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the term 'responsible tourism' familiar to you?</li> <li>• Do you think you travel in a responsible way?</li> </ul>
	<p><i>Tourist interviews</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your understanding and ideas about responsible tourism?</li> <li>• In your opinion, do you think you travel in a responsible way?</li> <li>• What do you think you could change about your way of travelling to be more responsible?</li> <li>• Do you think Vietnam is a responsible tourism destination?</li> <li>• Do you think a responsible approach to tourism is important for Vietnam?</li> <li>• What would you like to see changed about how tourism is managed in Vietnam?</li> <li>• Do you experience that tourism is supporting poverty reduction (environmental protection/conservation) and in what way can you distinguish this? (perhaps highlight with concrete examples from experiences).</li> </ul>



## 4. Empirical context

This chapter will provide an overview of the tourism industry in Vietnam, with particular focus on the North-West area. Furthermore it will give information about SNV and their Northern Highlands program. To get a local insight of the current situation of the area five in-depth interviews are conducted with stakeholders (tour operators and hotel owners) who are partners of SNV and are already working on responsible tourism. The results of these interviews are presented in appendix 2.

### 4.1 Vietnam

Vietnam is one of the fastest growing tourism markets in the world. It has experienced dramatic growth in the last ten years. In 2008 tourism counted for 4.2% of the national GDP (Nielsen, 2010). The growth of the tourism industry can be a chance for poverty reduction by involving the local communities in the tourism services. It can be a sustainable poverty reduction opportunity if the benefits are more equally distributed among different stakeholders, with a focus on the disadvantaged people and the local host communities who are often forgotten (SNV concept note, 2009).

### 4.2 Introducing the stakeholders

To understand the comments given by the different interviewed stakeholders this paragraph will introduce them and give a short explanation of their role in the tourism industry in Vietnam and especially in North-West Vietnam<sup>1</sup>.

Son Dang Xuan is the Co-founder and Product Manager of Footprint Travel Vietnam. This is a responsible tour operator who is executing different trips to the North-West and North-East region of Vietnam. 60% of the travellers who go to the North-West do hiking trips. The goal of Footprint travel Vietnam is: *“to minimise the impacts and we try to bring back some positive impacts. These positive impacts can be in the cultural or economic situation of the people. We try to spread the income to all the people in a village and train them.”*

Anton Jurgens is the Adventure Department Manager of Exotissimo Vietnam. A tour operator arranging trips in South-East Asia. They are offering a variety of different trekking and biking

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<sup>1</sup> An overview of the interviewed stakeholders is given in table 3.1.

itineraries. They are actively developing new trips in Ha Giang with Community Based Tourism as the main goal.

Pankasj Prandham is the Head of Operation of Buffalo Tours, a tour operator. Buffalo Tours is active in tourism for 15 years, they started as an adventure tour company. The company was one of the first tour operators in the North-West area to start tours. They developed Community Based Tourism and trained local hosts and guides.

Two interviews are conducted with the management of the Mai Chau Lodge. Hijaaz Latheef, the General Manager-Operations and Dang Duc Hoa, the Operational manager give some information about their lodge: *“Our hotel was established in September 2007. We have a total of 55 staff members, 99% is coming from the White Taj minority, the local people. Our main market comes from The Netherlands, Australia and America. Our hotel has 16 rooms. And in 2011 we are finishing phase two, and then we will have forty rooms. We will try to be one of the small luxury hotels in the world.”*

#### **4.3 SNV**

This research is executed in collaboration with SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, as part of their Northern Highlands Program in Vietnam. SNV is an international development organisation of Dutch origin, which supports national and local actors within government, civil society and the private sector to find and implement local solutions to social, environmental and economic development challenges (SNV world, 2009).

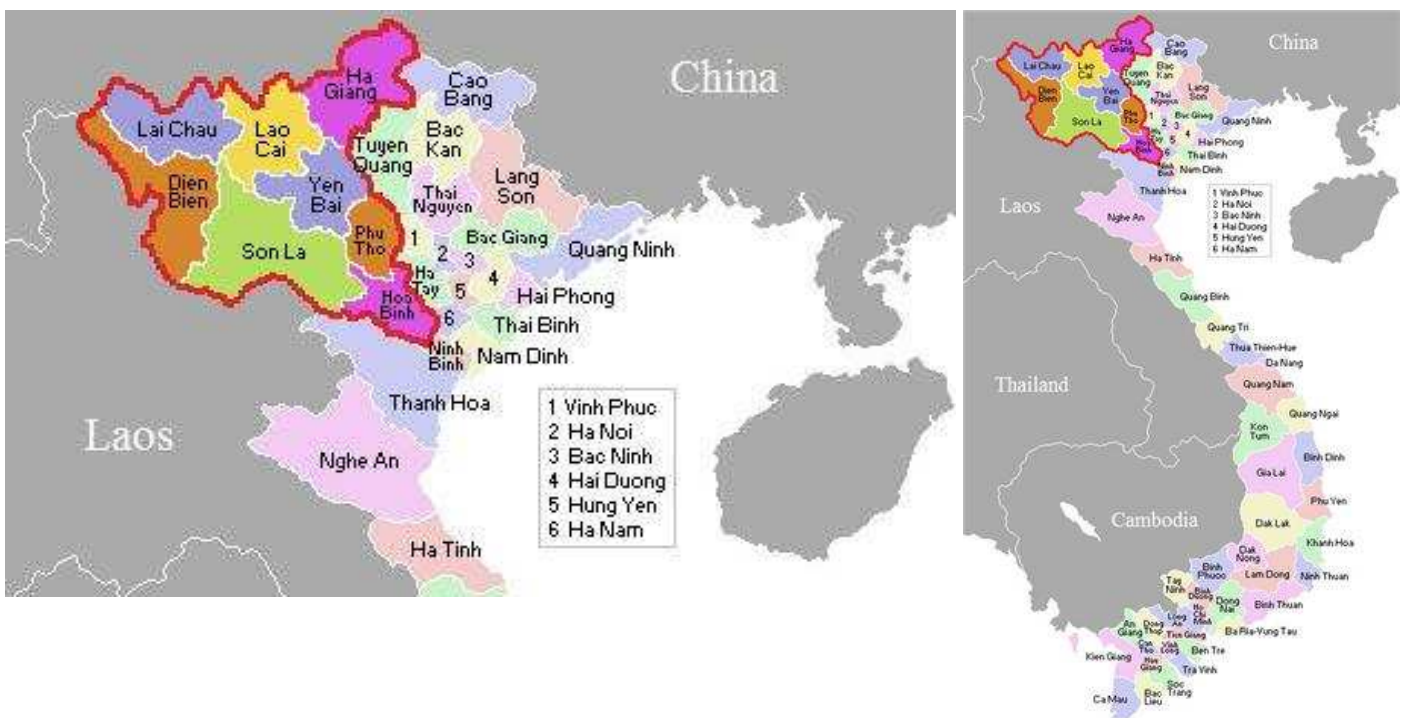
SNV stimulates the poor to strengthen their capacities and escape from poverty. They do this by facilitating knowledge development, brokering, networking and advocacy at national and international level. Important are the partnerships with other development agencies and the private sector. SNV works in 30 countries across five geographical regions: Asia, the Balkans, East and Southern Africa, Latin America and West and Central Africa. Advisory services are provided in seven sectors: ‘Pro-Poor Sustainable Tourism’, ‘Renewable Energy’, ‘Water’, ‘Sanitation and Hygiene’, ‘Education’, ‘Health’, ‘Small Holder Cash Crops’ and ‘Forest Products’ (SNV, 2009).

#### 4.4 Northern Highlands Program

SNV has initiated the, “*Northern Highlands: Comprehensive Tourism Development Program.*” This program will be implemented in eight provinces in Northwest Vietnam (Phu Tho, Hoa Binh, Son La, Dien Bien, Lai Chau, Lao Cai, Yen Bai and Ha Giang) (figure 4.1), and it aims at introducing and practicing the concept of “*inclusive sustainable tourism*” as an efficient development tool to reach the United Nations Millennium Goals, especially Goal 1 (on Poverty Eradication) and Goal 7 (on Environmental Sustainability) (SNV concept note, 2009). This research will contribute to the program by getting the insights of the tourists already visiting the North of Vietnam.

The overall goal of SNV on this program is:

*“To develop and successfully promote the northwestern region of Vietnam as a homogeneous, sustainable tourism destination, providing an authentic travel experience based on its dramatic natural landscape, and cultural diversity and heritage, by including disadvantaged communities in responsible tourism operations at all levels to provide substantial additional income and new employment opportunities.”* (SNV concept note, 2009: 4).



**Figure 4.1 Map of Provinces of Vietnam, project area North-West (SNV, 2009).**

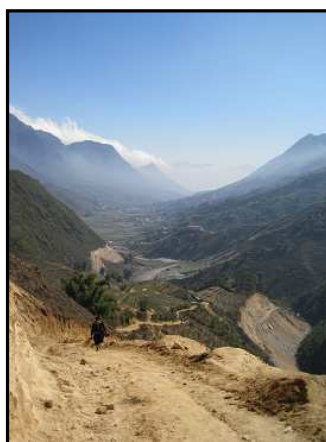
There are different challenges associated with the rapid growth and expansion of the Vietnamese tourism industry. The eight provincial governments have identified the following: the capacity of infrastructure; improving overall product quality through enhanced planning; HR development in both the public and private sector; the need for sustainable and market-oriented planning and investment; and better targeted marketing and product development strategies. A positive development is that the local authorities realise the opportunities tourism can bring to marginalised communities, particularly ethnic minorities, and that it can contribute to poverty reduction (SNV concept note, 2009).

#### **4.5 North-West Vietnam**

This paragraph will discuss the current situation in North-West Vietnam, explained by the different stakeholders. Some of the areas in the North-West will be highlighted.

##### *4.5.1 Current situation*

The Northern Highlands encompasses eight provinces in the North West of the country and borders both China and Laos. The Northern Highlands is the most mountainous area in the country. It has some of the world's most spectacular scenery and is inhabited by colourful hill tribes (SNV, Northern Highlands Trail, 2010). As mentioned by Pankasj tourists visit the North-West for the following reasons: *“The minorities, landscape, the authenticity and it is still not yet heavily touched by tourism. You still get to see the pure, natural side of the country.”* Anton gives a similar answer: *“Stunning scenery and a wide variety of ethnic minorities. Their simplistic way of life and colourful ethnic minorities is a definite draw for tourists.”*



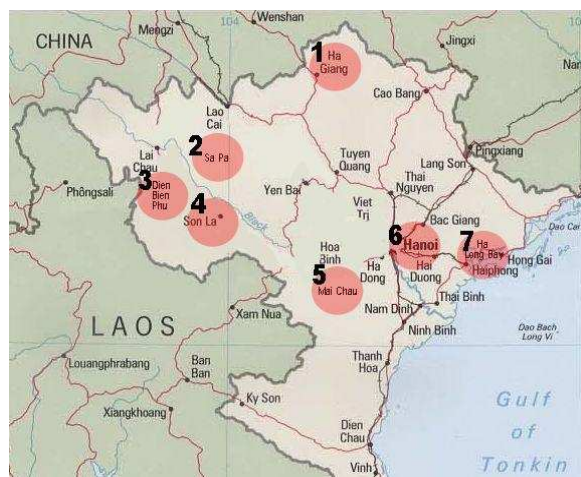
*Picture 1: Scenery Sa Pa.  
(Source: author)*

The Northern Highlands form one of the poorest areas of Vietnam. Hoa confirms this: *“The living standard of the local people in the North-West is very low. So the first thing for them is how to fill*

*their stomach every day.*” In recent years tourism has been more and more accepted for its potential to contribute to poverty reduction (SNV concept note, 2009). An area in North Vietnam where tourism has already been developed is Sa Pa district. Sa Pa is one of the top-five tourism attractions of Vietnam, visited by over 300,000 tourists each year. Recent study of SNV has revealed that Sa Pa has reached its carrying capacity with critical socio-cultural as well as environmental impacts emerging (SNV concept note, 2009). Currently, limited numbers of international tourists venture into more remote areas of the North-West (SNV concept note, 2009). So this means that there are tourists visiting the area, but the distribution of tourists is concentrated in a few particular locations (Sa Pa, but also Lao Cai). This creates problems where one area is overcrowded and another area has a high poverty rate, but no tourists visiting.

SNV is planning to support tourism development of other areas in the North. This creates the necessity to understand responsible tourists visiting the area, as they may potentially be interested in exploring the destinations in the North of Vietnam. In general, the Northern Highlands are hilly to mountainous, the infrastructure is poor, and the population density is low. The region is less urbanised and more dependent on agriculture than any other region. A large share of the population consists of ethnic minorities like the H’Mong, Red Dao, Black and White Thai, Muong, Tay, Day, Xa Pho, Nung and Na Nhi. (SNV concept note, 2009).

Different destinations have been visited for the purpose of the research. Below a short summary of the visited destinations where the research is conducted is given.



- 1: Ha Giang**
- 2: Sa Pa**
- 3: Dien Bien Phu**
- 4: Son La**
- 5: Mai Chau**
- 6: Ha Noi**
- 7: Ha Long Bay**

**Figure 4.2 Map of visited research destinations** (Adventure vacation trip, 2010).

#### 4.5.2 Ha Giang

Ha Giang is the most Northern point of Vietnam, sharing a boarder with China of 274 km. The scenery includes high mountains, deep abysses, rivers, streams and rapids and is home to 22 different ethnic groups. Ha Giang Town, a city with 50.000 inhabitants is located 320 km north of Ha Noi and is located on the banks of the Tien River (SNV, Northern Highlands Trail, 2010). The province has a population of 70.000 and had a poverty rate of 35.5% in 2007. The accessibility and infrastructure of the province right now is not convenient, to get into the province you need permits, but for tourists it is getting easier to go to Ha Giang. Son explains that: *“Ha Giang is getting more open now but it is still not the same everywhere. In Ha Giang city it could be easy but in remote areas like Quan Ba and Don Van (which are located on the border with China) sometimes still problems happen.”* Ha Giang has a potential for tourism development and is one of the priority areas of SNV (SNV, Ha Giang Province, 2009).



*Picture 2: Ethnic minority women walking to the market. (Source: author)*



*Picture 3: Home stay in Ha Giang. (Source: author)*

#### 4.5.3 Sa Pa

Sa Pa is a highland region of the Lao Cai province and home of the Fansipan peak which lies 3,143 meter above the sea level. Sa Pa is famous for mountains and forests but also for the six ethnic minorities living in the area. The six colorful ethnic minorities are still living a traditional lifestyle. It is a tropical climate region with low temperatures in the winter and cool temperatures in the summer. Today, Sa Pa is one of the main tourism destinations in the North-West region. Pankasj agrees: *“Sa Pa is certainly the most popular destination I would have to say in the North of Vietnam. Anton explains that Sa Pa is popular because of the accessibility: “Sa pa of course is the most popular especially with its access to China and Yunnan.”* In November 2007, 305,907



tourists visited Sa Pa. 206,868 of them were domestic tourists (67.6 %) and 99,039 international visitors (32.4%). In 2007 47,154 inhabitants were living in the district. This means 6.5 tourists for 1 local inhabitant. So all inhabitants of Sa Pa are affected by the developing tourism in the region (Majerus *et al.*, 2008).



*Picture 4: Black H'mong woman in Sa Pa during trekking. (Source: author)*

#### 4.5.4 Dien Bien Phu

Dien Bien Phu is established in the middle of the 19th century to secure this remote part of Vietnam against invaders from Thailand, Laos and China. The famous Vietnamese victory of the French in May 1954 occurred in this destination. This led to the French agreeing on the independence after almost a decade of fighting. A lot of historic war sites can be visited in Dien Bien Phu. It also gives an understanding of United States involvement in Vietnam as the division of Vietnam into North and South followed the by battle of Dien Bien Phu, and after that the US troops entered Vietnam (SNV, Northern Highlands Trail, 2010). Anton explains why Dien Bien Phu is becoming more popular: “DBP is popular with the French market due to the history as well as a popular cross border route into Laos.”



*Picture 5: Historic war site 'AI hill' in Dien Bien Phu. (Source: author)*

#### 4.5.5 Son La

Son La is the fifth largest province of Vietnam. Son La Province shares a border of 250 km with Laos.

The province is populated by various ethnic groups, including the Ma, H'mong, Dao, Muong, Kinh, Khmer, Tay, and Thai (Footprint Vietnam travel, 2009). Son La town is located in a valley with mountains. Tourists visit the town and province to go to the hot springs.

Another famous spot is the Old French Prison, this is a prison where anti-colonial revolutionaries were locked up (SNV, Northern Highlands Trail, 2010).



Picture 6: French Prison, Son La (Source: author)

#### 4.5.6 Mai Chau

After Sa Pa, Mai Chau is one of the popular tourism destinations in the North-West. According to Pankasj: *“Mai Chau is certainly popular. But not on the same scale as Sa Pa. The region has quite a lot of potential in terms of colorful minorities, in terms of landscape, in terms of adventure activities such as cycling and trekking.”* Mai Chau has been attracting tourists since the 1970s. It offers a perspective in the life of the White Thai ethnic Minority groups (Mai Chau lodge, 2010). The landscape is dominated by rice paddies surrounded by mountains. The nearby Thai villages offer home stays. Tourist activities especially include trekking and biking through the area. In a lot of the Thai houses the locals perform traditional dances (SNV, Northern Highlands Trail, 2010). Hoa claims that Mai Chau is getting more popular lately: *“Now, some more people know about Mai Chau. There is still a lot of nature and it is not very touristy. Lot of the tourists who come here they like the nature. With the dancing performance, with the singing, with the folklore. And the landscape is beautiful too.”*





*Picture 7: Landscape Mai Chau.  
(Source: author)*



*Picture 8: Taj dance performance,  
Mai Chau. (Source: author)*

#### **4.6 The organisation of Responsible Tourism**

This paragraph will explain what the stakeholders consider to be responsible tourism and how their company is working on it. It contains their approach towards responsible tourism, the policies they adapt, actions they undertake and how they deal with the impacts of tourism.

##### *4.6.1 Approach of interviewed stakeholders*

This paragraph will treat the different approaches of the interviewed stakeholders on responsible tourism. Buffalo tours is working on quite a few projects on responsible tourism. Pankasj explains: *“It actually is a quite elaborated and very big area the whole responsible tourism. How you operate, is related to the internal and external environment. Internally how you operate in a country. It comes to operating, meeting the norms of complying with the local regulations, you gain tax, you are being transparent, and you are giving back to the country of what the normal regulation is. Externally operate within the area where we can work together with local communities where we can get the supply chain and increase the value chain of the people involved in the whole mechanism. If something can be purchased locally, yes why not? And rather than sending it from Ha Noi. Or using the local capacities. So it is better to use these areas.”* So Pankasj explains that responsible tourism is embedded in the whole organisation, internally and externally.

How does Footprint travel see responsible tourism? Son explains: *“Well, responsible tourism, sustainable tourism is quit big. Our trip is beginning at the office; we have to train our guides and our staff about responsible tourism. What it is and what the effects are and the outcomes. We are trying to work with the local people. And try to make them to do it the same way. We are trying to support them in working in a proper way. So aside from trying to educate our staff and local people we have to really work with them, train them. So that they can work together. And not only the customer coming from Footprint. But also customers coming from different sources to that village, they can do the same thing for that village to preserve the environment, to preserve the cultures and to share the benefits among the members, not just my family but to his family and her family.”* What is noticeable from this quote is that Son mentioned the word ‘trying’ a lot. So he tries to do a lot but is it actually working? According to Son it is: *“Yes it works. It really works, but the point is two small companies or even a big size company could not change it to a positive result if we are not working together. Responsible tourism can only be successful from working together. From everyone, from all the tourism stakeholders.”* For Footprint Travel it is really important to educate the staff and the local communities on responsible tourism and to work together with different involved actors.

Anton makes a differentiation between cultural, economic and environmental factors. He explains: *“Exotissimo is proud to follow best practices in this field and is looking to do more. Responsible tourism is a combination of several factors. Cultural, Economic, and Environmental.*

*Cultural – we attempt to introduce our clients to this culture with minimal impact. We educate clients about respecting cultural differences (how to greet people, taking pictures, basic etiquette, giving money and gifts, dress, behavior, and dignity). We think this very important for the long term sustainability of the tourism industry. The more the populous see tourists as a positive contribution the more they will welcome them into the country.*

*Economic – we try as much as possible to source everything we need locally and encourage our clients to do the same. We also ensure we pay above minimum wage to all our employees’ whether it is the staff in the office or the porters carrying gear into rural areas. This helps to spread the wealth away from mass produced items. In rural areas to encourage and support local communities we use home stays and guesthouses but I do not see this as the best method, because it is difficult to spread the benefits this way and with this method we can also better manage the facilities. I am looking into community lodges in rural villages with the idea we rent from the village rather than individual families.*

*Environmental – we stick to strict guidelines when it comes to protecting the environment. Our trekking routes only stick to well worn paths, we pack in and pack out, and work with conservation groups like FFI<sup>2</sup> and local communities to find the best solution to protect what they have. In this regard tourism is a powerful tool in that when local communities see the benefits of tourism they will work to protect what it is that brings them there in the first place.”* The division which Anton makes is quite clear. He says that cultural, economic and environmental issues are important. This can also be translated to the theory of people, planet and profit, a common used theory to explain sustainability.

Mai Chau Lodge is an ecolodge which is consciously working on responsible tourism. They do this in different ways, Hoa talks about this: *“It means that our lodge is an ecolodge. We try to keep the environment as clean as possible and keep everything natural. In the future the first thing is that the hotel tries to plant more trees, to make it greener. The second is that we go to schools and talk about the environment. To teach the children about the importance of the environment. And for example this Lunar New Year we have a charity program. We make donations from the staff and we make a list of the poor families. And we will visit them on lunar New Year.”* Hijaaz adds to this that through the Mai Chau lodge a lot of jobs are created and that the Mai Chau lodge is arranging a meditrek each year.

#### 4.6.2 Policies

How important are policies to implement responsible tourism? Anton thinks guidelines and policies are very important. *“NGOs need to work towards educating communities on best practices, government needs to develop policy and laws, and the private sector needs to promote and bring the tourists to the region. Guidelines and best practices are essential for tour operators to follow. Also when it comes to protecting the environment we stick to strict guidelines.”* Pankasj has a different opinion on this topic: *“If you have proper good policies on place to look after staff. I personally do not believe in enforcing any strict policies and guidelines, that is not a sustainable approach.”* So here you find a conflicting situation where one of the tour operators is following strict guidelines and policies and the other doesn't want to enforce strict policies and guidelines. This shows that tour operators can have a completely different image on responsible tourism and how to implement this in their company.

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<sup>2</sup> Flora and Fauna International.

#### 4.6.3 Actions

Responsible tourism is not only about talking and making policies. The most important thing is to take action. Are the tour operators taking action to develop a responsible tourism industry?

Pankasj talks about the projects Buffalo Tours executed in the last years. One of the projects is the meditrek they organise together with the Mai Chau lodge: *“We do things like the medical trek every year, there is quite a lot of work involved. We have medical doctors from overseas coming to Vietnam and local doctors as well. They trek to the North-West and particularly focusing on Mai Chau. Perhaps we want to extend it further, set up a camp there in these areas for a week and treat the patients. The beautiful part is that those people over there can never afford to go to the hospital; they have never seen a doctor in their life”*. Besides the medical trek they are also working on the implementation of a community based tourism project with SNV in Ha Giang. They are also initiating the project clean Fansipan, in which they advise the porters to bring down the garbage on the mountain. This shows that Buffalo Tours is consciously working in improving the area for the local community and the tourists.

Footprint travel is working on responsible tourism by setting up the responsible tourism club. This is a group of 8 different tour operators working together to strive for a responsible tourism industry. Son mentions that it is very important to work together and to gain support from local authorities and the local people. This shows that Son also sees the complexity of the situation. He noticed that there are a lot of different concepts evolve around responsible tourism.

The Mai Chau lodge is buying vegetables from local suppliers, this way a lot of people get income because of the tourists visiting the area. Environment is also an important topic for the management of the Mai Chau lodge. Hoa explains that they are visiting schools and teach the children the importance of the environment. They are also organising cleaning camps in which their staff is cleaning villages. These are very concrete examples of how this company is helping local people to improve the environment.

#### 4.6.4 Solutions

Comparing the different answers of the stakeholders it is significant that they all mention that the solution in creating a responsible tourism industry is collaboration between the different involved actors. The tour operators, the local government, NGOs, travelers, local communities and the private sector.

Anton explained what the role of the different actors has to be in order to strive for a responsible tourism industry in the future: *“Better collaboration between major stakeholders. Local communities, NGOs, government, and the private sector. Only with agreements from all sides can a sound plan be achieved. CBT<sup>3</sup> is essential to give local communities a stake in their own future and protect what they have. NGOs need to work towards educating communities on best practices, government needs to develop policies and laws, and the private sector needs to promote and bring the tourists to the region. Guidelines and best practices are essential for tour operators to follow.”*

#### **4.7 Target group**

For the purpose of this research it is important to find out which tourists are travelling to the North-West area of Vietnam. In this paragraph the tourists, who book their tours with the tour operators and the guests who stay in the Mai Chau lodge, are introduced.

##### *4.7.1 Image*

The tourists travelling with Buffalo tours through North-West Vietnam are according to Pankasj: *“The tourist who is more interested in the cultural aspect of the tour, more adventurous and wants to see the authentic side of the country. Perhaps among those 5% repeat visitors would probably go to the area of North-West Vietnam to further explore. Or who has a bit more time than two weeks, which is a small percentage. It is more so of a middle bracket tourist, middle income tourist who spend about 50 to 100 dollars a day. For high-end the facilities and infrastructure is still not yet set up. For the backpackers it is slightly over the budget to go.”*

According to Son the tourists who travel with Footprint Vietnam travel are a middle range and middle-age target group. Their main groups visiting are young seniors which are really active and want to explore the country. Anton is also mentioning that the travellers who book at Exotissimo are adventurous travellers. But they do need a certain level of comfort and are willing to pay a bit more for this. The travellers who stay at the Mai Chau lodge are also demanding their stay to be adventurous and they like to discover the culture and the ethnic minorities.

Very significant is that all the interviewed stakeholders are mentioning that the tourists are of the adventurous types who want to see the authentic side of the country. The travellers are middle

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<sup>3</sup> Community Based Tourism

range in spending, it is not really a backpacker destination and high-end facilities do not yet exist in the area.

#### 4.7.2 Nationality

What are the most common nationalities of the travellers visiting the North-West of Vietnam? According to Son 60% is from North-America and 25% to 30% is from Europe and the others are from Australia. The guests from the Mai Chau lodge are from the Netherlands, Australia, America and France. About 90% of the revenue of the Mai Chau Lodge is from international tourists. This shows that there are not much Vietnamese travellers exploring the North-West area of their country. Especially international tourists from the USA, Europe and Australia are visiting.

#### 4.7.3 Figures

How many tourists are travelling to the areas of the North-West currently? The different stakeholders provided some statistics. An overview is given in table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 Overview tourists visiting**

Company	Tourists visiting
Buffalo Tours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1000-2000 a year with Buffalo Tours</li> <li>• Mai Chau area total 15.000 international tourists visiting</li> </ul>
Footprint Vietnam Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1000 a year with Footprint Travel</li> <li>• 60% is visiting the North-West</li> </ul>
Mai Chau lodge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2008: 3000 tourists in Mai Chau Lodge</li> <li>• 2009: 5200 tourists in Mai Chau Lodge</li> <li>• Mai Chau area: 9000 in 2009, but not reliable, real numbers probably around 14.000-15.000 tourists a year.</li> <li>• 80 % foreigners, 16% Vietnamese are visiting the Mai Chau Lodge</li> </ul>

#### 4.7.4 Activities

What are the main activities tourists undertake when visiting the North-West? The following activities are mentioned by the stakeholders are trekking, cycling, motor biking and going on cultural trips.

Hoa explains what the Mai Chau lodge is organising for the tourists: “*Mai Chau is very good for walking, trekking and biking. For example sometimes we organise for the guests who come from Ha Noi and go to Mai Chau, the lunch and after that they go to the Han Kia that is an H’mong ethnic minority area. And they trek about 8 kilometres to the H’mong area. And for the second day they trek from the H’mong area to the White Taj area. So it is about 35 kilometres*”

## **5. The Cultural Creatives in the North of Vietnam**

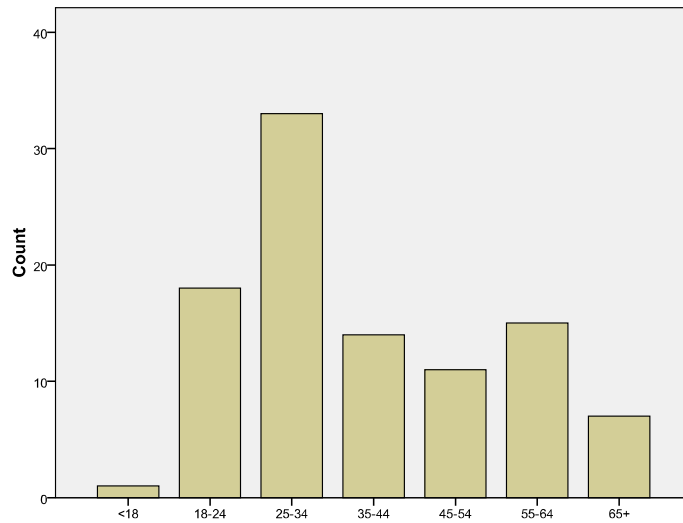
### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter will provide an analysis of the quantitative and qualitative results of the research conducted in the North of Vietnam. In total 101 surveys are conducted on 5 different locations (Sa Pa, Dien Bien Phu, Mai Chau, Ha Long Bay and Ha Noi). Nine in-depth interviews are conducted with tourists travelling through the North of Vietnam. This chapter will combine the results of both research methods into different topics. Characteristics and features of Cultural Creatives will be related to the tourists visiting the North-West of Vietnam. Similarities and differences will be revealed in order to make the next step in identifying whether and to what extent the tourists in North-West Vietnam fits into the Cultural Creative subculture. Three key themes were chosen from the different surveys and interviews, these themes are 'Lifestyles', 'Motivations' and 'Values'. In the following paragraph, the responding tourists who travelled through the North West of Vietnam will be introduced.

### **5.2 The travellers in the North of Vietnam**

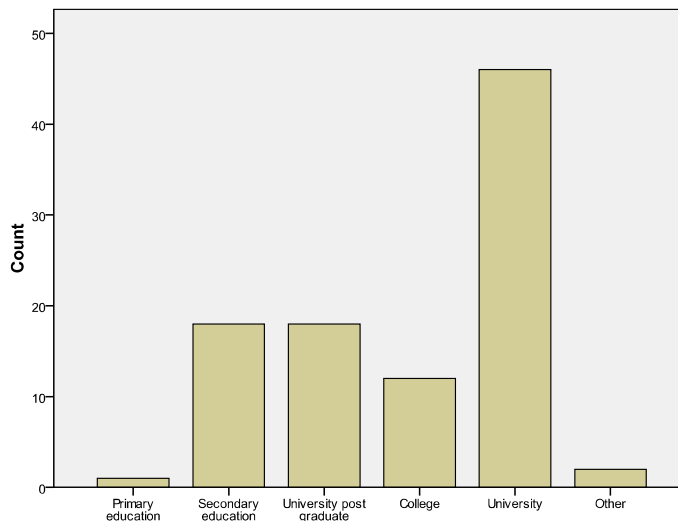
SNV conducted research of responsible tourists in their six source markets in Europe (Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and United Kingdom) and North-America (United States and Canada). They found that these kinds of travellers actively plan their holiday, they seek interactive learning experiences and they travel with a purpose. They explain that the profiles of the responsible travellers from Europe and North-America are similar in different ways: *“they tend to be well educated, include all age groups (with greater concentrations among youths and retirees), are equally divided between men and women, have higher than average amounts of disposable income, come mostly from urban areas, and travel beyond major cities”* (SNV, 2009:37). Is this image corresponding with the findings of my research? The findings of my research in the North of Vietnam reveal a profile of the tourist, which will be elaborated further on in this chapter. This paragraph will give background information on demographical information such as gender, age, education, job and nationality.

A total of 101 (N=101) usable questionnaires were collected during the months of January and February 2010 in the North of Vietnam. They represent 45 male and 54 female travellers (2 respondents did not fill in their gender). In addition 9 in-depth interviews were conducted which represent 5 male and 4 female travellers.



**Figure 5.1 Age of respondents (N=99)**

One third of the respondents are between 25 and 34 years old (Figure 5.1). Other high percentages in age groups are 18-24 and 35-44. This shows that a relatively young age group travels to the North of Vietnam. In contrast with this is that 15% of the respondents are in the age group of 55-64. So different age groups are represented by the tourists travelling to the North of Vietnam. This finding is corresponding with the finding of the SNV research; different age groups with greater concentrations among youths and retirees.



**Figure 5.2 Level of education (N= 97)**

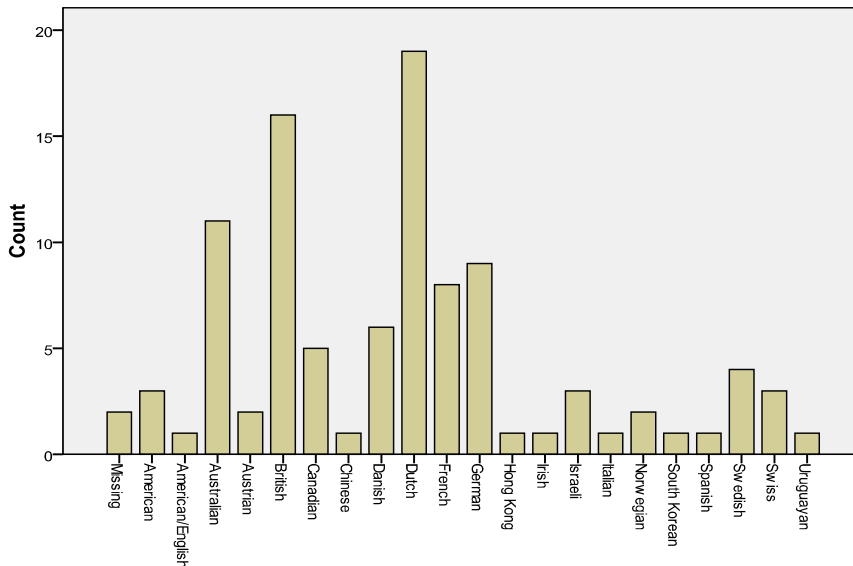


Looking at the education level (figure 5.2) it is significant that almost half of the respondents attended University, so most travellers completed a higher level of education, which is also coming forward in the SNV research. The jobs of the tourists can be divided into different categories (Table 5.1). The highest percentages are the job categories construction, education, business and health. This are jobs which are strongly related to society; especially education and health.

**Table 5.1 Job categories (N=94)**

Category	Frequency
Construction	11
Education	11
Business	11
Health	10
Retired	8
Marketing and PR	6
Other	6
Finance	5
Sales	5
Unemployed	5
Student	4
Technical	3
Hospitality industry	3
Media	3
Nature and development	3

Looking at the nationalities it becomes clear that the respondents are mostly from well-off Western countries (figure 5.3). The highest percentage of the respondents is Dutch, followed by British and Australians. That the highest percentage is Dutch can be explained by the reason that the researcher is Dutch and it is always easier to get in contact with people of your own country, who speak the same language, when travelling. So most travellers are from Europe, Australia and North-America.



**Figure 5.3 Nationality of respondents (N=99)**

## 5.2 Lifestyles

This paragraph will reveal and compare the lifestyle of the Cultural Creatives with the tourists travelling to the North of Vietnam. Lifestyle can be explained according to Ray and Anderson (2000:34) as: *“the way people live, the things they buy, the kind of stores and shopping experiences they choose, the media they listen to, and the way their houses look inside and out”*.

### 5.2.1 Lifestyles of the Cultural Creatives

Ray and Anderson (2000:20) explain about Cultural Creatives: *“They are simply ordinary people, who share a culture of values and worldview, and to some extent, a lifestyle.”* They also explain that most Cultural Creatives in terms of occupation and education are a very diverse group, though there are a few higher educated people amongst them. The different lifestyle characteristics of the Cultural Creatives are listed in table 5.2. It shows the characteristics of the lifestyle choices of the Cultural Creatives and what they prefer. Some of the topics in table 5.2 are compared to the answers of the tourists. These are the topics which can be related to (responsible) tourism. These topics are divided into sub themes, revealed in paragraph 5.2.2.

The following quote of Ray and Anderson is relating to my research; it shows the life style characteristics which are exposed when you travel :*“When you travel to a new place, one way to learn about the local culture is to read the signposts: look at the books in the stores, watch the TV programs, identify the local heroes and heroines, see who makes news. We can tell a lot about cultures from what they pay attention to, whom they admire, who is an esteemed leader, who is merely a celebrity.”* (Ray and Anderson, 2000: 37).

**Table 5.2 Lifestyles of the Cultural Creatives (CCs) (Ray and Anderson, 2000: 35)**

<b>Books and radio</b>	CCs buy more books and magazines, listen to more radio and watch less television. They are literate, discriminating and dislike most what is on TV. They demand good information and have exceptionally goop deception-detectors for ads and for misleading corporate or political claims.
<b>Arts and culture</b>	Most CCs are aggressive consumers of the arts and culture.
<b>Stories, “whole process,” and systems</b>	CCs appreciate good stories and want views from the whole process of whatever they are reading. They like a system overview: they want to know where a product came from, how it was made, who made it, and what will happen to it when they are finished with it.
<b>Desire for authenticity</b>	CCs are the ones who brought the criterion of ‘authenticity to the market’. They lead the consumer rebellion against things that are ‘plastic,’ fake, imitation, poorly made, throwaway, cliché or high fashion. In traveling they like meeting/talking to local people.
<b>Careful/responsible consumers</b>	CCs are careful and well informed consumers. For the most part, they are careful, well-informed shoppers who do not buy on

	impulse.
<b>Soft innovation</b>	CCs are the leading edge of many cultural innovations. They tend to be innovators and opinion leaders for some knowledge-intensive products, including magazines, fine foods, wines and boutique beers.
<b>The foodies</b>	CCs are the 'foodies', people who like to talk about food, experiment with new kinds of food, cook with friends, eat out a lot, do gourmet and ethnic cooking, and try natural foods and health foods.
<b>Home</b>	Home is important to CCs but they don't buy a lot of new houses. They buy resale houses and fix them up the way they want.
<b>Authentic styling in homes</b>	CCs preferences for home styling is an authentic style. They want access to nature, walking and biking paths, ecological preservation, historic preservation, and master-planned communities that show a way to re-create community.
<b>The nest</b>	When CCs buy a home, they want it to be a nest. It should have a lot of privacy externally and private spaces within, including the buffering of children's spaces from adult spaces, and with lots of interesting nooks and niches.
<b>Interior decoration</b>	CCs like to have original art and craft pieces around the house. Status display happens inside the house, not outside, though it is not blatant: it is display of personal good taste and creative sense of style.
<b>Cars</b>	CCs are more likely to want safety and fuel economy in a midprice car. If they could also get an ecologically sound, high-mileage, recyclable car, they'd snap it up.
<b>Vacation travel / responsible tourism</b>	CCs define the leading edge of vacation travel that is exotic, adventuresome, without (too much) danger, educational, experiential, authentic, altruistic and/or spiritual. They like tours of temples in India, tours of the back country where tourists don't go, ecotourism, photo safaris, fantasy baseball camps, save-the-baby-seals vacations, help-rebuild-a-Mayan-village vacations. They don't go for package tours, fancy resorts, or cruises.
<b>Experiential consumers</b>	Many CCs are the prototypical consumers of the experience industry which offers an intense/enlightened/enlivening experience rather than a particular product. Examples include weekend workshops, spiritual gatherings, personal growth experiences, experiential vacations, the vacation-as-spiritual-tour, or the vacation-as-self-discovery.
<b>Holistic everything</b>	CCs are the prototypical innovators in, and consumers of, personal growth psychotherapy, alternative health care and natural foods. What ties these interests together is a belief in holistic health: body, mind, and spirit are to be unified.

*The themes which are colored yellow are the themes which will be highlighted in the following paragraph.*

### 5.2.2 Lifestyles of the tourists

This paragraph will bring the lifestyle characteristics of the Cultural Creatives and the findings of the research together. It highlights some of the characteristics summarised in table 5.1 and links this to the travelers in North-West Vietnam. The four themes that are discussed are; arts and culture, the foodies, vacation travel/responsible tourism and experiential consumers.

### ***Arts and culture***

Arts and culture are really important to the Cultural Creatives. Some of the ways they can be involved in it is by going to museums, being in art clubs, and writing books. Vietnam is country with a lot of history and culture, this already implies that the visitors are interested in this element of the country. Especially in the North-West of Vietnam the people are visiting because of the culture (stated in chapter 4). Aline (female, 60) explains that she needs culture while travelling: *“I am crazy about cinema, and theatre too. I need both, museum, culture and nature when traveling”*.

The Vietnamese travelers who are travelling in Vietnam travel completely different than the Western travelers. Mai Anh is a 23 year old German tourism student which I met in Sa Pa, when she was travelling around with friends. She has Vietnamese parents but she grew up in Germany and she speaks Vietnamese. Because she stands in the middle of this two cultures she wanted to experience the differences by going on Vietnamese trip and a trip for foreigners. She noticed that the Vietnamese tour is far more entertaining, by playing games during the trip, and she noticed that the travelers get more information on the Vietnamese trip because most Vietnamese have a difficulty in speaking English. She also explains about some features of the Vietnamese trips: *“I know that the way the Vietnamese are travelling is completely different to Europeans. Because most Vietnamese want to have an all inclusive holiday. And they really want to stay in their group. They are not that individual travelers. And they do not want to explore something. They just want to have everything already organised for them. I think Vietnamese people are less interested in doing trekking tours”*. This shows the contrast between the two cultures and the way of travelling.

Mai Anh draws an image of the Vietnamese tourists as the opposite of a Cultural Creative. This also implies why the Vietnamese companies have difficulties in adapting their (responsible) tours to Western tourists. They have difficulties in imagining what is important to the Western travelers. Mai Anh also explains that her Vietnamese family and colleagues discourages her to go to the North-West of Vietnam. They told her she shouldn't go there because the tourism is not developed and girls shouldn't travel alone to this areas. Local people which she met during her travel also discouraged her to travel to the North-West. *“I haven't even considered traveling to any place in the North. Because a lot of people here, the locals, told me it is not interesting at all. And if locals are telling you, you shouldn't go there then you even think locals are not satisfied or don't expect a lot”*.

### ***The foodies***

A life style characteristic of the Cultural Creatives is that they are the ‘foodies’, people who like to talk about food, like cooking, experiment with new kinds of food and are curious about food. By doing the interviews I noticed that a lot of the respondents talk about food. Aline (female, 60), Mai Anh (female, 23), Stephanie (female, 24) and Stefan (male, 24) mentioned that they think food is really important when travelling. They like to eat well and having good food. Especially Stefan is really enjoying food. He mentions that food is one of the important things for him when travelling. He elaborates on this by the following: “*We spend a lot of money on food, all of us. Yes often times we spend more money of food than on two days of sleeping. I want to explore and I was keen to learn about the Vietnamese kitchen. As I said I am curious and I wanted to try all the different curious food that is offered here. And I really love to cook and buying food and looking for food on markets.*” This quote shows that Stefan really loves food and he also wants to experience it while traveling. He is spending more money on food than on accommodations. Stefan shows resemblances with the theory of Ray and Anderson and in my opinion he can be identified as a “foodie”.

### ***Vacation travel/ responsible tourism***

According to Ray and Anderson (2000) the travelling of the Cultural Creatives is generally exotic, adventuresome without (too much) danger, educational, experiential, authentic, altruistic, and/ or spiritual. This lifestyle aspects will be divided into subtopics because it is a key topic in this research.

### ***Understanding responsible tourism***

To discuss responsible tourism with the travelers it is very important to get a clear inside in their understanding of the topic. The answers of the questionnaire show that 31.6% of the respondents have heard of responsible tourism, 46.9% knows what it means and 21.4% is not familiar with the term of responsible tourism. The respondents were also asked if they think they travel in a responsible way. 82.6% of the tourists answered that they think they travel in a responsible way, this is a significant number. 17.3% of the tourists did not think that they travel in a responsible way. To get more inside in this answer they are linked to the questions of the in-depth interviews. It shows that most respondents have a different idea of responsible tourism, the answers are very diverse. The different topics which are mentioned when people think about responsible tourism are the environment, not exploiting the people, being conscious, behave like a guest, volunteering, local community and eco-tourism projects.

Stefan is a tourism student and he is familiar with the term of responsible tourism. He explains: *“Behave like a guest, not trying to change a culture, or not trying to change a culture unconsciously. So that people in a certain district will change their offers or something. And of course the responsible environment. Tourism here in Vietnam, sometimes locals throw things out of the window, that is what I experienced. Respecting the local people. Don’t change them. Don’t change their offers.”* Stefan’s answer reflects his belief that it is really important not to change a culture.

Mowforth and Munt (2003) argue that more and more tourist facilities apply the label of responsible tourism to themselves, because of the positive and commercially valuable perception of the concept. This means that responsible tourism becomes a brand used to promote tourist destinations as a label for their tourism development policies, even if these products are not really ‘responsible’. Robert (male, 63) also noticed this in the North-West of Vietnam. He explains that by travelling through the North-West of Vietnam he experienced that a hotel was labeling responsible tourism. *“In Dien Bien Phu, I think it was the best hotel in the place and there is a big sign ‘Ecotourism’. I didn’t understand it. Because there is not a single farmer or whatsoever which is in this area at all. So they label ecotourism. But to me ecotourism is more like what I did in Mai Chau. Going to a guesthouse”*. This quote is significant because Robert is saying different things. He noticed that a hotel was labeled ‘ecotourism’ and he thinks ecotourism is associated with farmers and guesthouses. He has linked responsible tourism to the local people in the area. When he was asked about this he answered: *“To me ecotourism will be that I will be allowed to go in a village for one week and work with the local people on their forest or their rice plantation or whatsoever. Or helping them to develop some sites. But I did not see any of that”*.

The previous quote implies that Robert is very conscious of the role of the local community in responsible tourism. Stefan states that it is also important that foreign investors or hoteliers integrate into the local community. He noticed that some resorts owned by foreign companies or entrepreneurs seem to be small islands in a city or region, not integrated into the regional or local markets. Some foreign entrepreneurs even ship or fly in their products. This refers to import leakages in tourist areas in Vietnam. Frank (male, 31) also refers to the local community. He has been to a project in Laos called “The Gibbon Experience”, in which you can enjoy the jungle by doing obstacle tracks. The money of this project goes to the local people to preserve the nature reserve. He also mentioned that he did not see any of this kind of projects in Vietnam.

Bert (male, 60) is a tour guide working for a Dutch tour operator, he is a retired police officer and doing this job on a volunteer basis. For this research it is useful to have the opinion of a tour guide and their ideas of responsible tourism. He mentions that the tour operator where he is working for is working on responsible tourism; they sell Green Seats<sup>4</sup>, they have different projects and a feel good program. The feel good program exists of doing volunteering after the trip. According to Bert the tour operator is consciously working on responsible tourism.

This answers show that most respondents do have an idea of what responsible tourism means, but because the topic is so complex and elaborate the respondent's answers are one-sided. They all mention topics which are related to responsible tourism but none of the respondents is able to catch all the different aspects of the topic.

### *Danger*

Cultural Creatives like adventuresome holidays without (too much) danger. Danger is one of the topics that emerged from the interviews. This subject contains feeling safe in a country but it implies as well the planning of your holiday.

Travellers who are planning their entire holiday are looking for safety and do not want to be involved in unprepared situations. Aline and Robert did plan their entire trip. They made their own itinerary and pre-arranged it by internet through a travel agency in Ha Noi. They are traveling around Vietnam by car, with a driver and a private guide. But they customised their trip by making their own itinerary, so they did not go for pre-arranged package tours, which is a characteristic for Cultural Creatives. The other travelers are traveling independently and did not pre-arrange their trip. 17.8% of the respondents of the questionnaire did book their trip at a travel agency or tour operator. So the majority of the respondents is not booking their trip with a tour operator and is travelling independently.

Feeling safe in a country is important for Cultural Creatives. Aline needs to feel safe when she is travelling she explains: *"I like to feel secure. Here in Sa Pa it is safe. I am by myself all the time, I am walking the streets at night"*. So she explains that it is safe for a woman to travel alone in the North of Vietnam. From my own perspective as a single women travelling I can say that I never felt unsafe in the North of Vietnam. Even not in the capital city Ha Noi. The only thing is that you

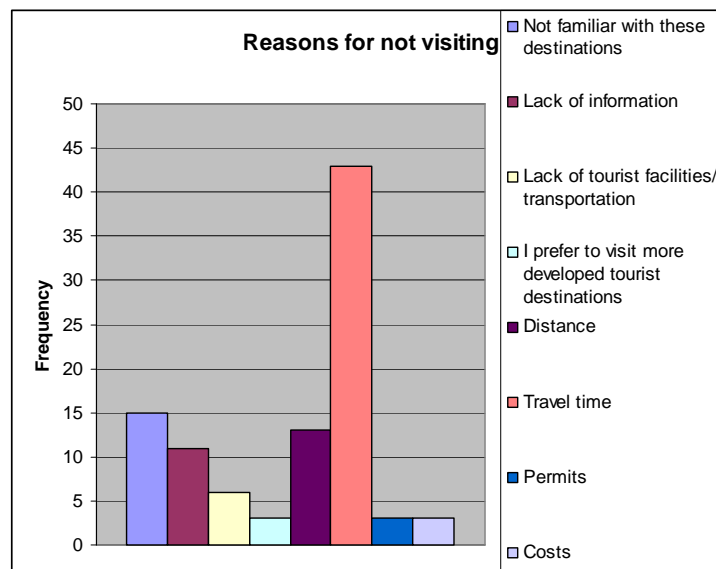
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<sup>4</sup> A (voluntary) Co<sup>2</sup> compensation program for flights, which invests in renewable energy and the planting of new forests.

have to be careful with your luggage. In the highlands this is not the case. Robert talks about his experience in Bac Ha where there is a large market every Sunday: “Really the market in Bac Ha is so crowded, but we never hear anybody say: ‘hey where is my stuff?’”. So Vietnam is a relatively safe destination and that is a definite draw for tourists to visit the country. An element which is not safe in Vietnam is the transportation. At some places in the North-West the roads are not good and the driving style is very dangerous. It also takes a lot of time to travel around the North. That is a reason why a lot of people are not visiting this part of Vietnam.

#### Visiting remote areas

Cultural Creatives like to travel to places which are exotic, experiential and authentic. Travelling to the remote areas of the North-West would be a logic destination if you look at this concept. Significant was that only two of the nine interviewees did travel to the remote areas in the North-West. From the questionnaire results only 8.9% is travelling to the remote areas outside of the tourist destinations in the North-West of Vietnam. This can be explained by the reason that the North-West of Vietnam is not developed for tourism, there are (almost) no destinations and the transportation is very bad, so actually the whole North-West of Vietnam is a remote area. Only a very small percentage of the respondents are adventurous enough to really go into the remote areas. The reasons for not travelling to these areas are showed in table 5.4.



**Figure 5.4 Reasons for not visiting the North-West (N=97, more answers possible)**



The most mentioned reason for not visiting the North-West area of Vietnam is the travel time, followed by the reason that the tourists are not familiar with this destinations and the distance. The interviewees of the in-depth interviews have different reasons for not visiting the remote areas. Aline got sick while travelling and she found it too difficult to travel to this areas. Her husband Robert decided to travel alone around the North-West. Katie (female, 30) explains: *“If I had more time and if I knew more about it and knew that trains go there and that it is accessible like by transportation. I would be interested if we had more time”*.

### ***Experiential consumers***

Many Cultural Creatives are consumers of the experience industry. They are striving for an intense, enlightening, enlivening experience rather than a particular product. Some of the answers of the respondents correspond to this, 37.2% thinks it is important to have authentic experiences while traveling and even 41.5% thinks this is very important. A concept which is related to this topic is that the experience has to be educational. Chris (male, 43) explained how this influences his life: *“I guess really getting acquainted with wherever I am going. So like Vietnam really getting to know the people and find out why they are different than we are and learn some things from them. I can go home by having learned something in life what they taught me”*. So for Chris it is really important to learn something new from the people he meets and the culture he is experiencing. Mai Anh also mentioned that it was important for her to learn and get new experiences in everything she does.

Stephanie and Stefan like to explore a country and culture in their own unique way. They share this with me: *“We are more interested in to watch and explore. Do something else and get lost. We really love to get lost so we have our city map I don't know anywhere and we just walk for hours until we get really tired and maybe forget that we are hungry and then it is already three o'clock and we just have breakfast or something. And because we are really flashed and amazed by all the smells and what you see. That is what we have done, all the times. When someone asks us what you have done today, we can just say we walked around, because that is what we do”*. This shows that Stefan and Stephanie really want to experience the place and culture where they are going. They do not plan activities or go to attractions. They just walk around and indulge themselves in the culture. This shows resemblances to the lifestyles and interests of the Cultural Creatives.

By filling in the questionnaire the respondents were asked to rate their lifestyle characteristics. One of the questions asked the people to identify to which level the dimensions were important to them on a 5 point Likert-scale. Respondents could opt for five categories: 1=unimportant, 2=important, 3=very important, 4=all determining and 5=no opinion. The dimensions respondents were asked to state their opinion on were derived from Ray and Anderson's (2000) book on Cultural Creatives. The 17 distinguished characteristics were: 'protect the environment', 'support local charities', 'support the local economy/industry', 'preservation of heritage', 'benefit the poor', 'poverty reduction', 'good local working conditions', 'respect local cultures', 'behave responsible', 'local development', 'improve quality of life of host communities', 'meet and interact with locals', 'authentic experiences', 'learn about other cultures', 'minimal impact on destination', 'conserving energy, water and minimising waste' and 'behave and dress appropriately'. The results of this question are enclosed in appendix 3, question 18.

Different colors are used in which red is the most mentioned variable and the green color is the least mentioned variable. The columns important and very important are mostly colored in shades of red. This shows that almost all respondents think the variables are important, this can be explained because it are generally shared lifestyle characteristics which are important to people. The things which are very important to the respondents are: 'respect local cultures' (62.5%), 'behave responsible' (59.4%), and 'support local charities' (54.4%). The things which are important to the respondents are: 'protect the environment' (53.7%) and 'good local working conditions' (51.5%). 'Learning about other cultures' is for 23.1% of the respondents all determining when travelling. This results in lifestyle characteristics show great resemblances with the lifestyles of the Cultural Creatives. They share a lot of lifestyle characteristics which they find important in their lives.

### **5.3 Motivations**

This paragraph will reveal and compare the motivations of the Cultural Creatives with the tourists traveling to the North-West of Vietnam.

#### *5.3.1 Motivations of the Cultural Creatives*

Ray and Anderson (2000:41) write in their book: *"When we travel to a new country, we feel almost irresistible impulse to smooth over the strangeness, the distinct particularity of the people we meet. We slip seamlessly into supposing they are just like ourselves, and we forget to marvel at the differences. It's not until we have dwelt in the new country long enough to be shocked,*

repeatedly, at the wrongness of our assumptions that we begin to notice the crucial things we have missed”. This shows that travelers when they go to a country they first want to smooth over the strangeness but after they have been indulged in a culture they marvel and enjoy all the differences. This paragraph will look at the motivations of tourists to travel to a country.

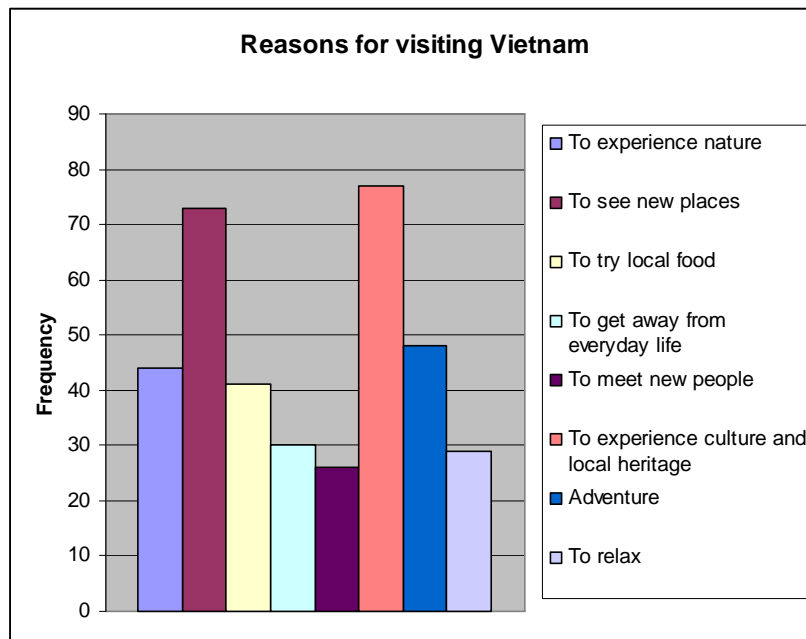
In their book “*The Global Nomad*” (2003) Richard and Wilson explain that the basic motivations for travelling in their research are a mixture of exploration, excitement and relaxation. A small proportion is travelling for altruistic motives. In table 5.3 the different motivations for traveling are summarised. This table will be used because the main topic in this book is cultural change and it is closely related to the Cultural Creatives theory. It will not look at the market-based research of putting tourists in different boxes, but it will see it in a bigger picture of the global change in human consciousness.

**Table 5.3 Motivations for undertaking trips** (Richards and Wilson, 2003:26)

<i>Motivation: I went on trip to:</i>	
Explore other cultures	Avoid hustle and bustle
Experience excitement	Find myself
Increase my knowledge	Relax physically
Relax mentally	Develop close friendships
Have a good time with friends	Associate with other travellers
Interact with local people	Be in a calm atmosphere
Challenge my abilities	Use my physical abilities/skills
Build friendships with others	Gain a feeling of belonging
Visit friends and relatives (VFR)	Contribute something to the places I visit
Use my imagination	

### 5.3.2 Motivations of the tourists

The tourists were asked for their reasons to visit Vietnam. The results of the questionnaires are shown in figure 5.5. The reason for visiting which is mentioned most is to experience culture and local heritage, followed by seeing new places. Adventure and experiencing nature are also mentioned frequently. This can be combined with the lifestyle characteristics of the Cultural Creatives in which culture, experiences and adventure are typical characteristics. If you compare this finding to the findings of Richards and Wilson you can see the resemblances with exploring new cultures and experience excitement. Not mentioned in table 5.3 are: seeing new places, adventure and nature.



**Figure 5.5 Reasons for visiting Vietnam** (N= 101, more answers possible)

The results from the in-depth interviews show that people travel to Vietnam for several reasons. Aline, Robert and Stephanie visited Asia before and wanted to visit another Asian country. Some of the respondents mention that they travel to Vietnam because they have heard that the people are very friendly. So they want to interact with the local people which is also revealed in table 5.3.

Some travelers have very specific reasons for visiting a destination. Katie, who is American, explains: “*Vietnam was in my personal interest because my father was in the Vietnam War.*” A part of Katie’s personal history is involved in Vietnam, so it was really important for Katie to see the country in which her father fought in the war.

Figure 5.6 shows the reasons for travellers to visit the North-West. 71.3% of the respondents is traveling to the North-West. The three key motivations for visiting the North-West are adventure, see local villages and meet local people. Other reasons which are also mentioned often are visiting some less touristy places in addition to the main destinations; see the real Vietnamese life and authenticity. This can be linked to the lifestyles and the values of the Cultural Creatives. When this is linked to the table of Richard and Wilson you can see the resemblances in interacting with local people, experience other cultures and experience excitement.

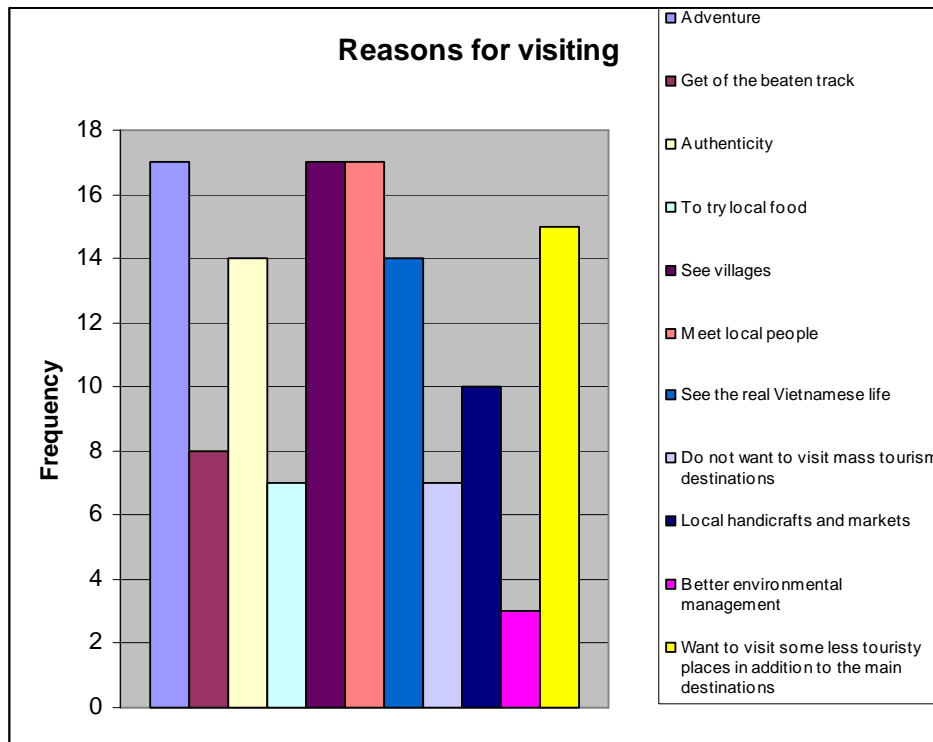


Figure 5.6 Reasons for visiting the North-West (N=101, more answers possible)

## 5.4 Values

This paragraph will reveal and compare the motivations of the Cultural Creatives with the tourists travelling in the North-West of Vietnam. According to Ray and Anderson (2000:7): “*Values are the best single predictor of real behavior*”.

### 5.4.1 Values of the Cultural Creatives

Table 5.4 shows the values which are most important to the Cultural Creatives compared to the Traditionals and Moderns. These different values can be subdivided in topics which are important to the Cultural Creatives. This are: authenticity, engaged action and whole process learning, idealism and activism, globalism and ecology, the importance of women, altruism, self-actualisation and spirituality.

**Table 5.4 Values of Cultural Creatives (Ray and Anderson, 2000:29)**

Values where Cultural Creatives have highest percentages (compared to Traditionals and Moderns)	
Want to rebuild neighborhoods/communities	Are idealistic
Fear violence against women and children	Believe in religious mysteries
Like what is foreign and exotic (xenophiles)	Are self-actualising
See nature as sacred	Are not financially materialistic
Hold general pro-environmental values	Want to be an activist
Believe in ecological sustainability	Do not have financial problems
Believe in voluntary simplicity	Combine spiritual and psychological development
Believe relationships are important	Are not cynical about politics
Believe success is not a high priority	Are optimistic about future
Are profeminist in work	Want more creative time for themselves
Are not concerned about job prosperities	Believe in holistic health
Are altruistic (help others, volunteer)	

#### 5.4.2 Values of the tourists

The tourists were asked what the most important values in their life are and what the most important values are when travelling. These answers are compared to the values of the Cultural Creatives as listed in table 5.4.

Some of the travelers are mentioning that friends and family are the most important in their life. This is also mentioned by Ray and Anderson, in their book they clarify: *“The Cultural Creatives have strong concerns about the well-being of families and want to improve caring relationships in all areas of life, private and public. Eighty-nine percent say ‘the caring quality of your relationships with people’ is very or extremely important to their lives”*.

Significant is that a lot of the respondents start talking about money. A characteristic of the Cultural Creatives is that they are not materialistic. Aline mentioned the following: *“Some people might think I am materialistic, I am not at all. My husband is but I am not. Like he is always trying to improve the house, I do not care. I hate construction works. When he renovates I go to Montreal. I could live in a smaller house as long as there is comfort and I like the area and I like what I have to do”*. So she mentions that people might think she is materialistic but she thinks she is not.

For Chris, Frank and Stefan it is important to earn enough money to be able to have financial security and a good quality of life. Stefan elaborates on this: *“being successful and still having*

*opportunities to enjoy my life. Sometimes I want to be a businessman, really straightforward and on the other side I am a small hippie. So I am a mixture of all. The pursuit of happiness that is what I want, because for well living you need a certain amount of money. And to get a certain amount of money you have to work. You have to have a job, a nice salary. But not too much and too time consuming*". For Stefan money is not that important, but he explains that he needs it to live well. He is also mentioning that he sees himself as a small hippie. Table 5.4 shows that Cultural Creatives do not have financial problems and this is revealed by the research. They need money to live well but it is not a top priority in their lives.

Other topics which are mentioned as important values are the environment (Katie) and learning and getting new experiences (Stephanie). This corresponds with some of the values of Cultural Creatives which are listed in table 5.4.

#### *Volunteering*

Characteristic for Cultural Creatives is that they have an altruistic lifestyle; this is reflected by being involved in volunteering which is also revealed in table 5.4. Aline, Katie and Chris are talking about their experiences and plans of doing volunteering. Aline is planning to do some community work in South-America because she speaks Spanish.

Katie and Chris are very involved in volunteering. Katie is doing volunteering (at an elderly home) at home which is important to her. Because this is important to her she also wants volunteer while travelling, she talks about this: *"We are also doing some volunteering. In Thailand we are going to help save some of the native turtle species. We are doing that for two weeks. Then we go to a local community where it is not touristy at all and where the local people are involved to do some environmental teaching to the children that are in the community. In Africa, Tanzania we are going to do some volunteering in a project for people who have been infected by aids. So it is an orphanage and training for women who have aids. And helping them to start some small businesses"*. Katie and Chris are traveling around the world for eight months, by their altruistic nature they also want to give something back to the countries and communities they visit. For the questionnaire a 5 point Likert-scale was chosen which shows that 42.7% of the respondents think altruism is applicable to them and 11.2% of the respondents think that altruism is very applicable to them. This is representing almost half of the respondents. This is a significant high percentage, so this can implicate that a large part of the respondents is fitting in the Cultural Creatives subculture.

In the questionnaire there is a question on values which asked the respondents to which level different dimensions would apply to them on a 5 point Likert-scale. Respondents could opt for 5 categories: 1=not applicable to me, 2=slightly applicable to me, 3=applicable to me, 4=very applicable to me and 5=no opinion. The dimensions respondents were asked to state their opinion on were derived from Ray and Anderson's (2000) book. The 22 distinguished values were: 'environmentally conscious', 'adventurous', 'active', 'materialism', 'social', 'contentment', 'optimism', 'politically aware', 'relationship/network oriented', 'feeling of freedom', 'ability to enjoy', 'spirituality', 'success', 'creativity', 'sustainability', 'authenticity', 'idealism', 'religion', 'activism', 'self-actualisation', 'self-awareness' and 'altruism'. The table is enclosed in appendix 3, question 19.

'Applicable to me' is the scale which is mostly chosen by the respondents. The most mentioned variables which are very applicable to the respondents are: ability to enjoy (55.3%) and feeling of freedom (47.3%). The variables which are applicable to the respondents are: social (57.9%), active (54.6%) and optimism (50%). To compare the values of the respondents to the values of the Cultural Creatives it is also necessary to look at the values which are not applicable to the respondents. Religion is not (40%) and slightly (34.4%) applicable to the respondents. Materialism is not (30.4%) and slightly (37.0%) applicable to the respondents. This is also true for the Cultural Creatives. Significant is that spirituality is not (26.9%) and slightly (25.8%) applicable and activism (25.5%) and slightly (34.0%) applicable to the respondents. These are two values which are very applicable to the Cultural Creatives.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

The results of the research show that there are signs that a part of the travellers in the North of Vietnam who participated in the research fit in the emerging subculture of the Cultural Creatives. There is also a smaller part that is obviously not fitting in the Cultural Creatives subculture. Noteworthy to say is that most of the travelers have characteristics of the Cultural Creatives but it is not possible to say that they match 100% with the Cultural Creatives, there are always characteristics which do not fit in the image Ray and Anderson draw. So I state that the travellers who have several matching characteristics do fit in the subculture of the Cultural Creatives.



## 6. Conclusions

In this chapter I summarise, integrate and discuss the results of this study. I will provide an integration of the quantitative and the qualitative findings, focusing on lifestyles, motivations and values, while embedding the results within the broader concept of the emerging global Cultural Creatives subculture. This study is put in a responsible tourism perspective and linked to the overall context of a transmodern worldview. The scope for further research will be provided at the end of the chapter.

### 6.1 Conclusions

The main purpose of this exploratory study was to investigate the lifestyles, motivations, and values of the tourists exploring the Northern provinces of Vietnam, in order to identify whether a segment of this tourists reveal a transmodern line of thought, and thus fit into the emerging Cultural Creatives subculture.

Demographic and psychographic profiles of the research population form the background against which the qualitative results may be projected. The tourist visiting to the North of Vietnam are predominantly young aged, 33.3 % of them are between the 25 and 34 years old, but a relatively large share (15%) of the travellers is in the age group 55-64, this is as well coming forward from the research SNV conducted amongst tourists. 50% of the respondents attended university, so they are mostly higher educated. Most common job categories which the respondents are working in are construction, education, business and health. The tourists are dominantly from well-off Western countries. In the following paragraphs the conclusions of the main concepts will be presented and they will be linked toward the emerging subculture of the Cultural Creatives.

#### *Responsible tourism*

Ray and Anderson (2000:331) are explaining the connection between responsible (eco) tourism and the Cultural Creatives; *“Ecotourism is typical of industries done by Cultural Creatives for Cultural Creatives. You can hear the voice of the subculture in the way ecotravel businessman Will Weber describes his work: This is a great business. We have the privilege of connecting intelligent, curious, caring travelers, with friendly, responsible local hosts in a spirit of goodwill and sympathetic inquiry. The more authentically we present destination cultures and natural habitats, the more our travellers appreciate and value the experience. I can’t imagine a business with more potential for aiding preservation and cross-cultural understandings”*

The ideas of the tourists in this research concerning responsible tourism are very diverse. The results show that most respondents have various ideas of responsible tourism. The different topics which are mentioned when people think about responsible tourism are: the environment, not exploiting the people, being conscious, behave like a guest, volunteering, local communities and eco-tourism projects. This answers show that most respondents do have an idea of what responsible tourism means, but because the topic is so complex and elaborate the respondent's answers are mostly one-sided. They all mention topics which are related to responsible tourism but none of the respondents is able to catch all the different aspects of the topic.

As mentioned in the beginning of this report, tourists are realising more and more that their participation in tourism comes with a cost to the communities and environments through which they pass and they want to contribute to the communities and environments they visit. Responsible tourism is an industry which is done by and for Cultural Creatives. It is important that responsible tourism is linked to the Cultural Creatives subculture because a lot of the values imbedded in the concept are important values to the Cultural Creatives, they want a better life for the future of next generations. This is also one of the key issues of transmodernity, after centuries of destroying the earth it is now time to make up the balance and fight for a better world.

#### *Lifestyle characteristics*

The lifestyle characteristics of the travellers who visited the North of Vietnam show a lot of resemblances with the life style characteristics of the Cultural Creatives. The four main themes which clearly came forward from the interviews are arts and culture, the foodies, vacation travel/responsible tourism and experiential consumers. In short, arts and culture is very important to the respondents, they emphasize on the importance of culture when traveling and the differences in travelling for the Western and Vietnamese tourists. This undoubtedly shows that (most) domestic Vietnamese travellers do not fit into the Cultural Creatives profile. Another topic which clearly came forward in the interviews is the concept of food. A lifestyle characteristic of the Cultural Creatives is that they are foodies; people who like food and like to talk about food. Aline, Mai Anh, Stephanie and Stefan really love to talk about food during the interviews. The concept of danger is also significantly coming forward from the interviews. Ray and Anderson (2000) explain that Cultural Creatives like travelling without (too) much danger. The interviews show that the tourists really like to travel safe in a country. Vietnam is a relatively safe destination, so this is a definite draw for the tourists. Cultural Creatives like to travel to places which are exotic, experiential and authentic. The research shows that there are not a lot of tourists

visiting the remote areas outside the developed tourism destinations like Sa Pa and Mai Chau. This can be explained by the travel time and bad infrastructure and transportation. The whole North-West area of Vietnam is a 'remote' area, so there are only a few tourists who venture into the really remote areas. Another topic which is important to the travellers who participated in this research is to have special experiences, this is complying with the theory of Ray and Anderson in which they describe that Cultural Creatives are striving for intense, enlightening and enlivening experiences.

#### *Motivations for travelling*

Richard and Wilson (2003) explain that the basic motivations for travelling in their research are a mixture of exploration, excitement and relaxation. A small proportion is travelling for altruistic motives. The results of the questionnaires and interviews show that the following motivations are most important for tourists when they travel to (the North-West of) Vietnam: 'experience culture and local heritage', 'seeing new places', 'adventure', 'experience nature' and interaction and meeting local people is also very important to the respondents. Significant is the almost half of the respondents think altruism is (very) applicable to them. This can implicate that a large part of the respondents is fitting in the Cultural Creatives subculture.

#### *Personal values*

Values which are most important for the Cultural Creatives can be divided in the following topics; authenticity, engaged action and whole process learning, idealism and activism, globalism and ecology, the importance of women, altruism, self-actualisation and spirituality. The respondents of the research mention that the most important values in their lives are; relationships, living well, without having financial problems, the environment and learning and getting new experiences. Another topic which is really important to both the Cultural Creatives and the respondents of the research is volunteering. Katie, Chris, Bert and Aline are involved in volunteering both at home and while travelling. This show that they have altruistic motives and want to contribute to society.

In this study I have focused on the lifestyles, motivations and values of the Cultural Creatives to answer the question to what extent the tourists visiting the North of Vietnam fit into the characteristics of this emerging subculture. The results of this study show that there are signs that a part of the travellers in North Vietnam who participated in this research fit in the emerging subculture of the Cultural Creatives. There is also a smaller part that is obviously not fitting in the Cultural Creatives subculture. There are also signs that the domestic Vietnamese traveller is not

fitting in the Cultural Creatives subculture. Noteworthy to say is that most of the travellers have characteristics of the Cultural Creatives but it is not possible to say that they match 100% with the Cultural Creatives, there are always characteristics which do not fit in the image Ray and Anderson draw. So I state that the travelers who have several matching characteristics do fit in the subculture of the Cultural Creatives. Because the research is done on a relatively small scale more evidence has to be collected in order to be able to confirm this findings.

The emerging subculture of the Cultural Creatives has a global scope and allows the results of this study to function as examples, fitting into a transmodern line of thought. To answer the final research question, *‘Does the outcome of this study support a transmodern line of thought?’* it is important to link it to the concept of responsible tourism. Because responsible tourism is in most studies seen as a market-based concept it was really important to emphasise in this study on the possibility of being a transmodern Cultural Creatives phenomenon. Ray and Anderson show that responsible (or eco) tourism is an explicit example of an industry done for and by responsible tourists. This research show that a lot of the respondents think responsible tourism is important and they are conscious of their influence in visited destinations. In order to shape a better world for tomorrow Cultural Creatives can put emphasis on responsible tourism by being the ones who produce and consume this form of tourism.

## **6.2 Scope for further research**

In order to obtain more evidence for the theory of the Cultural Creatives and the transmodern line of thought it is necessary that more research, with larger samples will be executed on this topic. This can be done by executing research on Cultural Creatives in other geographical areas of the world. Local communities can also be considered in future research, by placing them also in the broader subculture of the Cultural Creatives. It would as well be fascinating to research non-Western tourists in order to identify their perspectives and link this to the Cultural Creatives. In Vietnam a research to the domestic tourists could be an option, linking this to responsible tourism it would give a whole new perspective on the phenomenon.

The perspective of responsible tourism can also be further broadened by linking it to other theories. By gaining more inside on the responsible tourists this can also be used in research which can help develop a better working responsible tourism industry for the production and consumption side, but also for the local communities. This can create a better future for tourism

and the communities and the tourists who are involved in it which is the goal of the Cultural Creatives and the transmodern line of thought.

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# **Appendix 1**

*Stakeholder interviews*

# Interview stakeholders

## Introduction

SNV has initiated a program to stimulate tourism development in North-West Vietnam. The “Northern Highlands: Comprehensive Tourism Development Program” aims at introducing and practicing the concept of ‘inclusive sustainable tourism’ as an efficient development tool. This program considers eight provinces in the North-West: Hoa Binh, Son La, Dien Bien, Lai Chau, Lao Cai, Yen Bai and Ha Giang.

## Goal

To gain an insight into the current travel market in North-West Vietnam. The stakeholders can also help identify the locations for conducting the second phase of this research.

## Questions

### *Organisation*

- What is your organisation’s role in the tourism industry in Vietnam and in North-West Vietnam?
- Do you work in North-West Vietnam? In which areas? (Not a tour operator)
- Do you offer trips to North-West Vietnam? To which destinations? (Tour operator)

### *General*

- Can you give me a general idea about the tourism industry in North-West Vietnam? (modes of transportation, overall quality of accommodations, support provincial government)
- What are the most popular tourism destinations in North-West Vietnam?
- What are the Unique Selling Points of North-West Vietnam?

### *Tourists*

- How many tourists are travelling to North-West Vietnam? (Reports, figures, statistics)
- What are the reasons for tourists to visit North-West Vietnam?
- What kind of tourists are travelling to North-West Vietnam? Can the tourists be divided into different groups?
- What are their main activities?
- What are the main modes of travel for tourists in North-West Vietnam?

- Has your organisation done any research looking at tourists visiting the destinations in North-West Vietnam? Or are there any other researches you know of? (Reports)
- What information would you be interested to obtain from tourists?

#### *Responsible tourism*

- What do you consider to be responsible tourism?
- Do you work in the responsible tourism business?
- In your opinion, do you think there is a responsible tourism industry in North-West Vietnam? (Yes/No) Can you please explain your answer?
- In what way can the tourism industry in North-West Vietnam become more responsible? (Things to improve)
- Do you know of any good examples where tourism development has led to poverty reduction, or where tourism companies have initiated any poverty reduction projects (in NW Vietnam)? How does your organisation look at that?

#### *Destinations*

- Which destinations have a high tourism potential for the future?
- Is your organisation working on developing new areas?
- Which destinations would you recommend to me to conduct my research? (tourism hubs, 'new' destinations)

#### *Concluding*

- Any other issues you would like to share?

# **Appendix 2**

*Transcripts stakeholder interviews*

**Interview Pankaj Prandham**  
**Organisation: Buffalo Tours**  
**Function: Head of Operations**  
**21 January 2010, 13.00**  
**Duration: 36,39 min.**

**E: Ellen**  
P: Pankaj

**E: Can you tell me what your organisations role is in the tourism industry in Vietnam and in North-West Vietnam?**

P: We have been in the industry for the last 15 years, a bit over 15 years now. We started as an adventure tour company. Particularly offering trip, soft adventures I would say, in Hoa Bing Province, in the Lao Cai region. We were one of the first companies to start a trekking program there. Which resulted in developing Community Based Tourism in a way that we have to rely, we have train the local hosts and guides and that is how we started. And later on other tour companies as well started to send their groups there. And now, 15 years down the line Mai Chau receives quite a few numbers of clients. I won't be able to tell you exactly now with the number wise, but a few hundred tourists every year.

**E: In Mai Chau?**

P: In Mai Chau region, this is in Hoa Binh Province.

**E: I am going there too to do research.**

P: This is in Hoa Bien Province. And later on as we expanded we felt the need of other areas as well and professional services to expand to the costumers. So we expanded all throughout Vietnam, providing different kind of tours, from classic luxury, high-end and not only limiting to the adventures. So we sort of expanded and now foreign daughter's countries of Indo China like Cambodia, Laos and Thailand.

**E: Ok, but you offer trips trough whole Vietnam?**

P: Yes, we do have trips for all over Vietnam. Currently we handle about, our whole group, handles about 50.000 tourists annually. Not only Buffalo Tours but we are talking about the whole, our parent company is called Ten Jing. Under Ten Jing Buffalo Tours is one of the pioneer tour operators. Besides we have other joint ventures like Intropid trekking China, which is a well established adventure tour company of the world.

**E: And in the North-West of Vietnam, what do you do there?**

P: North-West of Vietnam we have more adventure activities there. Because the area where you are looking at, particularly where SNV is looking at, Hoa Binh, Yen Minh, Lai Chau, Son La. Around Hoa Binh, as I said before, we have trekking, home stays, starting from one day to five days program in that region. Around Son La, Dien Bien Phu and Lai Chau we have as well a trekking in this region, but it is not very well.....

**E: Developed?**

P: Yes, it is not very developed as well. One thing is that it is not developed and the other thing is logistically it takes quite a lot of time to get there just to do the trekking and so on. However this area, this route exactly is quite popular for the cyclists. So in Buffalo Tours we have currently a program of a week to 10 days cycling. You start from Ha Noi and it exactly follows the same trail as Hoa Binh.

**E: With groups?**

P: With groups. And from Sa Pa they take a train back to Ha Noi.

**E: And how far, what you know of, is the tourist industry in North-West Vietnam already developed?**

P: The tourism trail is developed; however there are quite a few other potentials I believe can be developed such as: more authentic trekking, identifying better routes for cycling because at the moment we are a little bit restricted and most of the companies are probably following the same route. Landscape wise it is quite attractive, minority people, so there has points of attraction that. and yes there can be other products developed in that area.

**E: Ok and what about the modes of transportation? Is it ok for tourists to travel?**

P: It is, it is absolutely. Well, of course it is a hilly region where a little up and downhill driving is involved.

**E: I noticed that in Ha Giang.**

P: That's correct, however it is a proper peached service road. So there is no problem with the logistics.

**E: And the overall quality of accommodations?**

P: Overall quality of accommodations is a bit of a problem for this region. There are a few small guesthouses and up to two to three locally claimed two-three star hotels. They are doing the best, however they are not in the same level as other regions. So accommodation is a bit of a shortage, in this area. And as well, the thing is, besides accommodation, most of these hotels

are obviously developed in the main cities, such as Dien Bien Phu and Lai Chau and so on and it would be definitely good to have some other accommodations, perhaps some home stays and things build along the road. So not necessarily clients have to stay in the cities. This goes as well with a model of pro-poor tourism and community based tourism and promoting the local communities to provide the service and directly benefiting to the individual families or to the communities.

**E: So home stays will be the best solution?**

P: Home stays or mini, small guesthouses and some local restaurants.

**E: And is there any support from the provincial government to develop these areas?**

P: There should be support, but to the level of what it can be.... But there is still an area for further support and for further promotion of the area.

**E: What are the most popular tourism destinations in North-West Vietnam? Of course Sa Pa...**

P: Sa Pa is certainly the most popular destination I would have to say in the North of Vietnam. There is an increasing interest among the tourists to Dien Bien, Lai Chau, and these areas. But logistics is a problem while when the tourists comes to Vietnam you have to look at the number of frequent customers is very low, less than 5%. So when they come most of the tourists come here for two weeks and they want to see the whole Vietnam, the whole country. To do the North, one week is necessary to cover this bit so the rest of the one week is not probably enough to see the Centre and South of the country. So this is one of the reasons of this area, there is a little bit under looked at even though some tourists may want to visit because of the time frame they can not and well it is not easy accessible. There is quite a bit of driving involved to get there. So for instance, tourists can not say, I have two days extra en I want to do an extension to visit the North-West of Vietnam, no it is not possible. The only way of getting there is driving, there is no airport or anything, except Dien Bien Phu.

**E: But the tourists who go with Buffalo Tours will only go with big groups or also in little groups?**

P: It can be an individual group as well, a smaller group. But the tourist who is more interested in the cultural aspect of the tour, more adventures and want to see the authentic side of the country. Perhaps among those 5% repeat visitors would probably go to the area of North-West Vietnam to

further explore. Or who has a bit more time than two weeks, which is a small percentage.

**E: You might have some individual travellers, but they do not book tours at a tour operator. Ok so you have Sa Pa, Dien Bien Phu, Lao Cai, also Mai Chau is popular, right?**

P: Mai Chau is certainly popular. But not is the same scale as Sa Pa. The region has quite a lot of potential in terms of colourful minorities, in terms of landscape, in terms of adventure activities such as cycling and trekking.

**E: And what do you think are the Unique Selling Points of North-West Vietnam? I think you already mentioned some of them, the minorities, the mountains, the views....**

P: Exactly, the minorities, landscape, the authenticity and it is still not yet heavily touched by the tourism. You still get to see the pure, natural side of the country.

**E: But what do you think about Sa Pa, is that still pure or is that already to much touched by tourism? I heard some negative stories.**

P: We all know that Sa Pa is beautiful of course and has a lot of interesting things to offer to the tourists, to the visitors. But we know over the time there has been more supply than demand, which has obviously created imbalance in the external environment. And certainly we need to look at other areas. It is not only about the responsible initiatives and following the guidelines of sustainable tourism as well as it is good to help the other communities, the other people benefit from the tourism, not only one particular area.

**E: I would like to know some more about the tourists who are visiting. Do you know how many tourists are travelling to the North-West, do you maybe have some figures?**

P: From Buffalo Tours we would have about 1000 to 2000 tourists a year.

**E: Do you know the total number of tourists visiting?**

P: Well... I do not think it is more than 15.000 that is my rough estimation.

**E: But we are talking now only about international tourists, right?**

P: Right, we are not including the domestic tourists.

**E: And do you know how many domestic tourists are visiting?**

P: Domestic tourism to North-West Vietnam, there is a fair bit of traffic, but I won't be able to provide you any stats on it. But there is a fair bit of domestic traffic.



**E: But my research is focusing on the international tourists, so that is more important. Can the tourists be divided into different groups? The international tourists, or is it just one particular kind of tourist who is going there? I read something about backpackers, luxurious tourists....**

P: Can it be divided to that region, sorry what is your question?

**E: The tourists who visit the North-West, what kind of tourists are they?**

P: It is more so of a middle bracket tourist, middle income tourist who spend about 50 to 100 dollars a day. For high-end the facilities and infrastructure is still not yet set up. For the backpackers it is slightly over the budget to go.

**E: But the backpackers go to Sa Pa, right?**

P: O yes absolutely, definitely. Not to the mountains. In the North I would say a hundred or a couple of hundred a day.

**E: What are the main activities tourist do when they go North?**

P: The North-West cycling mainly, trekking and a very small percentage cultural trips. Because Dien Bien Phu being a historical site back in the French colonisation period and the war, they fought. So there would be some numbers of French tourists going to that area and beside French there are a few others. So mostly adventure and a bit of cultural.

**E: And the main modes of transportation the tourist use in North-Vietnam?**

P: It is all service vehicles, cars, four wheel drives.

**E: But they do not go by the local busses?**

P: Local busses, I personally do not think that tourists are going there by local busses because there are local busses of course but it is not suited for the tourists and all the facilities. As well the timing is different, which does not match with the tourists needs. So it is all privately organised.

**E: Has your organisation, Buffalo Tours, done any research looking at the tourists visiting the North-West?**

P: We have done a bit of research but whenever the research is done we analyse very carefully the impact after the implementation. Is it going to bring the value to the company, to the local people or not? Because doing a research, introducing a product is easy but actually making that product marketable and bringing it to clients is the important factor there. And if in some areas we are not confident that it will create values for that product, we are hesitant to start something. But we have done some research

**E: But also on the tourists visiting the North-West? Or not? Like in my research, questionnaires and interviews?**

P: Questionnaires and things like that well we have a proper feedback system from the tourists. In which we ask them to provide us to improve our service quality and provide us with any other comments. It is quite a holistic approach. We do ask for feedback, but the tourist who go there certainly enjoy the trip. So far we have not received any comment from the tourist that they did not enjoy the trip. Everybody enjoys because there is so much interesting things to offer and see. Culture, landscape, ethnic minorities.

**E: Yes, I noticed that in Ha Giang, it was really nice. And, for my research, could you maybe give me some tips what information would interesting to obtain from tourists?**

P: Particularly focussing on this area?

**E: Yes. Which topics are not covered yet by researches?**

P: You want to interview particularly tourists?

**E: Yes. Of course I have an idea what I want to know from them. But maybe you have some other topics which I can cover?**

P: If I was you I want to know from them things like... Why they chose to come to this area, compared to other areas in Vietnam. How much time do you spend in Vietnam? This will give you quite a good idea of the time tourists spend in particular areas. Why did they choose particular this specific area to come compared to other regions in South-East Asia. Such as Lao and Cambodia and so on. So basically asking them about their expectations, the reason why they decided to go to that area and skimming down to the expectations. What are the expectations, do they meet in terms of service, in terms of quality, in terms of what they have expected from the region.

**E: Your company is a responsible tour operator? Right?**

P: Yes we do quite a few projects on responsible tourism.

**E: Does Buffalo Tours see itself as a responsible tour operator?**

P: All tour operators mention this responsible travel it quite of a very catchy jargon. But there is a difference in just mentioning it and doing things.

**E: What do you consider to be responsible tourism?**

P: It actually a quite elaborated and very big area the whole responsible tourism. a) How you operate, it is related to internal and external environment. Internally how you operate in a country. It comes to operating, meeting the norms of complying with the local regulations, you gain tax,

you are being transparent, and you are giving back to the country of what the normal regulation is. If you have a proper good policies on place to look after staff. Externally operate within the area where we can work together with local communities where we can get the supply chain and increase the value chain of the people involved in the whole mechanism. If something can be purchased locally, yes why not? And rather then sending it from Ha Noi. Or using the local capacities. So it is better to use areas. All the projects what we have done to for the last... In Hoa Binh and May Chau, well we started with a trekking and gradually we saw the need that high-end people want to go as well. And appreciate the local area and want to stay in some comfort. So we started of a lodge, four stars. Most of our staff are all locals except the top management. We train them, we provide them with all the skills like English language and they are earning double then the other people. We expect to get more people, expand a little bit. So this is one of the examples, besides we do things like the medical trek every year, there is quite a lot of work involved. We have medical doctors from overseas coming to Vietnam and local doctors as well. They trek to the North-West and particularly focusing on Mai Chau perhaps we want to extend it further, set up a camp there in these areas for a week and treat the patients. The beautiful part is that those people over there can never afford to go to the hospital, they have never seen a doctor in their live. So this is one of the things we do. And we are developing a project together with SNV in a community based approach currently in Ha Giang. This is not a new approach, we have already done it in other areas. We as well initiated this program called clean Fansipan. We advise our porters to bring the garbage down from the Fansipan trail. The Fansipan is the highest mountain in Vietnam.

**E: But in your opinion, do you think that there is a responsible tourism industry in North-West Vietnam? Or is it just a few tour operators, or NGO's like SNV?**

P: Responsible tour operators.... well this is something.... private sector, private tour operators have to take the initiatives.

**E: Yes, but overall it is not..?**

P: There is no such organisation or there is no such policy in place like that this are the norms of responsible tourism one has to follow when visiting the North-West of Vietnam. This is a personal initiative, consciousness by

tour operators should have one place while operating tours anywhere into the North-West.

**E: And in what way do you think that the tourism industry in North-West Vietnam can become more responsible?**

P: First there is the private sector that has to take the initiative, which I think quite a lot of tourism companies are doing it, as well as educating the local people which is very important. Building the capacities of the locals, without educating... I personally do not believe in enforcing any strict policies and guidelines, that is not a sustainable approach. You have to go and spend some times with the locals in a very participatory approach. Of explaining, telling, giving them the examples of what has happened in other regions because of not complying or following the sustainable approach. So it has to be all the parties involved from the private sector, the locals, local provincial government and then NGOs like SNV.

**E: Everybody has to work together.**

P: Exactly it is a team effort.

**E: And do you know of any good examples where tourism development has led to poverty reduction? Or where tourism companies have initiated any poverty reduction projects?**

P: Mai Chau can be an example, it is a fantastic testimony of a project we have done, which we are quite proud of. Creating jobs for a couple of hundred people. Lifting up their income level.

**E: That is really good. For the future do you think, which destinations have a high tourism potential?**

P: I would say Mai Chau, Ha Giang has got a lot of potential. Mai Chau is established in the region. But still they can do more for further developing in that region. Ha Giang on the other hand is very colourful, the landscape is absolutely fantastic, it has so much to offer. But there are some bottlenecks, there are some speed bumps along the way it can be addressed. But I see a huge potential for Ha Giang. I would be good for locals but also for tourists because it offers something different.

**E: What do you think are the main challenges in Ha Giang?**

P: Infrastructure and capacity building.

**E: And your organisation, I know you are working in Ha Giang, do you also work in other areas to develop, or are you planning in the future to develop some new areas?**

P: At the moment we are focussing on Mai Chau and Ha Giang. Well, there are quite a few other areas but we want to specifically focus on a few areas and achieve what we want and bring some results. Rather than going everywhere and encouraging no results.

**E: Ok. And for my research my plan is to go to Sa Pa, Dien Bien Phu, and Mai Chau to see the established tourist areas. After that I want to go to areas which are not developed yet. And my goal is to find tourists and interview them. Do you think I should go to these areas? Is it a good idea to do that?**

P: Yes these developed areas have plenty of tourists, but I doubt if you will find any tourists in other areas. What I suggest is probably you can start with less visited areas, where probably a few numbers of tourists visit take some pictures and then go to the visited areas and see like this are the options this are the things which this areas has to offer and in the next visit would you recommend your friends to go to this area instead of the other area?

**E: Yes. I am going to do in-dept interviews with tourists, one for the tourists who already visited the remote areas and one for the tourist who did not visit yet. But of course I need tourists that is why I need to go to the tourist places to find them.**

P: Good luck if you can find any, but if you can not find then I would suggest visit the area first and then interview the tourists who are already in the tourist area. Given that, if you had the choice would you go to that area? Would you recommend your friends to go to this area?

**E: Yes, it will be a challenge I think.**

P: Yes, interesting.

**E: Ok. This were my questions, I do not know if you have anything you would like to add?**

P: No

**E: Ok. Thank you very much for this interview.**

**Interview Son, Dang Xuan**

**Organisation: Footprint Vietnam Travel**

**Function: Co-Founder, Product Manager**

**25 January 2010, 14.00**

**Duration: 46 min.**

**E: Ellen**

S: Son

**E: Could you start by telling me what your organisations role is in the tourism industry Vietnam is and particularly in the North-West area?**

S: Footprint travel is known to support travellers in Vietnam. We have travellers coming from different countries to Vietnam. It could be from Europe, it could be from North-America as well from Australia. We are more like many tour companies, but our difference is that we try to minimise the impact and we try to bring back some positive impacts. We try to bring as much as possible and not some, as much as we can. And we do hope that we would have some support from our travellers, our guests. Of course our staff and all the footprint members the finalise reason in the country, in Vietnam, to work with responsible travel and minimise the impacts. It has been a challenge for footprint because we are a small company and we do not have many guests per year. We just have a few hundred to thousand a year and that is something that is a little bit difficult for footprint. To overcome all the challenges in responsible travel. So, last year 2009 we decided to work with other tour companies in town. It was a huge effort. SNV supports footprint to work with other tour companies in town, Ha Noi. And we worked together on it with SNV We are with eight companies all together. Called the responsible travel club. And this is something that we really want, to grow bigger in terms of supporting responsible travel in Vietnam.

**E: This are all tour operators located in Ha Noi?**

S: Yes, mainly in Ha Noi. So that was something brief and quick about Footprint.

**E: And what is your role in North-West Vietnam? Do you offer trips to North-West Vietnam?**

S: Yes we do.

**E: And to which destinations?**

S: We offer trips throughout the country. But the North of Vietnam is our main territory. We do different kind of trips to the North-West/North-East region, including Son La, Lai Chau, Dien Bien, up to Lao Cai, Ha Giang and all the way to the North-East of Vietnam. And we do cycling trips we do van trips and a lot of hiking trips. Footprint is specialised in hiking trips. We hike a lot in the North-West region. Around sixty percent of our customers in the North-West region do hiking trips. We also do hiking trips in the South of Ha Noi, in the centre and in the South of Vietnam, in Dalat.

**E: Ok, and what is the current situation in the tourism industry in North-West Vietnam right now? The transportation, the accommodations....**

S: Well, I think that still needs some sort of improvement on the services. Especially in Moc Chau and Son La. It is difficult to find good hotels for guests to stay at night. In Mai Chau they have something like a lodge, it is quite adequate but it is located in the heart of a tourism hub, so it is pretty busy. And sometimes people really want to go of the beaten trek, they want to go see the live of people. They want to stay with comfort. The place nearest to Ha Noi, which is a four hour drive, which is not very far away. We could not find a proper hotel yet, three stars, they are mostly two stars or even below.

**E: But the people who travel with footprint travel are they the high-standard tourists?**

S: Yes, they are midrange and up.

**E: So they are not doing home stays?**

S: We do offer home stays. People often want to experience the culture, the first and second night. If they have seven nights in the North-West region they will spend around two nights in home stays and the rest would be in a luxury hotel, maybe three stars. Not that luxurious, they are looking for value in the trip. They do not want to stay somewhere basic, it means that they want some sort of comfort. But they do not want luxurious five star hotels, which are very expensive. The five star hotels are international chain, which does not really support the local economy.

**E: So the middle range....**

S: Yes the middle range, a three/four star hotel would be all right.

**E: And what modes of transportation do the tourists use in the North-West?**

S: We often do like jeep, jeep is the most common mode of transportation in the North-West and North-East region. It is quite flexible, we go in small groups, maximum six people. Sometimes we go in bigger groups but normally we go in small., 5 to 6 people in a jeep. We can go a little bit of the beaten trek and even we can go further into a village which we do not want to but sometimes travelers want to be picked up after a long trek. And then they really want to go on the van, on the jeep. Besides from that we do have motor biking trips on the motorcycle and but we have a limited cycle... A few reasons, one is like they are a little bit noisy. When five or six motorcycles are driving at the same time. There is also pollution and another point is that it is not that save. Most of our travelers are mid-range and seniors and we do not want to take a risk on a trip. And so mostly trekking, hiking and rough areas. And also areas which are good and safe for the customers.

**E: And to develop the North-West area, is there support from the Provincial government?**

S: Yes we do. Actually, we do not have like... it is not like Ha Long Bay, we have a trip almost going every day to Ha Long Bay. We are really working closely with the local authorities there. To work on the environment and we do have support most of it is from processors of stay overnight. It used to be very difficult to stay overnight in an area. It is more difficult and there will be some problems when people come in the evening and they check the passport and they take the passport away which is a little bit strange to foreigners, we do not want that. And we have to say to the local authorities that something they want to say they have to do it in a flexible way. Because we as a company are already here, we know the customer very well, we have all the details, so we should not be like try to bother them on their holidays and stop them on their way of trekking. While they are enjoying there great views with pictures and then be stopped by a police man saying I need to have your passport and papers. But it is getting very easy now especially Ha Giang. Ha Giang is getting more open now but they still... it needs to be the same everywhere. In Ha Giang it could be easy but in remote areas like Quan Ba and Don Van sometimes still problems happen. Last time my friend, a Dutch guy from Ha Noi, went there and he got a problem with the police. After negotiation and

negotiation he finally could stay in Don Van. But Ha Giang is very amazing, but we want to have a trip we no interfere, with no problems. Even with problems with the motorcycle, or problems with the car, it is no problem because we still enjoy the scenery. We know that it is the car, it is the motorcycle a problem with... . And the local people are very friendly. The only factor is the local authorities. It is good for Vietnamese people, that is why they check, but I know that they have to check somewhere. First of all they need to have one check point in Ha Giang . We are more than happy to stop them in Ha Giang to do some administration, some paperwork.

**E: What are the most popular tourist destinations in North-West Vietnam?**

S: For Footprint travel it is still Sa Pa. But of course it changes. Another destination called Pu Luong. It is a new destination, actually it is a nature reserve area. It is supported by agrafine, flora international they are trying to conserve the environment and the forests there by offering eco tourism and home stays. And it is quite interesting because it is beautiful. Now we offer the change Sa Pa and Pu Luong. A lot of people they do not want to go to famous hubs and they choose Pu Luong. And people are quite happy with that because it is rustique, it is still simple. The road condition is still very poor mostly with the trekking they just see the home stays, not hotels. But it provides a different type of experience.

**E: And what do you think of the situation in Sa Pa. Because I have heard some negative things about Sa Pa. That there are too much tourists and it is getting less and less popular?**

S: I have to say that Sa Pa is still very beautiful in terms of scenery, people, the culture and everything. Sa Pa has some really unique points that people have to come, like Ha Long Bay. People who go to Northern Vietnam they must go to Sa Pa and Ha Long Bay. But there is an overgrowth of tourism in Sa Pa because of too much tourism development in Sa Pa and the management is still not meets that level of growth. It is still not at that level of proper development. Like vendors, there are a lot of vendors in Sa Pa. Vendors is one of the issues in Sa Pa about tourism. When you go up in the train station there are not many. But when you go up to the tourist town of Sa Pa you do see beautiful ladies and H'mong, Dzao, Taj people. They are going to follow you the whole way till you close the door of the hotel that is one of the things. And also the investment of hotels and resorts, I mean they should have a better plan for developing. Where the hotel should be allowed

to build as well as the resort. They have to keep the environment, as well as the sceneries. I think that are two main issues in Sa Pa. Some tourists do not want to go there because of the harassment of the local people. Even the local people are getting very commercialised. They are welcoming tourists at their homes but they are not the tribal people, they are the King people from Ha Noi or from somewhere else, coming there and pretending to be H'mong and they build a house there. Want tourists to come to their homes. Just not authentic anymore, not traditional. So that is one of the issues. The entire business should be H'mong and not the original people. There are still poor people around Sa Pa, they do not have a proper job. They just go working at rice paddies and they survive from the agriculture, which is very little and a lot of people like the H'mong people, the King people they are selling rice in Sa Pa, they follow the tourists from the van till the trekking routes. And the local people are there, they earn nothing. So there is kind of like an unbalance.

**E: Yes I have heard about it. What are the Unique Selling Points of North-West Vietnam? Why do tourists visit the North-West?**

S: I would say still... in terms of, I mean there are a few tourists going to famous tourism hubs like Sa Pa or Mai Chau. Other areas are still very prestigious very rustic and simple, untouched by tourism. I think that is the unique point. And the scenery is beautiful and the people are very friendly. Not in the main towns like Sa Pa or Mai Chau but the villages in the middle you will be warmly welcomed by the local people. They still have the cultures and traditions and the scenery is still very amazing.

**E: And you already said that there are some hundred to 1000 tourists visiting the North-West every year from footprint?**

S: No in total. It depends on the year and in around nearly 1000 a year coming to Vietnam to Footprint travel. And around 60% are visiting the North-West.

**E: Do you know in total how many tourists go to the North-West?**

S: In total?

**E: Yes in total. Not only Footprint but all the tourists visiting.**

S: I am sorry but I do not know that figure. Maybe you can check with Hung. Hung knows that because he is working closely with VINAP. Vietnam National Tourism Administration. So Hung should know some of the figures.

**E: What kind of Nationalities are visiting the North-West?**

S: Around 60 percent is from North-America. Around 25/30 percent from Europe and the rest from Australia.

**E: And the travelers who do not go with Footprint, who are they? I heard you also have a lot of backpackers in Sapa?**

S: Yes backpackers are going to Sa Pa too.

**E: And right now there is no luxurious tourism right?**

S: No not now. In the North-West region there is ... that why Footprint travel is going for middle-range and middle-age target group. Of course there are the young seniors, they are really active and they want to explore. I remember a lady, the oldest lady, she was nearly eighty years old. She still went hiking, she went hiking last year for 11-12 days. In an area in the North-West region. So they look old, but they are not old at all. And the end she finished a twelve day trekking, it was amazing. But of course we got people around 55-60, they go trekking for 3-4 days, which is quit common.

**E: So normally people are from the older age group?**

S: They are normally from 40-45 up to 70.

**E: Younger people normally do not book tours with tour operator's right?**

S: Young people they do. We also have younger people, but that amount is just small. It is around 10 to maximum 15 percent. Of course they do want some sort of responsible tourism and the tourism Footprint is offering. But we got a lot of requests from younger people travelling with Footprint; they want to travel in a cheap way. Which we can not offer because the prices are based on a standard service that we want for our customers. We want some real challenge. But after that we want some good accommodations, a good meal and some good guides who can provide local information. Just go on the bus and get off and take pictures and get on and go on which is not our type of traveller.

**E: And what are the main activities that tourists undertake when they go to the North-West?**

S: Trekking, cycling. Cycling is just a few percent, around 7% and motor biking is around 5%. And trekking is probably the main thing.

**E: Has your organisation done any research looking at the destinations in the North-West?**

S: No. We have not done any research on that.

**E: Ok. My research is especially finding out from tourists what are the barriers of not going to the remote areas. What kind of facilities do**

**they need? Because SNV wants to promote it, market it. So in your opinion, what information would be interesting to obtain from tourists?**

S: So you mean that you are going to meet the visitors later in Sa Pa?

**E: Yes I am going to Sa Pa, Dien Bien Phu, Mai Chau, but also to some more remote areas. And in the tourists hubs I am going to ask the people; If they are going to the remote areas of not, and in the remote areas I am going to ask them what their experience is, if they are satisfied etc.**

S: I think it depends a lot on the research and the outcomes that you want to ask. Generally I think they are happy to answer your questions. But you should find the proper time. Especially when they already rest somewhere. You should choose the resting point. After they are already done with the pictures and otherwise you would find them in the village where they stay overnight and you make an appointment with them on forehand.

**E: Yes I think so. If I meet people and make appointments during the day they are willing to help me in the evening or in the afternoon. I would like to know some more about responsible tourism. In your opinion, what do you consider to be responsible tourism?**

S: Well, responsible tourism, sustainable tourism is quit big. We are trying to minimise the negative impacts and try to bring positive impacts to the environment, to the culture. And we are also trying to bring positive impacts to the economic situation of everyone, not just an owner of the home stay, who has the best view, but we try to bring benefits to everyone. And we try to do as much as we can to spread out the income to more people, more stakeholders. Our trip is beginning at the office; we have to train our guides and our staff about responsible tourism. What it is and what the effects are and the outcome. We are trying to work with the local people. And try to make them to do it the same way. We are trying to support them in working in a proper way. Because if we just come to a village, lets say your village. And we say you do tourism with me and you do this, this and that it is not working. Because your family will say this is a good way of making income, I will keep it for my family. But in order to convince them, you and other villagers working together is not easy. Because everyone has a different view, a different way to work. So aside from trying to educate our staff and local people we have to really work with them, train them. So that they can work together. And not only the customer coming from Footprint. But also customers coming from different sources to that village,

they can do the same thing for that village to preserve the environment, to preserve the cultures and to share the benefits among the members, not just my family but to his family and her family.

**E: And do you see some positive results already?**

S: Yes it works. It really works, but the point is two small companies or even a big size company could not change it to a positive result if we are not working together. Responsible tourism can only be successful from working together. From everyone, from all the tourism stakeholders. Now we are setting up the responsible tourism club. If we are working only, lets say in a small village in Mai Chau, if we do not have the support from the local authorities we will not be successful. And if we do not have support there from the local people we will not be successful. Because like even not working together we are advertising responsible tourism in Mai Chau. But in fact if you come and you see that they are not working together only one or two families they are working. And the rest is still living in poverty. It is difficult. So it is a challenge, you really have to work together, step by step and work on small projects. I found out that we have to work together, we have to work small. SNV has the ambitions of the whole North-West region. I believe that it is going to be successful in the future. But you have to do a very good example in one area first before it is spreading to different areas. Because you have to be successful. This kind of tourism is kind of sensitive because you invest money and you tomorrow you do not get return on investment. It is not easy that way. It is the culture, it is environment, it is the people who are working together, it is politic problems, it is businesses together, everything is evolving in that one.

**E: It is complicated.**

S: Yes, so complicated.

**E: That sounds really good, but overall in North-West Vietnam do you believe there is a responsible tourism industry?**

S: No I do not think that.

**E: Why not?**

S: Your question is... is there an existing responsible tourism industry?

**E: Yes, right now?**

S: If the question is the whole area I have to say no. But if the question is parts of the areas I say yes. Like in Moc Chau what we are doing with SNV. And it is happening. But it is still at a very early stage and we can not say that it is already successful. But in Sa Pa we have some sort of models in

Tavin village. Where we are working with a different partner, not SNV. It is becoming successful. But the point is after that when we are working with partners like SNV, they come and we come, and we do not have many tourists going per week. And you do not come to tell them, hey you do this right, you do that wrong. And then they loose it. It needs some sort of training, re-training every six months or every one year. To make them really understand the benefit of long term investment. In Tavin village it happens that way.

**E: I think we addressed this question already. But in what way can it become more responsible? But that is by working together as you said.**

S: I think the only way we can be successful is to work together. SNV can not be successful in poverty reduction and also tour operators can not be successful just working with us. They have to work with SNV to work with local authorities, with Vietnam Tourism Administration. We have to work with travellers because one of the very important stakeholders are the villagers and they have to work with us.

**E: What do you think which destinations have a high tourism potential for the future in North-West Vietnam?**

S: I would say Ha Giang. Ha Giang is going to be a potential one. But also Moc Chau, which is next to Mai Chau. Because Ha Giang is beautiful but it is very far away from the main tourists hubs and from the main city like Ha Noi. If there would be an airport somewhere near to Ha Giang that would be good investment.

**E: The main barriers for Ha Giang are of course the distance, but what other barriers would you think of?**

S: Yes distance and the road condition. It is three hundred kilometers away but if the road is in good condition it could be very quick. But hopefully in the future they are going to make a highway from Ha Noi straight to Lao Cai. And from Lao Cai to Ha Giang is not far. The new highway is expected to be done in 2015. So in five years. And around that time driving from Ha Noi to Lao Cai it could be around 4 hours.

**E: Right now if you want to go from Lao Cai to Ha Giang? Is that possible? How long will that take?**

S: There are a few ways to go. You can go by road or by local bus. The local bus will still take you three to four hours. But you can go on another short cut on the motorcycle. But I think that is dangerous because of the road condition and the weather. But I think if they plan something together

with the road from Ha Noi to Lao Cai and they open in trough to China. And they can combine it with another road to go to Ha Giang I think it would be amazing. That would be something good for the Ha Giang area. Because people come over land from China to Vietnam. And people are also coming from Laos to Dien Bien Phu, they go to visit Sa Pa. And they want to go visit Ha Giang. And maybe they want to go from Ha Giang to Ha Long Bay. And they do not want to go back to Ha Noi. Because the border area, it seems like the borders are opening everywhere. It is giving a change for travellers to go to cross the border easily. In the coming years, the coming two or three years, people would have .. they still want to go to Sa Pa and the surrounding area. But because of Sa Pa is a very touristy area of course some segment want to go of the beaten trek. For example, if I choose my holiday. Now I want to go somewhere different. Same if you come to Vietnam, you want to visit something authentic and experience. Go further I would say Moc Chau, next to Mai Chau is one of the new destinations and Son La.

**E: Yes I am planning to go to Moc Chau and Mai Chau, all this areas.**

S: Yes Moc Chau has one of the unique points. Moc Chau has the climate. Of course at this time it might be foggy, it is foggy everywhere. It is like England in Ha Noi for two weeks now. It is expected to be not so good, but hopefully in the next three, four days.

**E: One of my last questions was which areas would be good to conduct my research? But I think I already got some answers. I will travel through most of the North-West. Is there anything else you would like to add?**

S: No I think... I have been working with SNV already a long time ago and you could find lots of information at SNV. You have documents on responsible tourism and Vietnam. And you can also find ours, maybe Footprint, maybe other companies. Because Hung and many others from SNV have been coming to Footprint to interview and asking the same sort of information. Maybe for different purposes but I am sure you can find some interesting figures.

**E: Ok, I think I got enough information. Thank you for helping me with my research.**

S: No problem. If you have any other questions you can always email me.



**Interview: Dang Duc Hoa**  
**Organisation: Mai Chau lodge**  
**Function: Operational manager**  
**8 February 2010, 17.00**  
**Duration: 21,16 min.**

### **Introduction**

Hoa is the operational manager of the Mai Chau lodge. He is Vietnamese and very familiar with the Mai Chau area.

**E: Ellen**

H: Hoa

**E: Can you first tell me something general about the hotel?**

H: Our hotel was established in September 2007. And we have a total of 55 staff. 99% is coming from the White Taj minority. That are the local people. And our main market comes from The Netherlands, Australia and America. Our hotel has 16 rooms. And in 2011 we are finishing phase two. Then we will have forty rooms. We will try to be one of the small luxury hotels in the world.

**E: Why did they choose to build the hotel here, in Mai Chau in this area?**

H: Because Mai Chau is developing for tourism. Before, most tourists who come to Vietnam only know about Sa Pa and Ha Long Bay. But now, some more people know about Mai Chau. There is still a lot of nature and it is not very touristy. Lot of the tourists who come here they like the nature. The control is quit strong around here. With the dancing performance, with the singing, with the folklore. And the landscape is beautiful too.

**E: Do they also do dance performances in the hotel sometimes?**

H: Yes, yes, normally in the evening we will organise dancing performances at the terrace outside.

**E: I saw a dancing performance yesterday in one of the stilt houses, it was really nice. Is this hotel environmentally conscious? Do you consider the environment?**

H: Environment yes, it means that our lodge is an ecolodge. We try to keep the environment as clean as possible and keep everything natural. In the future the first thing is that the hotel tries to plant more trees, to make it

more green. The second is that we go to schools and talk about the environment. To teach the children about the importance of the environment.

**E: That is really good. And do you work together with other businesses around? Or with other local businesses like tour operators?**

H: Yes because we know the importance of the local community. So we can insist and develop if we get the support from the local government and from the local community around here. So we try to develop that relationship. And for example this lunar new year we have a charity program. We make donations from the staff and we make a list of the poor families. And we will visit them on lunar new year.

**E: Is it only from the staff or also from the guests?**

H: It is from the staff. And most products from here we use the local people. We buy from the locals.

**E: Are you also from here?**

H: I am from Ha Noi, but I work here for three years already. From the moment this hotel opened.

**E: And do you know anything about the marketing strategies? How does this hotel promotes itself?**

H: Our main market comes from the tour operators. And the expats from Ha Noi. That means the foreigners who live in Ha Noi. And we work with the tour operators. And sometimes we organise for the staff to go to another place and make a cleaning camp over there. Some other villages around here.

**E: But the people who live in the villages they just throw everything away?**

H: Yes, they destroy everything.

**E: I think they need to know what they are doing. Do you have more knowledge of the whole area of the North-West of Vietnam?**

H: This area is developing. There are not much tourists yet, they mostly go to Sa Pa. And there is still a lot of nature.

**E: And what about transportation?**

H: The transportation in the North, I think it is now much better than before. Now we have highway number 6. So the road is much better. Before if you went to Mai Chau the road was very dangerous.

**E: The road from Sa Pa to Dien Bien Phu is still really bad.**

H: Yes it is very bad. But if you go from Ha Noi to Mai Chau to Son La to Lai Chau that is ok.

**E: And what about the overall quality of accommodations? This is like a high-standard hotel. The rest of the area is not like this right?**

H: There are not so much accommodations for international tourists. Son La is quite popular but they only have one hotel where international tourists can stay, that is the Labour Union hotel.

**E: Is there support from the provincial government?**

H: Yes we got support from the government. Everything we discuss and we have a very close relationship with the local government.

**E: So they are happy that you develop something like this?**

H: Because we are committed to the local government. The first is that when the hotel develops we employ more local people to come here, to work. And the second is that we pay tax, so the government can use the tax to develop the infrastructure of the Mai Chau area.

**E: What are the most popular tourism destinations in the North-West besides Mai Chau? Sa Pa of course.**

H: Yes Sa Pa. Now, more people know about Ha Giang. And more people know about Son La and Lai Chau.

**E: So that are areas which are developing?**

H: Yes.

**E: And the travel routes of the tourists when they come here? Mostly they go up North, or South?**

H: Most of them they come here and after that they come back to Ha Noi. But some people come here and after that they go to Son La, Lai Chau, Dien Bien, Sa Pa and then back to Ha Noi. That is the North-West.

**E: But most people just go back to Ha Noi?**

H: Yes they come here and they stay about one or two nights. After that they go back to Ha Noi.

**E: How many tourists are coming to the hotel in a year?**

H: In the year 2008 we have around 3000 people. And in 2009 it is 5200.

**E: And do you know how many tourists are coming to Mai Chau?**

H: For 2009 I do not have the information yet. I will get the information from the police. I work with the police to get the number of tourists coming to the Mai Chau area. Every month.

**E: They keep track of all the tourists visiting?**

H: Yes, because when the foreigners come to here they have to fill in a registration form.

**E: Yes, I had to do that too. And why do you think the tourists visits this area and the North-West?**

H: Because the North-West is the home to a lot of the ethnic minorities. And the ethnic minorities they have their own culture. And for the foreigners, they like to discover the culture of the ethnic minorities. And the second is that it is not touristy and deserted. It is still very beautiful and natural.

**E: And do you know what kind of tourists are coming here, what kind of nationalities? You said especially Dutch, Australian and American?**

H: For our hotel?

**E: Yes.**

H: That is, they come from The Netherlands, Australia and America and France. That is our main market.

**E: And most of the tourists come with tour groups?**

H: Yes.

**E: How big are these groups?**

H: A big group, that is around... because our hotel is quite small. Only 16 room and 8 rooms in the cottages. But the maximum is around 30, 32 guests. At one time. Sometimes, because we have a cave in front of here. We organise a conference in the cave or a party.

**E: There is a cave here?**

H: Yes. And this year we are going to make a coffee house over there.

**E: And is there a specific type of tourist who come here? Are there adventurous tourists?**

H: Adventurous is quite in the demand of the tourist. Mai Chau is very good for the walking, trekking and the bicycle. For example sometimes we organise for the guests who come from Ha Noi and go to Mai Chau, we organise the lunch and after that they go to the Han Kia that is an H'mong ethnic minority area. And they trek about 8 kilometers to the H'mong area. And for the second day they trek from the H'mong area to the White Taj area. So it is about 35 kilometers. So they will have a big lunch.

**E: And they stay in the mountains overnight?**

H: Yes. They stay in the home stay. And after that they come back to the Mai Chau lodge. They stay one more night.

**E: Ok, so you have some kind of tours which you organise. Do you also have Vietnamese tourists coming, or Chinese?**

H: Yes we have guests from the Vietnamese too.

**E: But not much?**

H: Yes, not so much. About 90 percent of our revenue comes from the international tourists.

**E: And the main modes of transportation the tourists use? Do they come here by bus or by four-wheel drive car?**

H: Most of them come here by... because when they come to Vietnam they work with the tour operator. Already for the tour operator.

**E: It is already arranged?**

H: The tour operator arranges a bus for them to come here.

**E: So you do not have to arrange any transportation for tourists?**

H: Our hotel, we have one shuttle bus. They depart from Ha Noi at 8 o'clock. From Ha Noi to Mai Chau. And from Mai Chau to Ha Noi at 13.30.

**E: And the tourists, most of them stay here one or two nights you said?**

H: Most of them stay here for two nights.

**E: Ok, so not long time stays. All right, can I ask you also some questions about responsible tourism? You told me already this is an ecolodge. And what do you here consider to be responsible tourism?**

H: I told you already about the cleaning camps and going to the schools to teach children about the environment.

**E: And employing local people.**

H: Yes, and we invest money for the local government, because later we would like to make a one family in front of the road of Mai Chau they will plant one tree. So now we invest in working with the government to buy the tree.

**E: Ok that is really good. So this lodge is doing responsible tourism. Do you think in the North-West area are there a lot of this examples?**

H: Not so much yet.

**E: And what do you think can change about the tourism industry in Vietnam? To be more responsible what would be necessary to change?**

H: The living standard of the local people in the North-West is very low. So the first thing for them is how to fill their stomach every day. So they do not care so much about the environment. So the first thing is that we have to find a way to develop the economy. Develop the living standards. Then they do not have to worry about their stomach every day. So that time they have thinking for the other.

**E: Yes, that is true. But maybe if you develop tourism in little villages you can give them training about the environment so that they know**

**about it. So this lodge hires poor people and gives them a job. Most of them are poor so this is a good example of poverty reduction. Do you know any other examples of poverty reduction in this area?**

H: We encourage buying the local products from the farmers.

**E: So it is not only the people whom you employ but also the farmers?**

H: It means that ... for example we try to organise a dancing performance. The people of the village will come here for one night and perform.

**E: So they get some money... and will benefit too ok. And for the future, which destinations do you think have a high potential. You said already Ha Giang, Son La. Do you think these areas will be the main new destinations?**

H: Yes because a lot of the people now they go there.

**E: And is your organisation also working in these new areas? Or only here?**

H: We organise here and we have one project in the Sam Ta.

**E: Sam Ta? Where is that?**

H: It is in the Hoa Binh province too. But this is in the very high mountain. And the weather is like Sa Pa. It is very cold.

**E: But what kind of project is that?**

H: We made a resort and host cart over there and we make the farming over there too.

**E: Ok, so also a resort like this. And you told me about future plans? You are going to build some new houses?**

H: In March we start to make 8 lake suites. And after that we will make 16 villas on the rice field. And on the other side we will make one Vietnamese restaurant with a cooking stall. And around we will still grow the rice.

**E: I think it is really nice to see here the combination between tourism and the local people who still work on the fields. This were my questions do you have a brochure from the hotel?**

H: Yes I will give it to you.

**E: Thank you very much!**

H: You are welcome.

**Interview: Hijaaz Latheef**  
**Organisation: Mai Chau lodge**  
**Function: General manager- Operations**  
**9 February 2010, 10.00**  
**Duration: 30,10 min.**

### **Introduction**

Hijaaz is the general manager of the Mai Chau lodge. After interviewing his operational manager Hoa I interviewed him. Hoa answered most of the general questions so this interview was necessary to get some more in-depth information.

**E: Ellen**

H: Hijaaz

**E: I already got some general information from Hoa about the hotel. So I do not think that we have to cover that all. Why did you choose this area for the hotel?**

H: Because, mainly for the location. So if you take the Mai Chau area where you do not find locations, what is appropriate to create for the hotel. We have a nice lake here and the paddy area and the transport accessibility. This are the main reasons. Mainly the location, the accessibility, the transport. When we recruit the staff it is easy for them, to have the hotel here only five minutes walk.

**E: From the village?**

H: From the village.

**E: Ok. And do you also have an idea about the general tourism industry in the North-West?**

H: I will give you the statistics. Do you need it on this area?

**E: Yes on this area or on the whole North-West.**

H: Here for the last year the statistics were around 9000 tourists. We get the statistics from the police. So it is around 9000. But that is not so reliable so around maybe 14.000 or 15.000 tourists.

**E: In the Mai Chau area?**

H: Yes.

**E: And in the hotel?**

H: Which year do you need?

**E: Last year, or maybe the year before?**

H: So Mai Chau, 80 percent foreigners, 16 percent Vietnamese. The guests who is coming, 95 percent of the Vietnamese are coming from Ha Noi. This is the breakdown, foreign percentage is high. 84 percent foreigners and 16 percent of them are Vietnamese. The majority of the foreigners comes from Europe and the rest of them comes from Canada, USA, New Zealand and Asia. For the year 2009, 12 room's nights sold 3.642. Sixty percent including the cottage. The cottage takes around 6 percent. And the actual occupancy for this building is 57 percent. And the total number of guests is 2.801. Average stay is 1.3 nights. Average room rate is around 74 dollars. Our main travel agencies... we got a joint venture with the Buffalo Tours, a Sri Lankan hotel company. We have 12 hotels in Sri Lanka and we are in the progress of developing about 6 hotels in Vietnam. And this property, we are going to make this one as a star class luxury hotel. With 40 rooms and 8 rooms around the lake with modern facilities, with luxury facilities. And we are going to have another 12 on the paddy. And we are going to have a restaurant next to the cottages over there. And another swimming pool and 10 rooms build there own access after that. So this will be one of the unique properties in the Ha Noi region. And the Buffalo Tours is our joint venture partner. So most of our business, 25 percent we got from the Buffalo Tours.

**E: I have been talking to them in Ha Noi too.**

H: This is the percentage. Buffalo Tours 20 percent. Other agents we got them 34 percent. And 37 percent contract market.

**E: And the other agents? Are that tour operators also from Europe?**

H: Yes, yes only from Europe. But local travel agents have the contact with Europe. So month performance for the year 2008 and 2009 and 2007 we can only look at this one. In the hotel and we are picking up from the last year. And before that we did not make any profits but the last year we made some profit. And now the occupancy is increasing.

**E: This hotel was built in 2007?**

H: No, earlier it was a government guesthouse. So after that they leased it from the government. And it got converted into a hotel in the year 2007. So they started the business somewhere around the middle of the 2007. They started 2007 in September. Here this is the year performance 2007. 17 percent 37 percent and 63 percent occupancy.

**E: So you can see it goes up.**

H: 2009 and 2010 forecast. So this are the past statistics. And globally last year it was about 38 million travelers, international travelers around the world. And this year we expect that the growth is only 5 percent. They will end up around 39.5 million only. We can't expect that much.

**E: Because of the financial crisis the market is not good.**

H: Yes, yes. This is the arrival by the region.

**E: This is what comes to Vietnam, from North America?**

H: The international tourists. How much do you think the Vietnam tourist's arrival is per day? Any guessing?

**E: Per day?**

H: No per year?

**E: Uh...that is a difficult question. I do not know.**

H: Here the domestic tourism is around 25 million.

**E: 25 million!**

H: 25 million a year. And the internationals around 5 million. And this year we expect around 7 or 8 million.

**E: And of course if the Vietnamese get more wealth they will travel more.**

H: So it is unbelievable about 25 million Vietnamese travelling last year. And they expect a bit more this year. Tourism industry inbound arrivals where you can get the exact, reliable figures. So this is were we got them. This is the projected growth for the Asian market. This is after the September 11 attack. The Sars crisis, the financial crisis. Domestic tourist total around 24 million. Which places have you visited here?

**E: I have been to Sa Pa, Ha Giang, Ha Noi, Dien Bien Phu, Son La, Mai Chau.**

H: Ho Chi Minh?

**E: No, I will only be in the North.**

H: You are going to the South also?

**E: No. Because I have to do my research in two months and I do not have time to go. I would really like to go, but no. But I will go to Ha Long Bay before I leave.**

H: If you need any information, just email me so I can send it to you.

**E: Yes, that would be very helpful. It is really interesting for my research to have a general view about the area and the industry.**

H: I did the presentation for the last week, for the Spanish University students about the tourism and the Buffalo Tours. Our chairman, he is a

medical doctor. At the age of 21, while he was studying in the University he wanted to earn some extra money. That was in 1994. Then he did as a part-time job for nearly 6 months. And after that he wants to start something on his own. He collected some money, around 2000 dollars. So with the 2000 dollars he started with the travel agent. He had hard times and he lost the money. He did the drivers job, he went to the airport to pick up the clients. And everything on his own with the ... And the office was only 9 square meter. And the first three months the phone is not ringing. For three months he was disappointed but he did not give up. Now 8 percent our company is in Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Australia, Russia. Even for the last year was the financial crisis but it did not affect the Buffalo Tours. They achieved their target. Only the Buffalo Tours in Ha Noi, the profit was around 420 million. The net profit was 442.920 million US dollars for the year 2009. So they achieved their target. So that is only in the year 2009, in the main office.

**E: That is impressive.**

H: So to encourage the students who want to start their career in the hospitality business we do a presentation for them.

**E: Ok.**

H: I can tell you more about what happened when the phone rings. First year he earned around 100.000 with 150 percentages. Now the average we get around 55.000 a year. And also we go for the tourism sustainable development. To sustain the industry where you need the profit. Profit is main important.

**E: Yes this is the main focus of my research.**

H: And we need the innovations, people always look for new things and we need some creative ideas.

**E: But in what way do you do a sustainable business here? Can you give me some examples?**

H: Yes. When we do the customer service we are not going for the old tradition, the culture. We have our way of doing the things. And we look for new things. Creative ideas are always welcome. And we try to implement the new things. And the customers also we give them different service, I mean not the international level service, but we give them service without affecting the culture or the traditions while serving to the guests or serving a meal or serving a cocktail. So we keep the traditional value here. And we are going to expand this property as a star class luxury hotel. But we do not

want to differentiate our rooms from the Taj people, so we are going to have the roofs and everything similar to them. So if you put up a new building. A five star hotel with 100 rooms, it will be different here. Matching with the local communities as well. And we give a different experience when the guest comes. Not only in the hotel, we encourage the guests to stay in the home stays one reasons to have a different experience. The other thing is to help the community. We are dealing with these things. And always we keep a good relationship with the local community. Maybe when you start the tourism business in the Asian countries or in other countries because they are more attached to their culture, traditions and religion. But that are things that the hospitality of the tourism is against their culture or tradition. So we have to protect that and make them understand. So that is why here in the hotel our staff, 65 staff, most of them 95 percent from them are rural recruit and we train them to serve in the hospitality chain. And the Mai Chau area this one, the total population is 47.500 people. And about five ethnic minorities are there, maybe you have seen them. The Taj, H'mong, Dzao, King, about five here in Mai Chau. So this is the current information about the hotel we have. 15 rooms and a junior suite and 95 percent of them are local.

**E: And you also buy products from the local farmers?**

H: Yes. Mostly, I mean the vegetables all those things we buy from the local suppliers.

**E: Yes, that is good.**

H: Indirectly quite a lot of people get an employment opportunity. And every year we organise the meditrek. To treat people who have poor health facilities. So last year we have done around 1.200 people.

**E: This was also together with Buffalo Tours?**

H: Yes, with Buffalo Tours.

**E: Yes at Buffalo Tours they also told me about it.**

H: Here this one we are doing with SNV.

**E: A Ha Giang, yes I have been there with them. First week I was in Vietnam I went to Ha Giang. It was really nice.**

H: How did you go to Ha Giang?

**E: By car.**

H: Where did you go from Ha Noi?

**E: From Ha Noi, I was with Phil and with Hung and the driver. I do not know if you know them? We first went to Ha Giang town. And then we drove all around up to Don Van, Meo Vac. It was really impressive.**

H: I will send the slides of what we discussed to you.

**E: Yes that would be very nice. So the destination that has a high potential is Ha Giang. And are there other areas in the North-West who have a good tourism potential?**

H: Yes.

**E: Which ones?**

H: Here in the Mai Chau area?

**E: Yes or maybe in the North-West area?**

H: Have you been to Hoa Binh?

**E: No.**

H: Mai Chau is in the Hoa Binh province. This is a brochure about it.

**E: I think I addressed my questions. If I have more questions or about the sheets can I email you?**

H: Yes, you can email me.

**E: Ok, thank you very much.**

H: No worries.

## **Interview Anton Jurgens**

**Organisation: Exotissimo Vietnam**

**Function: Adventure Department Manager**

**6 March 2010.**

**By email.**

### **Introduction**

Because we were unable to make an appointment in Vietnam I send the questions to Anton and he replied by email.

**E: Ellen**

A: Anton

### **E: What is your organisations role in the tourism industry in North-West Vietnam?**

A: Exotissimo is an inbound ground handler for SE Asia. I manage the Adventure Department and we offer a variety of different trekking and biking itineraries to numerous clients from around the world.

### **E: Do you offer trips to North-West Vietnam? To which destinations?**

A: We offer trips across the region. Our biking trips range from the NW loop from Sapa to DBP and Mai Chau. We have trekking routes across the area; Sapa, DBP, Ba Be, Cao Bang, Ha Giang, Muong Nhe NR, Mai Chau, and Pu Luong NR. We are also actively developing new trips in Ha Giang with CBT at the forefront.

### **E: Can you give me a general idea about the tourism industry in North-West Vietnam?**

A: General is a relative term as it changes dramatically as you move around. Sapa has long been the big draw to the region and has developed accordingly. Some big mistakes have been made in Sapa, many of which only now are becoming apparent. With Sapa known as the hot spot for trekking it grew to fast and did not account for the local population. In reality they should have developed the whole region instead of on hot spot; secondly they did not incorporate the minority ethnic groups into the grand plan. Entrepreneurs came to Sapa to develop hotels and travel companies preferring to hire Vietnamese and not the local populous. This has created a big divide between the locals and the tourism industry. Our big problem is the past has been finding appropriate facilities to house clients. Home stays

are often very basic and lack even simple toilet facilities. Things are changing in the region as new lodges are built and home stays adapt to tourism demands.

### **E: What are the Unique Selling Points of North-West Vietnam?**

A: Stunning scenery and a wide variety of ethnic minorities. Their simplistic way of life and colourful ethnic minorities is a definite draw for tourists.

### **E: What are the most popular tourism destinations in North-West Vietnam?**

A: Sapa of course is the most popular especially with its access to China and Yunnan. Growth areas are Mai Chau and the Pu Luong NR. DBP is popular with the French market due to the history as well as a popular cross border route into Laos. I see potential in Ba Be.

### **E: What do you consider to be responsible tourism?**

A: Exo is proud to follow best practices in this field and is looking to do more. Responsible tourism is a combination of several factors. Cultural, Economic, and Environmental. Cultural – we attempt to introduce our clients to this culture with minimal impact. We educate clients about respecting cultural differences (how to greet people, taking pictures, basic etiquette, giving money and gifts, dress, behaviour, and dignity). We think this very important for the long term sustainability of the tourism industry. The more the populous see tourists as a positive contribution the more they will welcome them into the country.

Economic – we try as much as possible to source everything we need locally and encourage our clients to do the same. We also ensure we pay above minimum wage to all our employees’ whether it is the staff in the office or the porters carrying gear into rural areas. This helps to spread the wealth away from mass produced items. In rural areas to encourage and support local communities we use home stays and guesthouses but I do not see this as the best method. I am looking into community lodges in rural villages with the idea we rent from the village rather than individual families. With this method we can also better manage the facilities.

Environmental – we stick to strict guidelines when it comes to protecting the environment. Our trekking routes only stick to well worn paths, we pack in and pack out, and work with conservation groups like FFI and local communities to find the best solution to protect what they have. In this regard tourism is a powerful tool in that when local communities see the

benefits of tourism they will work to protect what it is that brings them there in the first place.

**E: Do you work in the responsible tourism business?**

A: See above.

**E: In your opinion, do you think there is a responsible tourism industry in North-West Vietnam?**

A: There is but it is in its infancy.

**E: In what way can the tourism industry in North-West Vietnam become more responsible? (Things to improve)**

A: Better collaboration between major stakeholders. Local communities, NGOs, government, and the private sector. Only with agreements from all sides can a sound plan be achieved. CBT is essential to give local communities a stake in their own future and protect what they have. NGOs need to work toward educating communities on best practices, government need to develop policy and laws, and the private sector needs to promote and bring the tourists to the region. Guidelines and best practices are essential for TO's to follow

**E: Are there good examples of poverty reduction projects obtained by tourism development?**

A: Mai Chau and Pu Luong is slowly becoming a good example of successful development.

**E: How many tourists are travelling to North-West Vietnam? (Reports, figures, statistics)**

A: No data

**E: What are the reasons for tourists to visit North-West Vietnam?**

A: Stunning scenery and a wide variety of ethnic minorities. Their simplistic way of life and colourful clothing is a definite draw for tourists.

**E: What kind of tourists are travelling to North-West Vietnam?**

A: The more adventurous types – however with better hotels and lodges it is becoming accessible to a broader range of travelers.

**E: Can the tourists be divided into different groups?**

A: Backpackers and FIT travelling to the region and then booking trekking from there. Package tour groups willing to pay more and have all logistics pre-organized.

**E: Is there already research looking at tourists visiting the destinations in North-West Vietnam? (Reports)**

A: Unsure.

**E: What information would you be interested to obtain from tourists?**

A: As much feedback as possible. What would interest them to return after the first visit?

**E: Which destinations have a high tourism potential for the future? And is your organisation working on developing new areas?**

A: Yes – Ha Giang and the North East. Cat Tien, Central highlands, Phong Nha Ke Bang.



# **Appendix 3**

## *Questionnaire*

## Tourism in North-West Vietnam

Dear visitor,

My name is Ellen Ruiters and I am a Masters student studying Leisure, Tourism and Environment at the University of Wageningen, The Netherlands. For my thesis I am carrying out a research on motives, values and aspirations of tourists visiting the North-West part of Vietnam. I am interested in the profile of the tourists visiting this part of the country. This research will be undertaken in collaboration with SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, as part of their activities in Vietnam. For the purposes of the research the North-West incorporates Hoa Binh, Son La, Dien Bien, Lai Chau, Lao Cai, Yen Bai and Ha Giang provinces.

I hope you can help me with my research by completing the survey. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes of your time.

Your participation is highly appreciated and I thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Ellen Ruiters  
Student Wageningen University  
Leisure, Tourism and Environment  
Wageningen, The Netherlands

***In collaboration with:***  
SNV Vietnam  
Pro-poor Sustainable Tourism  
Ha Noi, Vietnam



# Tourism in North-West Vietnam

*Part 1: I would like to start by asking you some questions about your travel in Vietnam.*

## 1. How many times have you visited Vietnam?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4+
- I live in Vietnam

## 2. Why did you choose Vietnam as your travel destination?

(Tick all boxes that are relevant)

- To experience nature
  - To see new places
  - To try local food
  - Other.....
  - To get away from everyday life
  - To meet new people
  - To experience culture and local heritage
- .....

## 3. How long will you be in Vietnam?

- 1- 6 days
- 7- 14 days
- 14- 30 days
- 1- 6 months
- 6- 12 months
- > 1 year
- I live in Vietnam

## 4. What best describes your travelling group?

- By myself
- Colleagues
- Other.....
- Partner
- Friend(s)

## 5. Which information source(s) did you use to decide on Vietnam as a travel destination?

(Tick all boxes that are relevant )

- Previous visit
- Friends and family
- Tour operator
- Travel agent
- Travel guidebooks
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Brochures
- TV documentaries
- TV commercial
- Radio
- Embassy/ consulate

- Tourist office in Vietnam       Advertisement       Product suppliers
- None       Travel fair      (airlines, hostels, hotel)
- Internet, websites:.....
- .....
- Other.....

**6. Which areas are you planning to, or have already visited in Vietnam?**

- North-East Vietnam
- North-West Vietnam
- Red River Delta
- North Central Coast
- South Central Coast
- Central Highlands
- South-East Vietnam
- Mekong River Delta



**7. How satisfied are you with your trip to Vietnam until now?**

- Very satisfied       Dissatisfied
- Satisfied       Very dissatisfied.

**8. What could be improved?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

*Part 2: The next questions are about the North-West area of Vietnam*

**9. Please indicate by ticking the boxes which destinations you have heard about in North-West Vietnam and which destination you have or plan to visit.**

Destination	Heard about	Visited	Planning to visit
Sa Pa	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mai Chau	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dien Bien Phu	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lai Chau	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lao Cai	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ha Giang	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Son La	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bac Ha	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moc Chau	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tam Dao	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hoa Binh	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yen Chau	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tuan Giao	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Muong Lay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Muong Te	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sin Ho	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yen Bai	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other destination(s):.....  
 .....

**10. How did/do you travel through North-West Vietnam?**

- Sapa – Dien Bien Phu – Mai Chau                       Only Sapa  
 Mai Chau – Dien Bien Phu – Sapa                       No plans yet  
 Other.....  
 .....

**11. What is the last overnight destination you have visited?**

.....

**12. What is the next overnight destination you are going to visit?**

.....

**13. Have you, or are you planning to visit destinations outside of Sa Pa, Dien Bien Phu and Mai Chau while you are in the North-West?**

- Yes go to question 15.                       No

**14. What are the reasons why you will not be visiting destinations outside of Sa Pa, Dien Bien Phu and Mai Chau while you are in the North-West?**

(tick all boxes that apply)

- |  |                                      |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not familiar with these destinations                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Distance    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of information                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Travel time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of tourist facilities/transportation             | <input type="checkbox"/> Permits     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I prefer to visit more developed tourist destinations | <input type="checkbox"/> Costs       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other.....  |                                      |
| .....  |                                      |

**Go to question 16.**

**15. What is your reason for visiting the remoter areas in the North-West Highlands? (Tick all boxes that are relevant )**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adventure               | <input type="checkbox"/> See the real Vietnamese life   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get of the beaten track | <input type="checkbox"/> Do not want to visit mass tourism destinations                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Authenticity            | <input type="checkbox"/> Local handicrafts and markets  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Try local food          | <input type="checkbox"/> Better environmental management  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> See villages            | <input type="checkbox"/> Want to visit some less touristy places in addition to the main destinations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meet local people       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other .....             |   |
| .....  |   |

***Part 3: This part of the questionnaire is about your attitudes to tourism.***

**16. Is the term ‘responsible tourism’ familiar to you?**

- Yes, I have heard of it
- Yes, I know what it means
- No

**17. Do you think you travel in a responsible way?**

(Travel which considers the environment, nature and culture of the destination)

- Yes
- No

**18. What is important to you when travelling?**

(Please indicate for all aspects to which level they apply to you on a scale of 1 to 5.)

	<b>1 Un- important</b>	<b>2 Important</b>	<b>3 Very important</b>	<b>4 All determining</b>	<b>5 No opinion</b>
<b>Protect the environment</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Support local charities</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Support the local economy/ industry</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Preservation of heritage</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Benefit the poor</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Poverty reduction</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Good local working conditions</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Respect local cultures</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Behave responsible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Local development</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Improve quality of life of host communities</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Meet and interact with locals</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Authentic experiences</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Learn about other cultures</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Minimal impact on destination</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Conserving energy, water, and minimising waste</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Behave and dress appropriately</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**19. Which of the following values and beliefs are important to you?**

(Please indicate for all aspects to which level they apply to you on a scale of 1 to 5.)

	<b>1 Not applicable to me</b>	<b>2 Slightly applicable to me</b>	<b>3 Applicable to me</b>	<b>4 Very applicable to me</b>	<b>5 No opinion</b>
<b>Environmentally conscious</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Adventurous</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Active</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Materialism</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Social</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Contentment</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Optimism</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Politically aware</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Relationship/ network oriented</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Feeling of freedom</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Ability to enjoy</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Spirituality</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Success</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Creativity</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Authenticity</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Idealism</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Religion</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Activism</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Self-actualisation</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Self-awareness</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Altruism (help others, volunteer)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Part 4: To conclude could you please answer some questions about yourself.*

**20. Gender...**

- Male
- Female

**21. What is your age?**

- < 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 +



**22. What is your highest level of education?**

- Primary education
- Secondary education
- University post graduate
- Other.....
- College
- University

**23. What is your job/ occupation ?**

.....  
.....

**24. Nationality .....**

**25. Do you have any additional issues that you would like to raise...**

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

**Thank you very much for your cooperation!**

# **Appendix 4**

## *Codebook*

Place in SPSS Sheet	Variable	Qnr	Question	Answer code
1	Resp.nr			
2	Location			1=Sa Pa 2=Dien Bien Phu 3=Mai Chau 4=Ha Long Bay 5=Ha Noi
3	Visited	1	How many times have you visited Vietnam?	1=1 2=2 3=3 4=4+ 5=I live in Vietnam
4	Res.nat	2	To experience nature	1=Yes 2=No
5	Res.new	2	To see new places	1=Yes 2=No
6	Res.food	2	To try local food	1=Yes 2=No
7	Res.away	2	To get away from everyday life	1=Yes 2=No
8	Res.people	2	To meet new people	1=Yes 2=No
9	Res.exp	2	To experience culture and local heritage	1=Yes 2=No
10	Res.adv	2	Adventure	1=Yes 2=No
11	Res.relax	2	To relax	1=Yes 2=No
12	Res.other	2	Other	
13	Stay	3	How long will you be in Vietnam?	1=1-6 days 2=7-14 days 3=14-30 days 4=1-6 months 5=6-12 months 6=>1 year 7=I live in Vietnam
14	Tvg.self	4	By myself	1=Yes 2=No
15	Tvg.colleg	4	Colleagues	1=Yes 2=No
16	Tvg.partn	4	Partner	1=Yes 2=No
17	Tvg.friend	4	Friend(s)	1=Yes 2=No
18	Tvg.fam	4	Family	1=Yes 2=No
19	Tvg.organ	4	Organised group	1=Yes 2=No
20	Tvg.other	4	Other	
21	Info.visit	5	Previous visit	1=Yes 2=No
22	info.friend	5	Friends and family	1=Yes 2=No
23	info.touro	5	Tour operator	1=Yes 2=No
24	info.trguide	5	Travel guidebooks	1=Yes 2=No
25	info.mag	5	Magazines	1=Yes 2=No
26	info.news	5	Newspapers	1=Yes 2=No

27	info.tvd	5	TV documentaries	1=Yes 2=No
28	info.tvc	5	TV commercial	1=Yes 2=No
29	info.radio	5	Radio	1=Yes 2=No
30	info.tragen	5	Travel agent	1=Yes 2=No
31	info.tours	5	Tourist office in Vietnam	1=Yes 2=No
32	info.none	5	None	1=Yes 2=No
33	info.broch	5	Brochures	1=Yes 2=No
34	info.adv	5	Advertisements	1=Yes 2=No
35	info.trfair	5	Travel fair	1=Yes 2=No
36	info.emba	5	Embassy/consulate	1=Yes 2=No
37	info.prod	5	Product suppliers	1=Yes 2=No
38	info.internt	5	Internet	1=Yes 2=No
39	info.webs	5	Websites	
40	info.other	5	Other	
41	area.NE	6	North-East Vietnam	1=Yes 2=No
42	area.NW	6	North-West Vietnam	1=Yes 2=No
43	area.RRD	6	Red River Delta	1=Yes 2=No
44	area.NCC	6	North Central Coast	1=Yes 2=No
45	area.SCC	6	South Central Coast	1=Yes 2=No
46	area.CH	6	Central Highlands	1=Yes 2=No
47	area.SE	6	South-East Vietnam	1=Yes 2=No
48	area.MRD	6	Mekong River Delta	1=Yes 2=No
49	Satisfied	7	How satisfied are you with your trip to Vietnam until now?	1=Very satisfied 2=Satisfied 3=Undecided 4=Dissatisfied 5=Very dissatisfied 6=Not applicable
50	Improved	8	What could be improved?	
51	Dest SP	9	Destination Sa Pa?	1=Heard about 2=Visited 3=Planning to visit
52	Dest MC	9	Destination Mai Chau?	1=Heard about 2=Visited 3=Planning to visit
53	Dest DBP	9	Destination Dien Bien Phu?	1=Heard about 2=Visited 3=Planning to visit
54	Dest LCH	9	Destination Lai Chau?	1=Heard about 2=Visited 3=Planning to visit
55	Dest LC	9	Destination Lao Cai?	1=Heard about 2=Visited 3=Planning to visit
56	Dest HG	9	Destination Ha Giang?	1=Heard about 2=Visited 3=Planning to visit
57	Dest SL	9	Destination Son La?	1=Heard about 2=Visited 3=Planning to visit

58	Dest BH	9	Destination Bac Ha?	1=Heard about 2=Visited 3=Planning to visit
59	Dest MCH	9	Destination Moc Chau?	1=Heard about 2=Visited 3=Planning to visit
60	Dest TD	9	Destination Tam Dao?	1=Heard about 2=Visited 3=Planning to visit
61	Dest HB	9	Destination Hoa Binh?	1=Heard about 2=Visited 3=Planning to visit
62	Dest YC	9	Destination Yen Chau?	1=Heard about 2=Visited 3=Planning to visit
63	Dest TG	9	Destination Tuan Giao?	1=Heard about 2=Visited 3=Planning to visit
64	Dest ML	9	Destination Muong Lay?	1=Heard about 2=Visited 3=Planning to visit
65	Dest MT	9	Destination Muong Te?	1=Heard about 2=Visited 3=Planning to visit
66	Dest SH	9	Destination Sin Ho	1=Heard about 2=Visited 3=Planning to visit
67	Dest YB	9	Destination Yen Bai?	1=Heard about 2=Visited 3=Planning to visit
68	Dest Other	9	Destination other?	
69	Travel	10	How did/do you travel through North-West Vietnam?	1=Sa Pa-Dien Bien Phu-Mai Chau 2=Mai Chau-Dien Bien Phu-Sa Pa 3=Only Sa Pa 4=No plans yet 5=Other
70	Last dest	11	What is the last overnight destination you have visited?	
71	Next dest	12	What is the next overnight destination you are going to visit?	
72	Dest out	13 A	Have you, or are you planning to visit destinations outside Sa Pa, Dien Bien Phu and Mai Chau while you are in the North-West?	1=Yes 2=No
73	Visit NW	13 B	Do you travel to the NW of Vietnam?	1=Yes 2=No
73	Not.familiar	14	Not familiar with these destinations	1=Yes 2=No
74	Not.info	14	Lack of information	1=Yes 2=No
75	Not.facilit	14	Lack of tourist facilities/transportation	1=Yes 2=No
76	Not.prefer	14	I prefer to visit more developed tourist destinations	1=Yes 2=No
77	Not.dist	14	Distance	1=Yes 2=No
78	Not.time	14	Travel time	1=Yes 2=No
79	Not.permit	14	Permits	1=Yes 2=No
80	Not.costs	14	Costs	1=Yes 2=No

81	Not.other	14	Other	
82	Rem.adv	15	Adventure	1=Yes 2=No
83	Rem.beat	15	Get of the beaten track	1=Yes 2=No
84	Rem.auth	15	Authenticity	1=Yes 2=No
85	Rem.food	15	To try local food	1=Yes 2=No
86	Rem.villag	15	See villages	1=Yes 2=No
87	Rem.local	15	Meet local people	1=Yes 2=No
88	Rem.real	15	See the real Vietnamese life	1=Yes 2=No
89	Rem.mass	15	Do not want to visit mass tourism destinations	1=Yes 2=No
90	Rem.hand	15	Local handicrafts and markets	1=Yes 2=No
91	Rem.envir	15	Better environmental management	1=Yes 2=No
92	Rem.less	15	Want to visit some less touristy places in addition to the main destinations	1=Yes 2=No
93	Rem.other	15	Other	
94	R Tourism	16	Is the term 'responsible tourism' familiar to you?	1=Yes, I have heard of it 2=Yes I know what it means 3=No
95	Responsible	17	Do you think you travel in a responsible way?	1=Yes 2=No
96	imp.enviro	18	Protect the environment	1=Unimportant 2=Important 3=Very important 4=All determining 5=No opinion
97	imp.chariti	18	Support local charities	1=Unimportant 2=Important 3=Very important 4=All determining 5=No opinion
98	imp.econo	18	Support the local economy/ industry	1=Unimportant 2=Important 3=Very important 4=All determining 5=No opinion
99	imp.herita	18	Preservation of heritage	1=Unimportant 2=Important 3=Very important 4=All determining 5=No opinion
100	imp.poor	18	Benefit the poor	1=Unimportant 2=Important 3=Very important 4=All determining 5=No opinion
101	imp.povr	18	Poverty reduction	1=Unimportant 2=Important 3=Very important 4=All determining 5=No opinion
102	imp.workc	18	Good local working conditions	1=Unimportant 2=Important 3=Very important 4=All determining 5=No opinion

103	imp.cultur	18	Respect local cultures	1=Unimportant 2=Important 3=Very important 4=All determining 5=No opinion
104	imp.respo	18	Behave responsible	1=Unimportant 2=Important 3=Very important 4=All determining 5=No opinion
105	imp.develo	18	Local development	1=Unimportant 2=Important 3=Very important 4=All determining 5=No opinion
106	imp.life	18	Improve quality of life of host communities	1=Unimportant 2=Important 3=Very important 4=All determining 5=No opinion
107	imp.locals	18	Meet and interact with locals	1=Unimportant 2=Important 3=Very important 4=All determining 5=No opinion
108	imp.exper	18	Authentic experiences	1=Unimportant 2=Important 3=Very important 4=All determining 5=No opinion
109	imp.otherc	18	Learn about other cultures	1=Unimportant 2=Important 3=Very important 4=All determining 5=No opinion
110	imp.impact	18	Minimal impact on destination	1=Unimportant 2=Important 3=Very important 4=All determining 5=No opinion
111	imp.cons	18	Conserving energy, water and minimising waste	1=Unimportant 2=Important 3=Very important 4=All determining 5=No opinion
112	imp.appro	18	Behave and dress appropriately	1=Unimportant 2=Important 3=Very important 4=All determining 5=No opinion
113	val.eviro	19	Environmentally conscious	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
114	val.advent	19	Adventurous	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
115	val.active	19	Active	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
116	val.materi	19	Materialism	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
117	val.social	19	Social	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
118	val.conten	19	Contentment	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
119	val.optim	19	Optimism	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me

				3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
120	val.politic	19	Politically aware	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
121	val.relation	19	Relationship/ network oriented	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
122	val.free	19	Feeling of freedom	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
123	val.enjoy	19	Ability to enjoy	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
124	val.spirit	19	Spirituality	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
125	val.succes	19	Success	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
126	val.creative	19	Creativity	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
127	val.sustain	19	Sustainability	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
128	val.authen	19	Authenticity	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
129	val.ideal	19	Idealism	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
130	val.religion	19	Religion	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
131	val.activis	19	Activism	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
132	val.self-ac	19	Self-actualisation	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
133	val.self-aw	19	Self-awareness	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
134	val.altruism	19	Altruism	1=Not applicable to me 2=Slightly applicable to me 3=Applicable to me 4=Very applicable to me 5=No opinion
135	Gender	20	Gender	1=Male 2=Female
136	Age	21	What is your age?	1=<18 2=18-24 3=25-34 4=35-44 5=45-54 6=55-64 7=65+



137	Education	22	What is your highest level of education?	1=Primary education 2=Secondary education 3=University post graduate 4=College 5=University 6=Other
138	Job	23	What is your job/occupation?	
139	Nationality	24	Nationality?	
140	Issues	25	Do you have any additional issues that you would like to raise?	

# **Appendix 5**

*Overview questionnaire results*

## Questionnaire results

### Location (N=101)

Location	Frequency	Percent
Sa Pa	23	22.8
Dien Bien Phu	3	3.0
Mai Chau	26	25.7
Ha Long Bay	19	18.8
Ha Noi	30	29.7

### 1. How many times have you visited Vietnam? (N=101)

Times	Frequency	Percent
1	89	88.1
2	4	4.0
3	1	1.0
4+	2	2.0
I live in Vietnam	5	5.0

### 2. Why did you choose Vietnam as your travel destination? (N=101, more answers possible)

	Frequency	Percent
<b>To experience nature</b>	44	43.6
<b>To see new places</b>	73	72.3
<b>To try local food</b>	41	40.6
<b>To get away from everyday life</b>	30	29.7
<b>To meet new people</b>	26	25.7
<b>To experience culture and local heritage</b>	77	76.2
<b>Adventure</b>	48	47.5
<b>To relax</b>	29	28.7

#### **Other**

##### ***Friends & Family***

- Come with friends
- Friend of mine who is doing the trip with us is originally from Vietnam
- Friends had told us it was wonderful
- Friends recommended
- My husband wanted to go
- To meet Marjorie who lived and worked in Vietnam for SNV (2)
- To travel with my son

##### ***Work***

- To work
- Work (teaching)
- Work opportunities

##### ***Other***

- A close place coming from here
- As part of a trip through South-East Asia

- Dalur?
- Impressions of the country
- To know the country I am living in
- To see the war places

### 3. How long will you be in Vietnam? (N=101)

Days	Frequency	Percent
1-6 days	5	5.0
7-14 days	33	32.7
14-30 days	53	52.5
1-6 months	4	4.0
> 1 year	2	2.0
I live in Vietnam	4	4.0

### 4. What best describes your travelling group? (N=101, more answers possible)

	Frequency	Percent
<b>By myself</b>	11	10.9
<b>Colleagues</b>	0	0
<b>Partner</b>	37	36.6
<b>Friends</b>	35	34.7
<b>Family</b>	16	15.8
<b>Organised group</b>	17	16.8

### 5. Which information source(s) did you use to decide on Vietnam as a travel destination? (N=101, more answers possible)

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Previous visit</b>	9	8.9
<b>Friends and family</b>	54	53.5
<b>Tour operator</b>	12	11.9
<b>Travel guidebooks</b>	55	54.5
<b>Magazines</b>	13	12.9
<b>Newspapers</b>	6	5.9
<b>TV documentaries</b>	19	18.8
<b>TV commercial</b>	0	0
<b>Radio</b>	0	0
<b>Travel agent</b>	6	5.9
<b>Tourist office in Vietnam</b>	0	0
<b>None</b>	2	2.0
<b>Brochures</b>	4	4.0
<b>Advertisements</b>	1	1.0
<b>Travel fair</b>	3	3.0
<b>Embassy/consulate</b>	1	1.0
<b>Product suppliers</b>	0	0
<b>Internet</b>	39	38.6

#### Websites

- Different travel organisations
- erlebevietnam.de

- Fox travel (2)
- Vietnam, Djoser
- Google (3)
- Different sites (2)
- Lemetail.co.il
- Lonely planet (4)
- Selective Asia (2)
- Tiscali.it
- Travel fish (3)
- Trip advisor (2)
- Weather websites
- Wikitravel
- www.footprintravelvietnam.com
- www.pervan.de, stefan-lease.de etc.

**Other**

***Films & Documentaries***

- "Indochine" film with Catherine Deneuve
- Anthay Boudain (chef) and his TV food documentaries on Vietnam
- Film "La fille du botaniste"
- James Bond films

***Recommendations***

- Friends recommendations
- Recommendations from friends & other travelers
- The company assigned me here, so I decided to travel, also friends said it was a beautiful country

**6. Which area's are you planning to, or have you already visited in Vietnam?**

(N=101, more answers possible)

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>North-East Vietnam</b>	71	70.3
<b>North-West Vietnam</b>	58	57.4
<b>Red River Delta</b>	31	30.7
<b>North Central Coast</b>	51	50.5
<b>South Central Coast</b>	68	67.3
<b>Central Highlands</b>	23	22.8
<b>South-East Vietnam</b>	61	60.4
<b>Mekong River Delta</b>	62	61.4

**7. How satisfied are you with your trip to Vietnam until now? (N=101)**

<b>Satisfaction</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very satisfied	55	54.5
Satisfied	36	35.6
Undecided	8	7.9
Not applicable	2	2.0

## **8. What could be improved? (N=63)**

### ***Transportation***

- Availability of trains to get around
- Better tailor made tours, better bus transportation system (open bus tours are always overbooked).
- Traffic
- Government travel policies. We couldn't fly through Vietnam from Phnom Penh and we lost about \$1700
- Information in train station, information in public place
- Lot of traffic when travel with children.
- Tourists' buses stopping where they say they will.
- Roads, more bus and flights during holidays
- Traffic
- Taxi drivers are cheating
- Taxi's can be a rip off if you get the wrong one. Taxi's don't know where they are going
- The continuous annoying motorbike drivers
- Trains
- Transport between remote areas
- We arrived yesterday on a 24-hours bus ride from Vientiane, Laos and that was not the best experience.

### ***Hygiene***

- Hygiene
- Hygiene
- The food
- Toilets

### ***Weather***

- Weather
- The weather
- The weather

### ***Satisfied***

- If you make no 'shit', you must be very satisfied
- Its perfect
- Nothing, everything is great!
- Nothing, we are very impressed with our tour operator and guide
- This is our second day, so far all is excellent
- Very happy with everything

### ***Pushy selling***

- Less pushy sellers on the streets
- I could prefer if the locals wouldn't put that much pressure on the tourists to buy their stuff. I would buy more if I could take my time to have a look and decide what I want to buy
- I found that people where always trying to sell something. Business people could benefit from learning some sales skills that did not involve pressure people the point of making them not want anything.
- I would like to buy traditional things, but too long sometimes the girls followed us and I felt disturbed!
- Only been in country during TET so nothing open! The co-operation of all officials in the country -then offer no assistance other than when saying 'no' or taking your money!

- Ignorance
- Shop assistants/market trailers etc. not being so pushy + sometimes very rude when trying to get you to buy things, please could they back off!! Being pursued for up to 2 hours by local ethnic minorities wanting to sell stuff I didn't want + had have clear I didn't want is not the sort of abiding memory I to take home with me! Post office staff could do with being a little more polite - have been to 3 post offices in different towns in Vietnam + everybody I've come across in them has been downright surly! The Vietnamese do strike me as being very greedy people - if they can make an extra few dollars from you- they will. It's not a pleasant experience to constantly feel you are being ripped off by hotel staff/market traders/shop assistants/taxi drivers etc. Just because you are a Westerner. Cost at 25.
- The amount of pressure to buy could lessen, to make it absolutely perfect
- The locals are too pushy. They became bothersome at times

### ***Service***

- More individual service
- If there was a tourist information centre, not selling tours etc, just simply impartial honest advice. One place to buy bus tickets, same price! The price appears to vary dramatically, 3 dollars to 8 dollars for the same journey. so you have to shop around, bit annoying. If we spoke Vietnamese! Could engage with locals better to understand their life more and roughly, also would be easier buying food where there are no prices listed. I think that is very off pulling for tourists
- More information about the culture and nature, In the home stay in the village we had a very nice house but it was really of our expectations
- Phone contact with tour consultants
- Service
- Tailor made tours, travelling by yourself
- The Vietnamese do not really have a culture of service, so hotel staff/waiters/taxi drivers etc. can be seen as rude or off hand
- To have more individual trips instead of the ones whom are too touristic

### ***Facilities***

- A heater in the restaurant of Mai Chau Lodge and on the boat to Ha Long Bay

### ***Pollution***

- Attention to environmental factors- less pollution via motorbikes
- I think there are a lot of garbage laying around all over - bad for the beautiful nature
- Pollution
- Noise + pollution
- Rubbish everywhere, more bins? Dien Bien
- The cleanliness could be improved particularly in areas that derive tourism from their natural beauty

### ***Language skills***

- Better English from the tourist guide,
- English level of the local population outside the tourist activities (or maybe my own level of Vietnamese language)
- English speaking by Vietnamese people.
- It could be nice if people were better to communicate. Not that they need to learn English (could be nice), but at least understand 'sign language' and pointing at that kind of stuff

- Language (European) speaking people are very few different to communicate with Vietnamese if you don't speak another Asian language or Vietnamese. Training in English or French or German or Dutch would be good.
- Our own language skills
- The English
- The more language you know the better your Vietnam experience
- The locals could speak better English

#### **Prices**

- Price tearing between locals and foreigners.
- Prices cheaper, Vietnam is expensive compared to other Asian destinations
- The raised prices for tourists.
- Vietnam have so many good natural resources. But the price is very different traveler and Vietnam people.

#### **Personal**

- I could be more prepared
- I do not know yet, because I have only been here for two days
- I need more entertainment places
- I've been here 3 days
- I've been here too short (2 days so far) to know. So far I'm impressed by the friendliness of the people and the quality of the food
- The culture is very different. I think sometimes the tourist must be more patient and 'indulgent'

#### **Other**

- Keeping control of tourism with local people
- Longer stay
- More 'destinations', there are at the moment a limited number of places on the tourist map, other places are difficult to get to and few places to stay
- More sustainable development and infrastructure

### **9. Please indicate by ticking the boxes which destinations you have heard about in North-West Vietnam and which destinations you have or plan to visit.**

(N=101, more answers possible)

	<b>Heard about</b>	<b>Visited</b>	<b>Planning to visit</b>	<b>Unfamiliar</b>
<b>Sa Pa</b>	22/ 21.8%	35/ 34.7%	26/ 25.7%	18/17.8%
<b>Mai Chau</b>	11/ 10.9%	24/ 23.8%	4/ 4.0%	62/ 61.4%
<b>Dien Bien Phu</b>	16/ 15.8%	6/ 5.9%	5/ 5.0%	74/ 73.3%
<b>Lai Chau</b>	10/ 9.9%	5/ 5.0%	3/ 3.0%	83/ 82.2%
<b>Lao Cai</b>	11/ 10.9%	18/ 17.8%	10/ 9.9%	62/ 61.4%
<b>Ha Giang</b>	9/ 8.9%	1/ 1.0%	2/ 2.0%	89/ 88.1%
<b>Son La</b>	15/ 14.9%	6/ 5.9%	3/ 3.0%	77/76.2%
<b>Bac Ha</b>	16/ 15.8%	2/ 2.0%	4/ 4.0%	79/ 78.2%
<b>Moc Chau</b>	8/ 7.9%	1/ 1.0%	2/ 2.0%	90/ 89.1%
<b>Tam Dao</b>	1/ 1.0%	2/ 2.0%	0	98/ 97.0%
<b>Hoa Binh</b>	14/ 13.9%	3/ 3.0%	2/ 2.0%	82/ 81.2%
<b>Yen Chau</b>	3/ 3.0%	0	0	98/ 97.0%
<b>Tuan Giao</b>	4/ 4.0%	0	1/ 1.0%	96/ 95.0%
<b>Muong Lay</b>	3/ 3.0%	2/ 2.0%	2/ 2.0%	94/ 93.1%
<b>Muong Te</b>	3/ 3.0%	0	0	98/ 97.0%
<b>Sin Ho</b>	3/ 3.0%	1/ 1.0%	0	97/ 96.0%
<b>Yen Bay</b>	1/ 1.0%	1/ 1.0%	0	99/ 98.0%



**Other**

- Ha Long Bay (7)
- Hue (2)
- Saigon (3)
- Ha Noi (6)
- Cat Ba Island
- Hoi An (3)
- Mekong Delta
- Ninh Binh
- Ta Phin Village(3)
- Tam Coc/ Bich Dong/Cuc Phuong National Park / Hai Phong
- Y lin Ho-Ta Van-Giang ta Chai-Su Pan-Ban Ho
- I can't remember the names of the towns

**10. How did/do you travel through North-West Vietnam? (N=101)**

Destination	Frequency	Percent
Sa Pa-Dien Bien Phu-Mai Chau	3	3.0
Mai Chau-Dien Bien Phu-Sa Pa	4	4.0
Only Sa Pa	13	12.9
Other	27	26.7

**Other**

- Bus
- By night train
- By train, taxi with driver
- First trip: Ha Noi- Sa Pa Second trip: Ha Noi-Mai Chau
- Ha Noi- Mai Chau-Ninh Binh
- Ha Noi- Mai Chau, Ha Noi-Sa Pa
- Ha Noi-Lao Cai-Sa Pa-Dien Bien Phu
- Ha Noi-Mai Chau (3)
- Ha Noi-Mai Chau by bus
- Ha Noi-Mai Chau-Ha Noi (2)
- Ha Noi-Mai Chau-Ha Noi-Ha Long Bay-Ha Noi- Sa Pa- Ha Noi
- Ha Noi-Mai Chau-Ha Noi-Ha Long Bay-Sa Pa
- Lao Cai-Sa Pa-Ta Phin(2)
- Mai Chau-Sa Pa (2)
- Maybe short excursion to a Dzaio village
- North to South
- Only Mai Chau (2)
- Sa Pa-Dien Bien Phu
- Sa Pa-Dien Bien Phu-Laos
- Sa Pa-Mai Chau
- Travel by 4 wheel drive
- We travelled from Ha Noi to Sa Pa by train and back to Ha Noi by train
- Y lin ho-Lao Cai-Ta Van-Giang ta Chai-Su Pa-Ban Ho

**11. What is the last overnight destination you have visited? (N=97)**

<b>Destination</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Bac Ha	2	2.1
Bangkok	1	1.0
Bangkok (Thailand)	1	1.0
Boat in Ha Long Bay	1	1.0
Cat Ba Island	2	2.1
Dien Bien Phu	3	3.1
Ha Long Bay	9	9.3
Ha Noi	39	40.2
Ha Noi (now), Ha Long Bay	1	1.0
Ha Noi (sleeper train)	1	1.0
Ha Noi for the last night	1	1.0
Ha Noi- Ha Long Bay	1	1.0
Ha Noi-Ha Long Bay	1	1.0
Ha Noi, Hue	1	1.0
Ha Noi, temple of literature	1	1.0
Ha Noi/train sleeper	1	1.0
Ho Chi Minh City	1	1.0
Hoi An	6	6.2
Hong Kong	1	1.0
Hong Kong-Ha Noi	1	1.0
Hue	1	1.0
In North Vietnam, Tuyen Quang-Xin Man-Bac Ha	1	1.0
Mai Chau	3	3.1
Sa Pa	12	12.4
Sa Pa/Ha Noi	1	1.0
Sleeper train	1	1.0
Ta Van Village	1	1.0
Vietiane Laos	1	1.0
Vinh Nghe An	1	1.0

**12. What is the next overnight destination you are going to visit? (N= 94)**

<b>Destination</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
-	1	1.1
Dien Bien Phu	2	2.1
Ha Long Bay	13	13.8

Ha Long Bay, on a boat	1	1.1
Ha Long city	1	1.1
Ha Noi	16	17.0
Ha Noi and further South	1	1.1
Halong Bay, Cat Ba	1	1.1
Ho Chi Min City	1	1.1
Ho Chi Minh City	1	1.1
Hoa Binh	1	1.1
Hoi An	3	3.2
Home	1	1.1
Home stay Ta Phin	1	1.1
Hue	5	5.3
I don't know	1	1.1
Laos	3	3.2
Laos, Viantiene	1	1.1
Mai Chau	4	4.3
Mai Chau-Ha Noi	2	2.1
Night train	1	1.1
Ninh Binh	3	3.2
Old quarters, Ha Noi	1	1.1
Overnight train to Ha Noi then stay in Ha Noi	1	1.1
Sa Pa	18	19.1
Sa Pa - Ha Noi	1	1.1
Sa Pa or Ha Long Bay	1	1.1
Son La	2	2.1
Ta Phin	1	1.1
Ta Van Village	2	2.1
Train to Ha Noi, Ha Long Bay	1	1.1
Vietienne (Laos)	1	1.1
Vinh	1	1.1

**13 A. Have you, or are you planning to visit destinations outside of Sa Pa, Dien Bien Phu and Mai Chau while you are in the North-West? (Version 1) (N=49)**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	9	18.4
No	40	81.6

**13 B. Do you travel to the North-West of Vietnam? (Version 2) (N=49)**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	26	53.1
Yes	23	46.9

**14. What are the reasons why you will not be visiting destinations outside of Sa Pa, Dien Bien Phu and Mai Chau while you are in the North-West? (Version 1) What are the reasons why you will not be visiting destinations in the North-West Area of Vietnam? (Version 2) (N=97)**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Not familiar with these destinations</b>	15	22.1
<b>Lack of information</b>	11	16.2
<b>Lack of tourist facilities/ transportation</b>	6	8.8
<b>I prefer to visit more developed tourist destinations</b>	3	4.4
<b>Distance</b>	13	19.1
<b>Travel time</b>	43	63.2
<b>Permits</b>	3	4.4
<b>Costs</b>	3	4.4

**Other**

**Organised tour**

- Program is different
- Different trip
- Organised tour
- Organised tour through Vietnam so everything is decided
- Tour is different
- Tour only goes to Sa Pa
- Travelling by group

**Time**

- 1st visit - we have limited time so are doing more familiar first
- As we want to visit different regions and don't have much time, we prefer to get to know one place a little bit more and not to move every day.
- Stayed only for 10 days in Vietnam and could not see everything

**Weather**

- I want to go South where it's warmer
- Weather
- Weather, warmer in the South

**Other**

- Travel with kids, can't walk for a long time
- Want to visit Laos, maybe next time

**15. What is your reason for visiting the remoter areas in the North-West Highlands?  
(Version 1) What is your reason for visiting the North-West of Vietnam? (Version 2)**  
(N=101, more answers possible)

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Adventure</b>	17	56.7
<b>Get of the beaten track</b>	8	26.7
<b>Authenticity</b>	14	46.7
<b>To try local food</b>	7	23.3
<b>See villages</b>	17	56.7
<b>Meet local people</b>	17	5.7
<b>See the real Vietnamese life</b>	14	46.7
<b>Do not want to visit mass tourism destinations</b>	7	23.3
<b>Local handicrafts and markets</b>	10	33.3
<b>Better environmental management</b>	3	10.0
<b>Want to visit some less touristy places in addition to the main destinations</b>	15	50.0

**Other**

- Landscape (3)
- My wife
- Nature
- Nature, adventure with friends
- Trekking
- War places

**16. Is the term ‘responsible tourism’ familiar to you? (N=98)**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes, I have heard of it	31	31.6
Yes I know what it means	46	46.9
No	21	21.4

**17. Do you think you travel in a responsible way? (N=98)**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	81	82.7
No	17	17.3

**18. What is important to you when travelling? (N=101, more answers possible)**

	<b>Unimportant</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Very important</b>	<b>All determining</b>	<b>No opinion</b>
Protect the environment	9.5%	28.4%	53.7%	3.2%	5.3%
Support local charities	12.2%	54.4%	23.3%	1.1%	8.9%
Support the local economy/industry	7.4%	48.4%	34.7%	5.3%	4.2%
Preservation of heritage	2.1%	34.0%	46.8%	12.8%	4.3%
Benefit the poor	6.3%	49.5%	32.6%	6.3%	5.3%
Poverty reduction	6.1%	47.6%	31.7%	6.1%	6.9%
Good local working conditions	5.3%	51.1%	30.9%	6.4%	6.4%
Respect local cultures	0.0%	18.8%	62.5%	18.8%	0.0%
Behave responsible	2.1%	19.8%	59.4%	17.7%	1.0%
Local development	8.7%	43.6%	28.3%	8.7%	6.5%
Improve quality of life of host communities	8.5%	40.4%	29.8%	7.4%	12.9%
Meet and interact with locals	2.1%	44.7%	42.6%	10.6%	0.0%
Authentic experiences	3.2%	37.2%	41.5%	17.0%	1.1%
Learn about other cultures	3.3%	24.2%	48.4%	23.1%	1.1%
Minimal impact on destination	6.7%	34.4%	36.7%	10.0%	12.2%
Conserving energy, water and minimising waste	5.4%	41.9%	36.6%	8.6%	7.5%
Behave and dress appropriately	3.2%	43.6%	40.4%	9.6%	3.2%

**19. Which of the following values and beliefs are important to you?**

(N= 101, more answers possible)

	Not applicable to me	Slightly applicable to me	Applicable to me	Very applicable to me	No opinion
Environmentally conscious	3.3%	14.1%	46.7%	31.5%	4.3%
Adventurous	7.5%	21.5%	34.4%	34.4%	1.1%
Active	4.1%	21.6%	54.6%	18.6%	1.0%
Materialism	30.4%	37.0%	26.1%	4.3%	1.1%
Social	0.0%	16.8%	57.9%	24.2%	1.1%
Contentment	1.0%	15.3%	47.1%	28.2%	8.2%
Optimism	2.1%	14.6%	50.0%	32.3%	1.0%
Politically aware	8.8%	28.6%	45.1%	14.3%	3.3%
Relationship/ network oriented	10.8%	30.1%	31.2%	19.4%	8.6%
Feeling of freedom	2.2%	7.5%	43.0%	47.3%	0.0%
Ability to enjoy	2.1%	5.3%	37.2%	55.3%	0.0%
Spirituality	26.9%	25.8%	29.0%	17.2%	1.1%
Success	11.6%	33.7%	31.6%	17.9%	5.3%
Creativity	6.5%	26.1%	37.0%	28.3%	2.2%
Sustainability	3.5%	18.6%	48.8%	18.6%	10.5%
Authenticity	1.1%	16.7%	42.2%	35.6%	4.4%
Idealism	13.8%	26.6%	38.3%	16.0%	5.3%
Religion	40.9%	34.4%	14.0%	4.0%	6.5%
Activism	25.5%	34.0%	25.5%	6.4%	8.5%
Self-actualisation	10.6%	20.0%	38.8%	17.6%	12.9%
Self-awareness	4.3%	19.4%	44.1%	22.6%	9.7%
Altruism	12.4%	30.3%	42.7%	11.2%	3.4%

**20. Gender... (N=99)**

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	45	45.5
Female	54	54.5

**21. What is your age? (N=99)**

Age	Frequency	Percent
<18	1	1.0
18-24	18	18.2
25-34	33	33.3
35-44	14	14.1
45-54	11	11.1
55-64	15	15.2
65+	7	7.1

**22. What is your highest level of education? (N=97)**

Education	Frequency	Percent
Primary education	1	1.0
Secondary education	18	18.6
University post graduate	18	18.6
College	12	12.4
University	46	47.4
Other	2	2.1

**Other**

- Business school - Start authorised estate broker
- Nurse
- Teacher's college

**23. What is your job/ occupation**



**Construction**

- Builder
- Calculator/work preparation
- Civil engineer
- Electrician
- Engineer (Environmental protection)
- Independent construction
- Engineer
- Interior restorer
- Painter
- Real estate broker - own business
- Renovating buildings in France

**Health**

- Benefits advisor for a charity working with the elderly
- Care assistant a nursing home
- Care assistant at a home for the elderly with Alzheimer's and dementia
- Doctor
- Doctor (radiologist)
- Intensive care
- Registered nurse (pediatrics)
- Social worker (3)

**Education**

- Associate professor
- Education + business consultant
- ESL teacher
- ESL teacher in South Korea
- Instructor
- School teacher
- Teacher (4)
- Teacher/ tutor/ tourist

**Finance**

- Bank employee
- Banker
- Controller
- Controller/ freelance financial
- Financial auditor

**Business**

- Administrator (2)
- Communication advisor
- Consultant (2)
- Consultant for the silk industry
- Coordinator
- Director Business
- Human Resources Officer
- Manager
- Secretary

**Marketing and PR**

- Marketing (2)
- Marketing and management graduate
- Product Marketing Management
- Public relations
- Public service

**Sales**

- Sales (2)
- Sales engineer
- Sales of software
- Music composition also sales

**Technical**

- Biologist technician
- Computer programmer
- Sound Technician

**Restaurant**

- Chef
- Restaurant manager
- Waitress

**Media**

- Employee media agency (research)
- TV director
- TV writer

**Nature and development**

- Development worker
- Ecologist
- Landscape-ecologist

**Retired**

- Retired (5)
- Retired elementary teacher
- Retired entrepreneur
- Retired teacher/ aboriginal languages teacher

**Student**

- Still a student for another first degree
- Student (2)
- Travelling/student

**Unemployed**

- Left my job to go travelling, but I was a marketing assistant at a college in England.
- N/A
- None, been working in Norway
- Not at the moment. Student at university when I go back home
- Unemployed, travelling

**Other**

- Lawyer (3)
- Government
- Research
- Shop keeper, photographer

#### 24. Nationality (N=99)

Nationality	Frequency	Percent
American	3	3,0
American/English	1	1,0
Australian	11	11,1
Austrian	2	2,0
British	16	16,2
Canadian	5	5,1
Chinese	1	1,0
Danish	6	6,1
Dutch	19	19,2
French	8	8,1
German	9	9,1
Hong Kong	1	1,0
Irish	1	1,0
Israeli	3	3,0
Italian	1	1,0
Norwegian	2	2,0
South Korean	1	1,0
Spanish	1	1,0
Swedish	4	4,0
Swiss	3	3,0
Uruguayan	1	1,0

#### 25. Do you have any additional issues that you would like to raise?

##### *Locals*

- I think the Vietnamese people are very kind
- In the poorer areas in North Vietnam there needs to be a way (or ways) to allow and encourage tourists to help the local tribes in a constructive and lasting way rather than just giving money directly or buying overpriced goods from the locals.
- It's incredibly disturbing how the locals toss trash everywhere on the streets, in the lakes and so on. And they don't care!
- Litter! A real shame there is so much litter everywhere in Vietnam and the locals continue to perpetuate the problem - have watched lots of local people just throwing sweet/food wrappers/bags of rubbish out to boat/buses/vans/in the streets/in their own communities - really sad look awful and must be having an impact on the environment. Noise! I hate the noisy TV's on the buses and trains and all the honking of horns, constantly. These must all seem like very negative comments, I would like to stress that I have met some very nice people here, those who are genuinely friendly and without an ulterior motive for wanting to find out more about you. But those who have been rude, pushy, taken advantage leave a sad impression of a country. While visiting the Sunday market this weekend with two other visitors from the hotel. One ethnic minority young woman approached then wanting to sell her wares. When politely told they didn't

wish to buy anything she reacted: "you horrible people - you no buy from me- you leave my county". I say no more!

- The street vendors need to be assist not to harass the tourist, it can get very annoying
- Tourism in Vietnam has a huge potential, but will not work without a change of attitude from the people in power. Short sightedness will be Vietnam's downfall.

### ***Impact of tourism***

- I find, in my travels, to be happiest when I feel that there is concern for preserving cultures with a real interest in protecting the environment - without either of the above, travelling will be a much lessened experience
- I think the impact of tourism on how the local people interact with tourists. e.g. hard selling, over-pricing, learning English, profit for individuals + community and peoples reactions to making/not making a sale.
- Good luck, don't change Vietnam to a Western country

### ***Facilities***

- If there were 4 star accommodations in the NW I would be more likely to travel there.

### ***Hygiene***

- Very nervous about food safety

### ***Information sources***

- We have relied more and more on the internet to find our information, in Vietnam this is so much easier then elsewhere. The days of the travel guide are really fast

### ***Prices***

- Yes, I wish Vietnam was cheaper

# **Appendix 6**

*In- depth tourist interviews*

## **Interview tourists**

### ***Did not visit North-West Vietnam***

(not visited or planning to visit) (Version 1)

#### **Introduction (me)**

- Thesis
- Interview
- Subjects
- SNV
- Voice-recorder
- Time

#### **General Information**

- Gender
- Age
- Nationality
- Profession

#### **Travel history**

- Why did you choose Vietnam as your travel destination?
- Is this the first time that you visited Vietnam?
- How long are you travelling through Vietnam?
- Can you describe Vietnam in 5 words?
- What is your travel route through Vietnam? (e.g. North to South, South to North)
- Are you planning to travel to North-West Vietnam? (Destinations)
- What modes of transportation do you use?
- How did you make travel arrangements (independent or travel agency)?
- Which destinations in the North-West are you familiar with?
- Would you be interested in visiting the more remote and less touristy destinations like Ha Giang, Dien Bien and Son La? Why (not)?
- What are your expectations if you travel to the more remote areas in the Northern Highlands?
- What kind of facilities would be necessary for you to stay in more remote areas?
- What are the potential barriers for visiting the North-West?

#### **Life style characteristics and personal values**

- Can you tell me something about your life in your country? Daily activities? What is important for you back home?
- How would you describe yourself (in a few words)?
- What are important values in your life?
- What are important values for you when travelling?

- How does your lifestyle reflect your choice of Vietnam as a travel destination?

### **Responsible tourism**

- What is your understanding and ideas about responsible tourism?
- In your opinion, do you think you travel in a responsible way?
- What do you think you could change about your way of travelling to be more responsible?
- Do you think Vietnam is a responsible tourism destination?
- Do you think a responsible approach to tourism is important for Vietnam?
- What would you like to see changed about how tourism is managed in Vietnam?
- Do you experience that tourism is supporting poverty reduction (environmental protection/conservation) and in what way can you distinguish this? (perhaps highlight with concrete examples from experiences).

### **Information sources used**

- Do you look up information about a destination before you travel somewhere? What kind of information are you looking for?
- What information sources did you use to plan your trip both prior to and after arriving in Vietnam?
- What sources have proven to be useful to you?
- What could be improved?

### **Overall experience**

- How satisfied are you to date with your trip in Vietnam?
- How satisfied are you by visiting the current tourism hubs (Sa Pa, Lao Cai, Mai Chau) (e.g. level of development, environmental management, quality of services)?
- What is the most positive experience you have had in Vietnam?
- What is the most negative experience you have had in Vietnam?
- What could be changed to make the experience more positive?
- Are you planning to come back to North-West Vietnam and Vietnam in general in the future? When?
- Would you recommend both North-West Vietnam and Vietnam in general as a travel destination to others? When?

### **Concluding**

- If you could make a movie about (NW) Vietnam after your trip, what kind of movie would you make? What would it be about? Why?
- Any other issues you would like to share?

# **Interview tourists**

## ***Visit North-West Vietnam***

(Version 2)

### **Introduction (me)**

- Thesis
- Interview
- Subjects
- SNV
- Voice-recorder
- Time

### **General Information**

- Gender
- Age
- Nationality
- Profession

### **Travel history**

- Why did you choose Vietnam and North-West Vietnam as your travel destination?
- Is this the first time that you visit Vietnam?
- How long are you travelling through Vietnam?
- Can you describe Vietnam in 5 words?
- How do you travel through Vietnam? (North to South, South to North)
- How do you travel to North-West Vietnam? (Destinations)
- What modes of transportation do you use?
- Do you think the transportation in North-West Vietnam is convenient for travelling?
- How did you make travel arrangements (independent or travel agency)?
- Do you travel to the more remote and less touristy destinations like Ha Giang, Dien Bien and Son La, or would you be interested in visiting?
- What kind of facilities would be necessary for you to stay in the remote areas?

### **Life style characteristics and personal values**

- Can you tell me something about your life in your country? Daily activities? What is important for you back home?
- How would you describe yourself (in a few words)?
- What are important values in your life?
- What are important values for you when travelling?
- How does your lifestyle reflect your choice for Vietnam as a travel destination?

### **Responsible tourism**

- What is your understanding and ideas about responsible tourism?
- In your opinion, do you think you travel in a responsible way?
- What do you think you could change about your way of travelling to be more responsible?
- Do you think Vietnam is a responsible tourism destination?
- Do you think a responsible approach to tourism is important for Vietnam?
- What would you like to see changed about how tourism is managed in Vietnam?
- Do you experience that tourism is supporting poverty reduction (environmental protection/conservation) and in what way can you distinguish this? (perhaps highlight with concrete examples from experiences)

#### **Information sources used**

- Do you look up information about a destination before you travel somewhere? What kind of information are you looking for?
- What information sources did you use to plan your trip both prior to and after arriving in Vietnam?
- What sources have proven to be useful to you?
- What could be improved?

#### **Overall experience**

- How satisfied are you to date with your trip in Vietnam and North-West Vietnam?
- How satisfied are you by visiting the current tourism hubs (Sa Pa, Dien Bien Phu, Mai Chau) (e.g. level of development, environmental management, quality of services)?
- What is the most positive experience you have had in Vietnam?
- What is the most negative experience you have had in Vietnam?
- What could be changed to make the experience more positive?
- Are you planning to come back to North-West Vietnam and Vietnam in general in the future? When?
- Would you recommend Vietnam and North-West Vietnam as a travel destination to others? When?

#### **Concluding**

- If you could make a movie about (NW) Vietnam after your trip, what kind of movie would you make? What would it be about? Why?
- Any other issues you would like to share?



# **Appendix 7**

*Transcripts tourist interviews*

## **Tourist interview 1**

**Name:** Aline Cloutier

**Age:** 60

**Occupation:** Translator, but retired

**Nationality:** Canadian

**Location:** Sa Pa

**Date:** 29-01-2010

**Time:** 11.00

**Interview time:** 1.10.16

**Did not visit remote areas in North-West Vietnam is planning to go to the North-East. Here husband did visit the North-West she decided not to go with him.**

**E: Ellen**

A: Aline

**E: Why did you choose Vietnam as your travel destination?**

A: We were thinking of visiting Vietnam for the last three years. But finally three years ago we visited Thailand during 15 days with a group and then 10 days on the beach by ourselves. I really liked Thailand but I do not like to travel in a group, it is not my style. And we started to talk about visiting Asia after that time. And finally this year my husband said I want to go to Vietnam this year. And he did the itinerary, normally we do it together. Last year we visited Peru and we did it together. But I let him do it. And it is a very tight itinerary. We change hotel almost every day. That is why I did not want to visit the North-West because I was tired. I did not like Ha Noi, it was really noisy and very polluted. I did not like it that much. And that is why I did not want to visit the other part. I was fed up to be in the traffic, every time we had to visit a Pagoda we had to travel one or two hours North or South of Ha Noi in the traffic and the motors. Anyway I had the flue too, I was sick so it did not help. One night I saw the itinerary I told my husband, are you serious we are here for two months. Two months is a lot when you travel all the time and you stay a few times only two nights. But he had spent so many time preparing that I felt he was not really willing to make a lot of changes. He made a few. That is why I took the decision, I said I will not do this part with you. He said it is ok, if you prefer to take the night train

to Sa Pa. So I doubted for a few hours and then I said I am going to do it. I was afraid that I would regret not to see this part because I know that the landscape is beautiful. But now I am ok, I do not regret it. I like it here. So I took the night train and I came here. It is a little bit more commercial and touristic than I thought. I knew it was touristic. But it is nice, close to the Fansipan mountain. I went to the top to see the orchid garden. Very nice and I visited a small village named Cat Cat. Very interesting I was surrounded by Dzao and the Black Hmong, very nice and gentle people. Even sometimes when you get the expression that they are a little bit sticky. Because they want you to buy things that they make, handicrafts. But they are honest people and one thing which is very surprising for me is that I know that they have very little education but they learn English and we can have a conversation with them.

**E: A really good conversation.**

A: Yes, a really good conversation. I was very surprised because compared to the people in Ha Noi, a big city like Ha Noi, even in hotels they are better. They do not speak perfect English, I do not even speak perfect English but anyway. But I am surprised. Like this lady who was with me during all my time in Cat Cat village for over two hours. She was very nice, she was 33 and she had five children. But she was not carrying handicraft to sell. I said you do not have anything, she said I let it in Sa Pa. I do not carry that, it is too heavy. I only sell in downtown Sa Pa. Anyway it was very nice and I liked this tour. And I came back by motorbike. Which is not my temper, I yell after the motor bikes in Ha Noi. But that was interesting. And I like the atmosphere here.

**E: But you chose Vietnam because you already travelled to Thailand and you decided that you wanted to see some other Asian countries?**

A: The main reason is not that we were in Thailand first. It is because we met a few people who had visited Vietnam too, from Canada. And they all liked it. They all said it is very nice and you will like Vietnamese people. Which is true, they are nice, very agreeable, smiling. Except in Ha Noi in the small streets where they eat and almost sleep they do not even see you. They know that you won't buy, they are not trying to sell you something, they are not interested and they do not even see you. It is unbelievable. On the other hand they are all nice and smiling.

**E: Ok, and this is the first time that you visit Vietnam?**

A: Yes.

**E: And you are travelling for two months?**

A: Two months. Which is a long trip.

**E: Me too, two months. But of course it is different because I am doing research. You said you are not travelling a very long time in Vietnam already?**

A: Not that long. But there is one thing besides the pagodas around Ha Noi that we visited which must be really, really wonderful for people to visit. It is the Phuong Fong National Park. It is in the South part of Ha Noi around three hours by car. Around 25.000 hectare of natural forest. So I am sure there is a lot of trekking during the high season. It was the off season. But we walked three hours. It was very calm, bungalows and a beautiful lake. But of course since it is off season there is no heating system in the bungalows. We were the only tourists to sleep there. Finally it was ok. But for people who like trekking and spending time in the nature it is beautiful.

**E: Can you describe Vietnam for me in five words?**

A: I would say still in development, still very poor, nice people. You go between beautiful things and ugliness.

**E: Like an imbalance.**

A: Yes it is unbalanced. There is one thing too it, because almost one week it was raining. So the rain and the dust it has and influence of what you think about a city. There was a lot of dust because it had been raining for five, six days every day. And the smog. But the small village I have seen, Cat Cat was wonderful. The village is constructed in different levels. When you go down, and when you go up too it is really beautiful. And you see the small wooden houses and the handicraft. But I know that I have not seen yet the nicest place in the North.

**E: What is your travel route through Vietnam?**

A: After Sa Pa we still have two villages to visit here, Lao Cai and Ta Van. Which is supposed to be really interesting. Then we take the night train again to Ha Noi. And then we visit the North-East I think Lang Son, Cao Bang, which is supposed to be beautiful, there is rice production too, but there is fruits, trees, tobacco, tea and we go to Dong Van and the beautiful national park Ba Be. Which is supposed to be wonderful.

**E: But you also go to Dong Van?**

A: Yes it is North, but North-East. I think what my husband is doing now is the North-West. Ba Be, they say it is the most beautiful site of the North East of Vietnam. We will live with families for two days.

**E: That is nice.**

A: This part will last four, five days I think.

**E: And then you also go to the South of Vietnam?**

A: Yes, then we go back to Ha Noi, you always have to go back to Ha Noi.

**E: Yes I know, they want to change that too, that it will be easier to travel around the North.**

A: The same problem exists in Argentina. From Ha Noi we decided to take the plane. We will fly to Hue. Hue is supposed to be a fantastic and interesting city. We will stay there two days. One day by ourselves and one day with a guide. Then we will go to Buon Ma Thuot and Dalat. These are recognised to be beautiful too. Like Dalat, they said it is the eternal spring because of the nice weather they have. And then Dalat- Nha Trang. Nha Trang we spend six days to relax over there.

**E: I heard this area is also really touristic, with a lot of backpackers.**

A: I hope it won't be too noisy and too touristic.

**E: But it is low season, so maybe it is not too touristic at this time.**

A: Yes that is true. During summer time it is crazy. And then we are flying to Ho Chi Minh City but we have heard that it is worse than Ha Noi. I met a lot of tourists since I am here and everybody told me if you did not like Ha Noi because it was polluted and noisy do not go to Ho Chi Minh City, you will go crazy. And some people told me that they like noisy cities. But we took our decision even before we met this people. We are going to stay only one day.

**E: So you are travelling all the way to the South. My next question is; are you going to travel to the North-West, but you told me you are not going, your husband is going.**

A: No, but I will go to the North-East.

**E: What modes of transportation do you use? You said you use the plane, the train and the car.**

A: Yes we have a private guide and so we are travelling by car. Sometimes we walk, we do not have the guide in cities. And I took the night train to Sa Pa. We are flying from Ha Noi to Hue.

**E: And this guide is with you the whole two months?**

A: Not the whole two months he will finish here. And it is another one who will continue later, I do not know why, maybe sometimes they are tired. And for the North-West, my husband told me there are two drivers. It seems that it is tough. For the North-East part I am not sure.

**E: And your travel arrangements? You booked everything with a tour operator?**

A: Well, what my husband did, he bought two guides book like Evasant, a very good French guide book. And the lonely planet too. He spends many hours looking at it what he feels should be interesting to visit. And then he got in touch with the local tourism agency in Ha Noi. He submitted his project. They were really impressed, they said you presented like a professional itinerary from a travel agency. But he likes to do that. The thing is... if a person submits a project I do not know if I was working in this tourism agency we got in touch with. I think I would have made more recommendations. They know that two months is a lot. I met two, three representatives from this agency in Ha Noi. One she told me, it is really long two months. And you told me you find it really tiring and it has been only a week. Why are you travelling so long? I said this is my husband, he prepared it but he would like to make a few compromises. There are a few things he will see in Ha Noi with a guide, I will not see that, I will go to the museum for me it will be more interesting than the things he is going to see. The thing is, everything is booked and paid already, so if we make a change this will cost a lot. But I think the agency could have told him, I think this part is too much, you do too much in four/five days, I it up to you but... Because we do not know the country, it is not like travelling in Europe. In Europe it is very easy to prepare a itinerary. We were used to do it in Europe. And even in South-America it is easy. But here, it is totally different. And I think that my husband realises now, maybe he will not admit it, and that it is a little bit too much. Not for him, he is very tough. He is a very strong physical and mentally guy. But he did not like Ha Noi too. Because of the noise and the pollution.

**E: So you arrange everything at a local travel agency?**

A: Yes, I would have preferred... all hotels were reserved but we did not have any deception. My idea was to reserve just a few hotels, and arrange by ourselves, but he said we are going to have a lot of stress... I am not sure.

**E: I think you have heard of some destinations in the North-West which destinations are you familiar with?**

A: No, the people I know who have visited Vietnam did not do anything of the North, not even Sa Pa. Because you know all the tours, they all go to the same place. It is something that the travel agency should try to work on.

They all go to Ha Noi of course, Ha Long Bay a few pagodas near Ha Noi. Hue, Hoi An, Ho Chi Minh and I think that is it.

**E: What about Dalat and Nha Trang?**

A: Dalat and Nha Trang no. Because most of people in Canada, the tours are for 16-18 days. So they don't have time.

**E: No. Yes I have heard that most people only have two or three weeks to see the whole country.**

A: You can't.

**E: It is crazy.**

A: No, no you can't. And the only people I met here from Canada and Quebec who are doing the North is because they are all by themselves. Otherwise in 18 days you can't. That is the problem.

**E: No, but you were not familiar with the North-West area?**

A: No.

**E: No, ok. And would you be interested in visiting more remote areas? I think you are already going to some more remote areas.**

A: Yes, right now I don't know. Because I find it more and more difficult. Because I do not sleep well. And there is one thing which is important when you are travelling and that is to sleep well. And I don't sleep well, I sleep five hours a night, never more than that. So for me it is tough. If you do not have enough sleep you get tired. Even in my life I am a very energetic person. But you have to sleep.

**E: Yes, of course.**

A: So now I am not sure if I still make that trip. I might change my mind in a few months.

**E: But are you interested in visiting more remote areas? Places were not much tourists are?**

A: For instance you are revering to?

**E: Ha Giang, Dien Bien, Son La where your husband is going.**

A: Well... I won't do it because I did not go and I do not think I will make another trip only to see this parts. It is too bad that I have missed it.

**E: But you were interested?**

A: I was it is only because when I took the decision not to go I was so tired and I was sick. But I do not regret it. I think I took the right decision.

**E: What were your expectations about this areas? Did you have any expectations?**

A: I knew that the hotels we would stay would not be as comfortable as we had here. I know. We were going to live in a family too, one day. And what I know is that the landscape in certain parts is supposed to be beautiful. This I knew. And I knew that we would spend a lot of time on the road. This is a part I do not like very much. Because even here. Places we visited, two three hours from Ha Noi we had a private car, air conditioning and we ate sand. Because there was a lot of renovation works, construction works. It has rained and the dust was coming inside the car and we were covered. Could you believe it? We were in a car.

**E: Yes that is not good.**

A: I told my husband I do not want to travel with group but they have a big bus, but I am certain that they do not have that, because the bus is higher.

**E: What kind of facilities would be necessary for you to stay in the remote areas?**

A: Ok, I know how I am. I wasn't this at thirty, not even at fifty. I need more comfort. I can't live in small rooms where is noise.

**E: So it should be like a three star minimum hotel.**

A: Yes, three stars. The three stars hotels in Vietnam are very good. They have everything you need. I am surprised.

**E: And I think you already told me about what are the potential barriers for visiting the North-West region. The travel time and facilities.**

A: Yes, travel time and tough roads at certain parts. It means spending hours... I know that the part from Dien Bien to Sa Pa you spend five/six hours doing only 30 kilometres. It is too much, you get fed up.

**E: I have to go by local bus for eight hours.**

A: O, I am sure it will take eight hours. But at your age I would have done it. But I know people of my age who can do it.

**E: Ok, my research is also about lifestyle and personal values. Could you tell me something short about your life in your country, your daily activities, what is important for you.**

A: Ok, as I mentioned I am a translator but I stopped. For the last 3, 4 years I stopped really slowly. Now I do not work anymore. I used to live in Montreal, a big city that I liked. I like cities and we spend a little bit in the county. Then we moved to a place we called Eastern Tall ship which is a place with a lake. A beautiful place, quiet. A beautiful place. But kept a bachelor in Montreal because I need. My husband likes the country. He was

born in the country and he likes it. And it is very nice where we live. There is a lake and a marina, we have a sailing boat. So we do some sailing. But for me it is a little kind village. We know all the people which are very nice, we have friends there. But I need to go to Montreal often, two/three times a month and my husband knows about that he said it is ok, go. And I know that I will move back to Montreal in a few years. Not downtown Montréal. The place we call is Nonce island, which is a beautiful place. Eight minutes driving from Montréal, but you have the nature, you can walk ... it is quiet and if you want to go downtown it takes you ten minutes. That is what I like. And I do some sports, a little bit tennis, I walk a lot, I skate a bit. But not this winter... my husband hates winter. So I do some sailing, I took some Spanish courses, I speak Spanish. I have friends with whom I take Spanish courses, we practice together. And last year we went to Saint Michael in Mexico to take Spanish courses, the three of us. We had fun and that was a really good school. And I am crazy about cinema. I go to the cinema a lot in Montreal. And theatre too. So I like city mainly because of the cultural aspect.

**E: You are really into culture?**

A: Yes. Travelling just for the nature is not totally my type. Our friends like that, but I need both. Museum, culture and nature.

**E: All right, and how would you describe yourself in a few words?**

A: Well, energetic person, nervous, who needs change, curious about things and people. Sociable but the opposite to I need shelter.. but I can be very sociable with people. I have contradictions in my personality. But I think a lot of people have that.

**E: Yes, ok... What are important values in your life?**

A: Some people might think I am materialistic, I am not at all. My husband is but I am not. Like he is always trying to improve the house, I do not care. I hate construction works. When he renovates I go to Montreal. I could live in a smaller house as long as there is comfort and I like the area and I like what I have to do. My values are mainly to be well with the people that I know, my friends, my family. To do things that I like. Mainly I would say that.

**E: Ok.**

A: And cultural values too.

**E: And important values for you when travelling? I think it is almost the same.**

A: Yes I like to meet different persons, people. I like to see beautiful things. Nature or architecture. Museum... and I like eating well. In Vietnam we eat well. I think we eat well. And I like to feel secure. Here in Sa Pa it is safe. I am by myself all the time, I am walking in the streets at night. It is not everywhere you can say that. In Ha Noi everybody tells us to be cautioned. I bought one sweater in the small street with all the stuff. Because I needed a sweater. But nobody was interested. First of all they thought it was too small for me because they are so small. And they did not even look at me. One lady she looked at me, she had a sweater in a bigger size that I was looking for. And she called me. And it is true that it fitted me. And she told me. I was carrying my bag like... I am very ... how can I say that. I don't pay attention because it is not that I am naïve but I am absentminded. And she said, come on your purse, please close it. And please hold it in front of you. She said that in front of my husband, he was so glad because he doesn't stop telling me that.

**E: Be careful. They told me the same thing. And how does your lifestyle reflect your choice for Vietnam as a travel destination?**

A: First of all we have been travelling for a long time. I have been travelling since I was 20. The first time I was in Europe I was 20. It was young at this time. So I like travelling. Does it have something with my own life? Probably because if you travel every year, sometimes two/three times a year it means that it is part of your life.

**E: So it is really important for you?**

A: Yes. But I know that if we travel less and less it has to be replaced by something. And the way I see it now it is only travelling to visit big, beautiful cities that I like, cultural cities. Where I stay in the same hotel for a week. This is probably what I will do in the next future.

**E: Ok, the next part of my questions is about responsible tourism. I would like to know what your understanding and ideas are about responsible tourism.**

A: It is not that clear for me. It is not only a question of to respect the environment, to help maintain the place where you go stay clean. And try to encourage local things, local products where you are. But as I said it is not very clear for me.

**E: No.**

A: Because we do not have that much information about that.

**E: Ok. Responsible tourism in my perspective is protecting the environment but also preserving the culture, make sure the benefits are spread. If you have responsible tourism in one village, then not only the family where the home stay is will get the money but it will be divided to all the families. And work together with the local communities, participation.**

A: Yes I know it does exist, I forgot those things but I know about them.

**E: And in your opinion, do you think you travel in a responsible way?**

A: I wouldn't say that up to now I did really. Because it is a new concept.

**E: Yes that is true.**

A: Last year I thought of, since I speak Spanish, doing some community work in South-America. I thought of it. I said I do not know if it would be tough or not, I talked to persons who did it. They said they do not force you to do too much. I might do it. Probably not in Asia because here it is more difficult for me than in South-America.

**E: And what do you think you could change about your way of travelling to be more responsible?**

A: Maybe sometimes it is... I hear about a special project that can help them a couple of days. Maybe I could do my very small part. Two days. Yes, the problem is that if I was forty it would be so different. It is not that old sixty but...

**E: But it is not only about participating in projects but also about carrying about the environment, I think you do that.**

A: Yes I do that.

**E: It is also when you visit villages, behave in a responsible way and the way you treat the people.**

A: Oh yes, I am nice with them. Even if I do not want to buy everything they sell. I am nice with them and they understand, I tell them I can not buy from all of you. And I know I will buy from flowers, the one who came with me in Cat Cat. And they will be all there but I will tell them she came with me for three hours. So it is normal that I am encouraging her. I am sorry but I can not buy from all of you. She really deserved it.

**E: And do you see Vietnam as a responsible tourism destination? Do you think they are working on that here. In your perspective?**

A: I think they are starting to work on it. They do a lot, I think ... I am revering especially to hotels and restaurants. They all offer a lot in restaurants and when I know how little they eat. Sometimes I say it is too

much what they give us. It is too much. And the rice, they spoil the rice. I asked the guide. I said everywhere we go we get a lot of rice and we are only with two. And they give us rice for six. And even if I look at the other tables. There is a lot of rice that hasn't been eaten. Could you tell me what they do with it? I understand that there is a lot of rice plantation but they do not have money to spend that. He said: we give it to poor people. Is it true, I do not know. But it is awful, like the other, I have seen twice or three times a Chinese group. I hate their attitude. I had an opinion about them, I still have that. First of all they are noisy and they do not have any manners. They speak very loud. They had plenty food and did not ate half of it. So when I see that I think what do they do with this food? For the rice the guide told me they gave it to the poor. There is one thing I am sure, in Ha Noi, a small place in the old district. Where the people eat all their food and they prepare the soup with noodles. I do not remember having seen rice. I have seen noodles, a kind of soup. When I go back I will check if they have rice. I don't think I have seen rice.

**E: Ok, but do you think it would be important for Vietnam to have a responsible approach for the future? If you look at Sa Pa.**

A: Yes.

**E: I think it should be developed different in my opinion.**

A: Yes because it is a beautiful site. They should have another road for trucks in such a small place, because with the big trucks it is pollution, noise, it means building roads. And they like for instance I have noticed this in other hotels too. The room I have, it is the big room at the corner, I was glad because it was sunny but we have a small heating system. But when it is cold here, and around the door, there is a lot of space. They don't do anything. In the bungalow where we slept space all over the doors, all over the windows and it is details that they do not know. And even if you have a heating system it costs a lot for them because it is not properly isolated. So there is a few things that could be done. Not only for us, for them. To reduce certain costs.

**E: What else would you like to see changed in Vietnam?**

A: To take waste, to reduce the pollution. I am not optimistic of what Ha Noi would look like in five or ten years. Because there are more and more motorcycles. As long as they make a little bit more money they buy a motorcycle. And if they make more money they will buy a car. It will be terrible. They can't build a metro in Ha Noi. I do not know.

**E: I think they are going to do that.**

A: O yes, that would be a very good idea.

**E: They are making plans now but it will take maybe ten years before it is finished. But I think they are going to do that.**

A: They have to. Otherwise traffic will be jammed all day and all night.

**E: It is already really busy.**

A: Yes it is already like that. This would be good. I thought of it, they should have a metro.

**E: Yes I think they are going to do it. And do you experience that tourism is supporting poverty reduction?**

A: I am not sure.

**E: Why not? Do you maybe have an example?**

A: I should be surprised to see how much the people making the rooms make. Their daily salary. I went to the women's museum in Ha Noi. Women have been working and are still working very hard in Vietnam. And the street sellers they have a new job since 2008, they do not want them to sell anymore in the street. I have read that they are making only 1,5 dollar a day.

**E: Wow.**

A: And travelling hours. Hours in the streets. So I am not sure if tourism has improved a lot their lives. Ok, they created jobs, but what is the salary. And when I hear the guide. The guide we have, he has training in tourism as a guide. His wife is a mathematic teacher. His brother is a doctor. So it is an above average family. He doesn't have money. I do not think so. They are building big apartments in Ha Noi. I said who is going to life like that. He said oh the "parvenu". Parvenu in French it means people who suddenly make money. He has kind of a disgust for rich people and the new middle class. Because he has certain values this guide. And he said oh the parvenu. The first day we were there he said Vietnam is still a very poor country. This is what he told us, and I know. I am not sure if it is only the owner of the big hotels.

**E: And do you think, the same question about environmental protection, do you think that is changed because of tourism? Or is it even getting worse?**

A: I did not read a lot of things of what they do here. I might be wrong, but I think their main concern now is to develop the tourism. Building hotels and building apartments. I do not think that they take care about the

environment. Ha Noi is an example. I know for instance about Brasilia. Brasilia was a really noisy and polluted city I know the last few years, they did a lot. Their life is much better now. I know a friend who is there often, she tells me a lot. I do not think they have this concern here. But I might be wrong.

**E: Yes. I do not think so either. I want to know also some things about the information sources you use. You told me a little bit in the beginning already, about how you look up information before you travel somewhere. But you told me your husband does that.**

A: Yes.

**E: But what kind of information do you look for?**

A: Well, we buy guides. And we also look through the organised tours. We look what they do and we do it a little different. I called it a marathon. But what my husband prepares is a marathon too. We do not do marathon with them, but it is a marathon. And sometimes by friends with whom we have certain values in common. Everybody does not travel for the same reasons. I have friends they will never come here. I was thinking sometimes of one of my friends. She will be in a hospital for months now. No I know her. If it is not perfectly clean, she would go crazy, she doesn't travel that much. She travels very rarely. I like my comfort but I can make compromises.

**E: Yes, and what sources of information have proven to be useful to you?**

A: To come here?

**E: Yes.**

A: I would say the guides and internet too. Internet is a fantastic way now to get any information you want. Not only about travelling. Only for the choice of hotels we have seen them. We knew what it looked like. The rooms and everything. Sometimes you have surprises. It did not happen now. But I know sometimes it could happen.

**E: You looked at the internet for hotels, for destinations....**

A: The hotels were suggested by the local agencies. But we check everything. My husband has a binder like that. He is still working, he is a businessman. I said you are not going to bring it this year again, it is around five pounds. Everything is there with tickets and the hotel and ... everything is there.

**E: It is like a hobby of him?**

A: Yes, he likes doing that, especially because where we live is kind of a domain. We have certain common costs, because of the marina but it is a condo, it is houses. And he was president and member of the board of directors. But now he resigned from everything. He did a lot, really a lot. And I was afraid, I said if he doesn't have anything to do because he has to do something. So that is why I let him prepare it himself. I did not get involved because I knew he had to be busy. I regret it a little bit, because I would have changed a few things. And he checked on internet too.

**E: I understand. And for the information sources. Is there anything in your opinion that could be improved?**

A: It is too bad it is not me who did the work, I did just a part. When he gave it to me I checked things. I spend at least 10 hours of checking things. But it is not the same thing as when you prepare it. The thing I would say about this local agency. They are ok. They respect what you say, they are on time. Like for the train, she came with me, she was there to make sure that I took the right train. She was there I took a cab, she put me in the train. She was ok. But they embellish a lot. They put it really, really beautiful. A little bit too much.

**E: Could be a little bit more realistic?**

A: I think so. Last year we had a French agency based in Peru. With whom we did about the same thing. And they were really professional. Everything was exactly like it was there. It was perfect in everything. But French people have been in tourism for many years. And we took a professional agency. And the thing is that when they realise that you are not on a small budget, which is our case, I think sometimes especially here, they are trying to take a little bit advantage of it. I know we paid a lot for the train. Much more than I should have paid but I took my decision like that. And she knew that I wanted to go.

**E: You had a private cabin?**

A: Yes, with four beds. And we asked them, do you have cabins with two beds. And she said no, it is only four. So I had to pay for four tickets. When I arrived, the guy who took the tickets looked at me, he looked at the four ticket and he was really surprised. And the representative said she is by herself, it is ok. But I met Quebecers yesterday. They told me they are going to take the night train with two beds. I said it doesn't exist. O yes they said, it does exist. I said are you sure. Yes she said I have seen photos and the



agency told me it does exist. Ok thank you. When I will go back to Ha Noi I will have a conversation with them.

**E: Yes tell them. That is not good.**

A: O yes, I will tell them. Because there are a few things I told her. One of the representatives she is smiling all the time. She doesn't stop smiling or laughing. You do not know why. I do not like her because you can not see exactly who she is. There is another one I prefer. She was very spontaneous, very nice. But her this time she did not laugh, she did not smile. I said, you said there was no day train, there is a day train, we met some tourists.

**E: Yes there is.**

A: I know it is very basic I would not have taken it. And she knew I would not have taken it. Because she knows me now. But I said it is too bad that I hear that from tourists. Because we did ask you. She said, do you know that it is very basic. I know, but it is for the principal. But now when I come back I had to pay four beds because she told me it doesn't exist two. I do not know what she will answer. Maybe she tells me the day you wanted to leave there was not one left.

**E: Yes but you have to be honest and not lying about it.**

A: I know, I told my husband. I said they know we are not on a budget. Even mostly my husband pays. I do not like to be taken advantage.

**E: No, of course not.**

A: I said let me talk about this part with her. Because I want her to know what I think. He doesn't like it too. For the train I will tell him. And for the train we paid a lot and we will tell. And we compare the hotel. We cancelled in Ho Chi Minh three nights, with the one we had in Nha Trang. The one in Ho Chi Minh costs at least 20 dollars more per day. 15 or 20. But she doesn't say anything, she smiles, she waits. I said I was expected that she would mention about the hotel, but nothing. And I said we will compare in the internet the prices. And she saw the book my husband had with the photos. He said it is for me. She said oh yes. He said you know we are well prepared, there is a difference of 15 dollar between the two hotels. Yes it is true that you would save money, but she wouldn't have told us. No, no, so it can happen in any county. But I tell you that we met different tourists, young tourists of 25-30. In two different places, Cat Ba and Ha Noi. Travelling by themselves. And two groups were coming back from Thailand. And they said in Thailand people were more honest. I can not say that from my experience. It is difficult for me, when you hear two/three

young people by themselves saying we never had the right information. Never at the same price. We have to argue, we have to check. The day we were taking the speedboat from Cat Ba to Ivan we knew the boat was a 1 o'clock. We had ours tickets reserved in advance and we met this two. They were from England I think. They said we are taking a rapid boat too. We said we think there is not more than one. They said we have to take a bus to there. We said a bus... think it is here. But maybe there is another one. They said, o don't tell me we are cut again. Because we are supposed to have our boat today. They were not on the boat. I do not know if they paid. This are some stories I have heard in Vietnam.

**E: This is also referring to it, the overall experience you have in Vietnam. How satisfied are you to date with your trip in Vietnam?**

A: If I put aside my health condition. I am satisfied. I would say I am satisfied. I know the conditions are different from my country. The honesty aspect could be improved. They must know about it.

**E: And how satisfied are you by visiting Sa Pa? About the level of development, environmental management, quality of services?**

A: From what I have seen, I do not think it is a place where you could spend two weeks. A few days, three days, four maybe. Because from the moment you have visited the small villages around, the orchid garden and you walk to the streets and discover a few places. There is a tourism office, I was there. They were nice but they gave me immediately an investigation paper to fill in. I was there for five minutes. I said yes ok, but they could have more literature. But of course they can not invent what does not exist in Sa Pa. They were nice, but no literature.

**E: What do you think of the level of development around here?**

A: When you say development, you are revering to what exactly?

**E: To all the building, the development of the tourism.**

A: O yes, for tourism there is a lot of hotels. I think there is a lot in such a small place. They probably have different prices. There is quit a wide range of type of hotels, I think so. Restaurants is the same thing. There is a lot of restaurants. Did you notice that all the Italian restaurants are much more expensive than other places? It is the double of other restaurants.

**E: And what is the most positive experience you have had in Vietnam?**

A: I think the relationship we had with the guide. He is a very nice person, with very good values. And he is honest. He said in Sa Pa there will be a lot of people around you. But do not buy. Don't be afraid he said, and he

prepared a map with things to do. Sometimes he said you better eat at the hotel. You will have more choice, it will be better and it will be less expensive in the restaurant in this place. That is a good experience. And the people I met too. The atmosphere yesterday I liked. I realise one thing if you don't take the time, any place you go, to feel the place you miss things. We go too fast now. I will tell my husband. I know it will be difficult to change many things, it is too late, but it is a marathon. I will tell him, I spend two days alone here and I know it doesn't make sense.

**E: And what is the most negative experience you had in Vietnam?**

A: Well, that I was sick at the beginning. I am never sick when I travel, very seldom. I had diarrhoea, a flue in arriving. Of course it influences you. You are sick, I had fever. I think this is it. Otherwise the pollution which is part of the country.

**E: What could be changed to make the experience more positive? But you can't do anything about being sick of course.**

A: No.

**E: Are you planning to come back to Vietnam in the future?**

A: I don't know. Because I still have a lot to see. Maybe in a different way. And not as long maybe.

**E: Ok, would you recommend Vietnam to others as a travel destination?**

A: Yes, with certain specifications. Depending to whom I am talking. Yes I would.

**E: Ok, and then I have one concluding question. If you could make a movie about Vietnam after your trip, what kind of movie would it be and where would it be about?**

A: It would be an adventurous movie. I would like to describe Vietnam as it is. Not only show Ha Long Bay it is part of beautiful things. But I would like people to see what it is exactly. So I would show things that are not really nice to see, but I would show them. But I would also show how nice people could be, I would show beautiful things too. So that people could understand that it is a mix of everything.

**E: Yes, a really realistic movie?**

A: Yes. But with positive things too.

**E: Ok, this were my questions is there anything else you would like to share?**

A: I do not think so.

**E: Ok, thanks a lot for this interview.**

### **Tourist interview 2+3**

**Name:** Katie Sloan/ Chris Barela

**Age:** 30/ 43

**Occupation:** Renewable energy/ Insurance

**Nationality:** American

**Location:** Sa Pa

**Date:** 31-01-2010

**Time:** 12.00

**Interview time:** 49,18

**Did not visit remote areas in North-West Vietnam**

**E: Ellen**

K: Katie

C: Chris

**E: Can I ask you, why did you choose Vietnam as your travel destination?**

K: Well, we are travelling probably through probably 20 different countries and we chose Vietnam because we were going to be in South-East Asia anyway. For me I wanted to come because I thought it would be less touristy like Thailand. That is why.

C: *It was one of my destinations because I wanted to know what the Vietnamese people were like. .*

**E: And this is the first time that you visit Vietnam right?**

K: Yes.

**E: How long are you travelling through Vietnam?**

K: About two weeks probably.

C: *Two weeks.*

**E: Can you describe Vietnam in five words?**

K: Friendly, touristy and beautiful, natural things to see.

C: *Yes sound about it. I thought they were friendly, very touristy, very beautiful, maybe exotic in some areas, good food.*

**E: And you're travel route through Vietnam? From South to North?**

C: *North to South.*

**E: Which destinations are you visiting?**

K: Sapa, Ha Noi, Hue, Hoi An, Saigon.

C: *Maybe Danang.*

**E: So the big tourist spots.**

K: Yes.

C: *Pretty much.*

**E: In North Vietnam you only visit Sa Pa?**

K: Yes, only Sa Pa.

**E: What modes of transportation do you use to travel through Vietnam?**

K: Train and bus mostly.

**E: Airplane?**

K & C: No.

**E: How did you make your travel arrangements? Did you do it independently or did you use a travel agency?**

K: We did it independently.

C: *We did our itinerary all by ourselves.*

**E: And how did you do that? By travel books?**

K: Yes mostly, like Lonely Planet.

**E: Which destinations in the North-West are you familiar with? Have you heard of Dien Bien Phu, Mai Chau, Moc Chau, Son La?**

C: *Only Mai Chau, I saw that in the Lonely Planet. I have read a little bit about it, but not much.*

**E: But you are not familiar at all with this area?**

K & C: No.

**E: Would you be interested in visiting more remote areas in the North-West like Ha Giang, Son La if you had more time maybe?**

K: If I had more time and if I knew more about it and knew that trains go there and that it is accessible like by transportation. I would be interested if we had more time.

**E: And what would be your expectations if you travel through this area?**

K: I was surprised that Sa Pa was so touristy. I did not realise that it would be so many tourists. What I thought Sa Pa would be like would probably be what this area would be like, where it is less touristy.

**E: What kind of facilities would be necessary for you to stay in the more remote areas?**

K: I would want to have hot water and western toilets. To be able to stay somewhere for a while, I would want that.

**E: You would not mind being in a home stay?**

K: Yes I would stay in a home stay.

*C: If I would be able to afford something other than a home stay I would not stay in loud places where the party is going on all night.*

K: I guess when I was thinking of home stay, I was thinking of literally just a couple people like you and me staying with a family. As suppose to like what we saw yesterday. I would not want to stay in a hostel. Like what we saw yesterday.

**E: I mean like in this areas where there are not much tourists and you really stay with a family in their house.**

K: Yes I would be interested.

*C: O yes that would be great.*

K: I think that would be very interesting, to be able to get to meet the people more. Like the ones that are not attracted to the tourists. See how people actually are living.

**E: So you would be interested in going?**

K: I would yes.

**E: And what are the barriers for not visiting? I might have addressed it already.**

K: I think lack of information and time.

*C: Yes.*

**E: Ok, the next part is a little bit about your lifestyle and your personal values. Could you tell me something about your life in your country? Daily activities and what is important for you back home?**

K: At home I work a lot from 9 to 5 and I do a lot of volunteering. Which is important to me.

**E: And how would you describe yourself in a few words?**

K: Charismatic, focussed, and friendly, like a people person.

*C: Outgoing....*

K: Outgoing.

**E: And what are important values in your life?**

K: Family and the quality of people, the environment.

**E: What are important values for you when travelling?**

K: I think for me it is like... just being open minded to different cultures. And I do not like to see a lot of trash. Like visiting Ha Long Bay and that there is so much trash in the water from all the different boats that were there. I felt sad, I did not want to contribute to ruining the environment in this beautiful places just because I am visiting them.

**E: And how do you think your lifestyle reflects your choice for Vietnam as a travel destination?**

K: I think... it is not so much about Vietnam. But the fact that we are taking eight months out and leaving work for eight months, reflects my values. I just really wanted to explore the world and see what is more out there, than just only America. And Vietnam was in my personal interest because my father was in the Vietnam war.

**E: And Chris, can I ask this questions to you too?**

*C: Sure.*

**E: Can you describe your life in your country? Daily activities?**

*C: My daily activities.*

**E: Yes what is important?**

*C: Most important? Daily activities... I guess when I was working most of the time I spend going to the office. It takes us more time than anybody wants of course. I am doing leisure stuff, a lot of golfing, going to the beach, walking my dog. Hanging out with Katie a lot. We spend a lot of time together. Going to movies.*

**E: Ok, and how would you describe yourself?**

*C: I am a very outgoing kind of person. I might be a little more introverted than most people, I am a little quieter. I am a people person ones I get to know you, but maybe a little shy at first. But I am very friendly, very kind, I have a big heart.*

**E: And what are important values in your life?**

*C: Good quality of life I guess. Striving for a high lifestyle. This means financial security where I can do whatever I want to without wishing I would do something without having the money. That is important to me. And lots of friends and lots of family. That is probably number one and the others are number two. This are things I think what everybody else wants.*

**E: And when travelling what is important to you? Important values?**

*C: On vacation, I guess really getting acquainted with wherever I am going. So like Vietnam really getting to know the people and find out why they are different than we are and learn some things from them. I can go home by having learned something in life what they taught me.*

**E: How does your lifestyle reflects your choice for Vietnam?**

*C: I guess my choice here was definitely to get away from routine. And another reason is that I wanted to get away from a country that was mine because of going to the same places back home.*

**E: Ok, the next part is about responsible tourism. What is your understanding and ideas about responsible tourism? Do you have some knowledge about it, or do you have no idea what it is?**

K: I do not have a whole lot of knowledge about it. But my guess would be that it is about not exploiting the people that are in a county and trying to be responsible and like environmentally involved.

**E: Yes, that is a good answer. It is like responsible travelling in a way that culture, nature and environment is considered.**

*C: I would say I have this in my head that there are certain places where you would want to be more conscious than others. But I did not know how to be environmentally conscious until I actually read the lonely planet. There are some areas in which it says, this is how you should behave, this is how you can contribute. And do not take more than one shower a day. These things were not in my head. Do not use plastic bottles whenever you can. Stuff like that. So in India there were some spots where I read and it helped a lot. To read something about particular regions. So if Vietnam had some sort of awareness. That would really help. I would remember like o in Sa Pa I am not supposed to shower twice. I am not supposed to use plastic bottles. That kind of stuff would help. Because you not really register it till you see it. Because at home before you leave it is an idea in your head that....*

K: What are some concrete things you can actually do when travelling?

**E: Some codes of conduct are existing already. And some responsible tour operators give them to their guests when travelling. Some particular rules like how to behave, like dress properly. Do you think you travel in a responsible way?**

*C: I think we do a fair job.*

K: Minus the plastic bottles.

*C: Just to give you an example. When it comes to doing laundry I will be conscious enough to wear my clothes more than one time. I know that there is probably a lot of tourists who wear their clothes once and this are the kind of travellers that want to be pampered and we are not like that. So we are conscious.*

K: We were very conscious in India how to act appropriately culturally. Like wearing covered up sleeves and long pants and not holding hands in public and things like that. We try not to offend the people.

**E: That is really good.**

K: We are also doing some volunteering.

**E: What kind of volunteering are you going to do?**

K: In Thailand we are going to help save some of the native turtle species. We are doing that for two weeks. Then we go to a local community where it is not touristy at all and where the local people are involved to do some environmental teaching to the children that are in the community. In Africa, Tanzania we are going to do some volunteering in a project for people who have been infected by aids. So it is an orphanage and training for women who have aids. And helping them to start some small businesses.

**E: What do you think you can change about your way of travelling to be more responsible?**

*C: I always think of the nature side, but I think we also should be conscious about the social customs as well. But I think we should with every destination where we go check with the social customs of the country.*

**E: Do you think Vietnam is already a responsible tourism destination?**

K: Not after seeing Ha Long Bay. All the trash we have seen there.

*C: Ha Long Bay surprised us both. It is such a beautiful highly touristic destination. It is mixed. Because it is such a beautiful place they should be keeping it up even more. And the fact that we were on a boat with some trash lined up in the water that was very disturbing. They are less socially conscious than I thought.*

K: Yes. And the fact that it is one of the top places for people to go. And one of the beautiful places in the world and if you do not take care of that then you would not think they were doing much anywhere else.

**E: I have not heard that before about Ha Long Bay. That is very surprising. For the future do you think it would be important for Vietnam to be responsible?**

K: Yes definitely. Because if they are using tourism as a part of their economy and this can all destroy what it is that people are going to visit. If they are not responsible, even if they do not want tourism that much, they are ruining their environment.

*C: I can explain to you how I feel. One of the most beautiful parts in my country is Yosemite National Park. If Yosemite was treated the way they treat Ha Long Bay tourism would stop. First of all the Americans would stop going and this is such a highly visited destination. Such a beautiful national monument. And they make a lot of work just to make sure that it is clean every year and that is why the people are drawn to it. They do a very*

good job in making people social consciousness. It does not can become so bad some day that it is no longer a destination. That is really what we are talking about. As long as they do not care about Ha Long Bay. People do not come to see it anymore. It is not at that level yet but if they go on the same way. So that is why it is important. For a place like that, I look at that Ha Long Bay place in the same way. They should want to keep it preserved.

**E: I think they have to become conscious first about the environment.**

*C: Yes there is a lack of consciousness, that is what it is.*

**E: What would you like to see changed about how tourism is managed in Vietnam?**

*C: More tourist information depots in destinations. Like in Europe, any where you will go there will be an tourist information centre.*

K: I think if they want more tourism it should not be so hard to get a visa. I know it is really hard in America to get a visas. But they actually starting to relax the rules because they want more tourism. So I think that is an important thing. Yes because for Vietnam you had to get it ahead of time and with most other countries you could do it at the point of entry. We only had to get the visas ahead for India and Vietnam.

*C: Maybe they could at least explain why they do it. Maybe they can do a better job or make them easier as well.*

K: And in Ha Long Bay when we were on the tour they kept our passports all the time. We do not like letting our passport out of our personal possessions.

**E: What about hotels? They keep them too right?**

K: They just usually make a photocopy or write the information.

**E: Do you experience that tourism is supporting poverty reduction? Do you have any examples?**

K: Well it is hard to engage because I do not know what they were doing before.

*C: This question is hard for us to answer because we do not have the reference point.*

K: I would assume it is helping to build some kind of wealth. But I do not know who it goes to. Does it actually going to the people? Like in India there was a lot of talk about how the artists there are kind of cut out from the money, because there is a lot of middleman there are actually selling the goods and taking all the profit. The people who are making the scarves or

whatever it is they do not get any money. I do not know if it is the same kind of thing here.

**E: For example if you look at Sa Pa people want to sell and they want to earn money. But I think right now most of the profit goes to the hotels and to the tour companies and not really to the local people. But with the tour we did yesterday we had to pay a fee to the village. So I think they are trying to do something.**

*C: I think in general the establishment of poverty raising is a good thing. I mean as long as the reason for it is benefiting the small and middleman. But again this is a communistic society and I am thinking from a capitalistic point of view. Maybe here a big guy gets all the money, I do not know how it is working I do not have a good frame of reference.*

K: I guess we do not know enough.

**E: What I saw in my hotel is that the owner goes to poor communities to give out blankets, I think that is a really good example. The next questions are about the information sources you use before and during travelling. Do you look up information before you travel somewhere? And what kind of information?**

K: Yes, Chris did al lot of research.

*C: Before we started I ended up looking at different books that the experts put out there. Have been there for 10 of 12 years and know the region really well. I read this books to find out where I wanted to go. That gave me a natural reference point. It helped me deciding whether I wanted to go to places or not. Especially for example Africa. My concern was not going to areas which are politically unstable and/or dangerous. I did look at the normal travel guides for that kind of stuff. Ones I had an ideas of things I had questions on I when to the internet to get further details. There is a lot of interesting websites that have been developed over the years. That you can go to and have far more information than this books have. I think that really helped me. I think 60% of travel guides and 40% of internet.*

**E: Ok, so travel guides and internet. What information sources did you use to plan you trip to Vietnam. And while you are in Vietnam what sources do you use?**

K: Mostly lonely planet.

*C: The other thing is that friends of us have been to the destinations we are going to. They helped us develop ideas of what to expect.*

**E: Ok, and the guidebook was also really useful?**

K: Yes you know it is funny the lonely planet is so useful, it has it all sorted out really easy. But I am starting to hate it, because everybody has the same thing and has the same information. I have a love hate relationship with it. Now we are starting to do more hotels that are not necessarily in the lonely planet. Get an idea of the range and start looking on the internet.

*C: We are actually warming up more to the idea of looking for local knowledge. We had a lot of time with the lonely planet that I think they really missed it with some of the places they described. We are a little bit more adventurous now at being braver of how to ask the right questions to the locals that is something we are doing a lot more. Local knowledge is powerful.*

**E: They know more than the lonely planet of course.**

*C: Yes so I will be asking more questions the further we go.*

**E: And what do you think could be improved? Did you miss some information?**

*C: I do not know, it is hard to answer this question because a lot of it has been pretty much sufficient. Internet could be updated more often. And the books as well, some of them are outdated and there might be some stuff there that you do not know about necessarily.*

K: And some more information on the places which are not as touristy. I do not think there is any information in the lonely planet about other places other than Sa Pa and the day trips from around Sa Pa.

*C: I think they can do that but the book will be this big.*

**E: But they have some information on the areas I am researching.**

K: We do not have the Vietnam one, but we have the South-Asia one. So that is why it is different probably. It is cut down a lot.

**E: Yes I have the Vietnam one.**

*C: Yes to have a Lao Cai, Sa Pa session that would be very helpful.*

**E: I understand. Next questions are about your overall satisfaction. How satisfied are you to date with your trip to Vietnam?**

*C: Very satisfied, so far our expectations, my expectations are pretty much turned out of what I was expecting. In terms of things that we would see and fun factor, I did not have any bad experiences, really at all yet.*

**E: And what do you think about Sa Pa? Are you satisfied about Sa Pa?**

K: It was more touristy than I thought it would be, but our hotel is nice.

**E: And you do not get really annoyed by this people trying to sell you things?**

K: No we just came back from India and to be honest if we would have not been to India I probably would get more annoyed. They are still way less aggressive than the people are in India.

*C: It is really annoying when you are having lunch or dinner.*

**E: What is the most positive experience you have had in Vietnam?**

*C: Most positive? We did not have a chance to see much of it yet so I'd rather wish we met you down South.*

K: Chris's birthday.

*C: The birthday party was really nice.*

K: But really the actually all day yesterday people were doing nice things we were at that other restaurant and they had happy birthday playing and people have been very nice and friendly.

*C: Yesterday was a good example that they were willing to recognise that, hey if we do something like this, one little small thing it might mean a lot. So it is nice to see people like that when you are travelling. I am sure this would not happen in all the countries. But it is very positive to me.*

**E: And Katie, for you too?**

K: That, and I think one of the most positive things for me even though there was a lot of trash everywhere was like seeing Ha Long Bay because it is just really beautiful. It was weird because the trash was not there the first day, only in the morning after all the boats had been out there overnight. So we did some kayaking and there was not much trash around, so I do not know if they clean it up. But it was just really beautiful and I was expecting it to be beautiful but I did not know how large it was so I really liked seeing that.

**E: And the most negative experience? Chris you said you did not have any negative experiences?**

*C: Nothing that really strikes me as, what really bothered me. There were some small things here and there. I was just thinking when you were talking about the bay. If they would have the public toilets, you know nice, just try really hard to keep those clean. I think that is hard in every country where you are travelling if you do that. I think that would really help.*

K: But walking across the streets in Ha Noi that is crazy. But it is also part of the experience. So you would not want to change that.

**E: Are you planning to come back to Vietnam in the future?**

K: Probably not, I do not know. But we still have not gone to the South yet. That might be a place where we would want to go back to.

*C: Yes my guess is that we are not coming back. But what I have been reading about the South the scuba diving the weather and you can always wear shorts, we probably want to go back to the South.*

*K: Oh, I do have a bad experience. I do not know how you can change it but there is so many young tourists from like Australia in particular. They just get really loud and drunk and obnoxious I think it is just because they are really young.*

**E: The backpacker type of tourist?**

*K: Yes*

*C: I do not know how you can change that other than if you book your package that you are guaranteed from going on a tour with the average age of ... And they are not going to do that.*

*K: Yes if they had tours for a certain age.*

*C: We do not want to get on a boat were everybody is there for a booze cruise. So if there was some warning system, that would be helpful.*

*K: And we are probably paying a little bit more than the backpackers so it gets cut out that way at the hotels but it needs to be more on the tours too.*

*C: Both, exactly.*

**E: And would you recommend Vietnam in general as a travel destination to others?**

*K: Yes I would.*

*C: Absolutely.*

**E: What would you tell people?**

*C: I would tell them that it is a very interesting place to visit, that people are friendly and it is very lively. There are wonderful places to see. I would totally recommend it as a travel destination.*

*K: And it is also that people speak fairly good English it is easier to get around. That was one of my concerns when I came here because I did not know how easy it would be to communicate. If other people would know that it would make them more willing to come.*

**E: But I think that is more in the real tourist areas. Because I have been to areas where nobody speaks English. Ok, last question if you could make a movie about Vietnam after your trip what would it be about?**

*K: We have a camcorder, we will have one maybe. It is an interesting question.*

*C: I would make a movie trying to educate people about what they do not know about Vietnam. Because in America we have this stigma about*

*Vietnam the war automatically comes to their mind. They have this visual of war type ideas in their head. I would probably make a movie like, here is Vietnam and it is nothing near what you expected. The war is long ago. I would probably make like a documentary of how it really is.*

*K: I just getting this visual in my head. That if I would make a movie about Ha Noi for example it would be... We were sitting at this really great coffee shop and it was overlooking like a big circle where all the traffic was going all crazy and like time laps, speed-ups. So you just see it over the day like all the people going in and out of each other. So you get the idea of how crazy it is, I think that would be really cool visual just on that city to see that because it is so unique and so different. That just popped in my head.*

*C: To explain it now one will ever understand what you are talking about.*

**E: Ok, any other issues you would like to share?**

*K&C: No*

**E: That was it. Thank you very much**



#### **Tourist interview 4**

**Name:** Robert Mabit

**Age:** 63

**Occupation:** Engineer, but retired

**Nationality:** Canadian

**Location:** Sa Pa

**Date:** 02-02-2010

**Time:** 10.00 a.m.

**Interview time:** 50,09

**Did visit remote areas in North-West Vietnam**

**E: Ellen**

R: Robert

**E: Can you tell me, why did you choose Vietnam and North-West Vietnam as your travel destination?**

R: First thing is, we went to Asia once before, in Thailand. And last year we went to South-America again. So we wanted to go back to Asia, different kind of trip organised by ourselves. Directly with an agency of Ha Noi. And I wanted to spend two months. And we start our trip from Ha Noi with basically loops of a few days from Ha Noi and back to Ha Noi. And then we will be going South. The reason for choosing Vietnam is that there are a lot of tour operators who offer Vietnam and also to get away from the snow.

**E: To get away from the snow, that is a good reason. And this is the first time that you visit Vietnam?**

R: Yes. And most likely the last.

**E: Ok, and two months you said you travel?**

R: Yes.

**E: Can you describe Vietnam in five words?**

R: Nice people, nice scenery in the North-West, because I think we are in the North-West here. There is one word which I really have to say. This is bikes, motorbikes and scooters. That is actually one word. And also unfortunately pollution and dust. But besides that it is an interesting country. A developing country. And a lot of construction going on.

**E: All right, how is your travel route through Vietnam? You go from North to South right?**

R: Yes. We basically flew from Montreal to Paris, stay two days in Paris. And from Paris a direct flight to Ha Noi. Which is quite strange because most North-Americans go the other way, they go West. It is much longer and costs more time. So if you have time and money you should do the East route, it is easier for the body and the jetlag and all that. Ha Noi is the capital of Vietnam and basically we selected first to go first of all to Ha Noi and we are spending basically in the North about a good three, three and a half weeks. Then we go South.

**E: Yes, and which different destinations do you visit?**

R: Ha Noi, and then we went to see a couple of pagodas around Ha Noi. Then we went to the Ha Long Bay which was beautiful and a good experience, we went to Cat Ba, which really I would not suggest people to go to. Then we went to a place where nobody goes this time of the year. But nobody told us. Which is the national park of Cuc Phuong. So we were the only tourist there because there is no heat in the bungalows. There was basically nobody there and they actually told us it is not the season that tourists go to this place. Anyway then Ninh Binh, some other pagodas around Ha Noi. Then Mai Chau which I liked, Son La, Dien Bien and then Sa Pa. And of course all the side trips from Sa Pa. And then from there on we go South.

**E: Yes and what modes of transportation do you use?**

R: Ok, well everything was pre-arranged by internet through an agency in Ha Noi. So basically we have a private car, with a driver and a guide. And to do the North actually they take a four by four instead of a small car. When you do a side trip from Ha Noi, even for one or two days usually they use a car because this is the cheapest way. But for this area you need a four by four, especially between Dien Bien Phu and Sa Pa. Because the road is horrendous, a lot of construction. I think in a couple of years it will be fine but at the moment... that is the reason why my wife did not want to do that part of the trip. She went directly from Ha Noi to Sa Pa.

**E: Ok, I have to go there tomorrow by bus.**

R: Good luck, you will survive.

**E: Do you think the transportation in North-West Vietnam is convenient for travelling?**

R: From Ha Noi to Dien Bien Phu the roads are fine to my standards with not much problems for a country like Vietnam. But from Dien Bien Phu to Sa Pa that should be avoided. Really avoid they are constructing a new road.

And when that road will be constructed, yes I will suggest that tourism will go from Dien Bien Phu to Sa Pa. But at the moment if somebody asks me for an advice, unless they are very young, backpack and all the bone in place. I will say no.

**E: Ok, next question. How did you make your travel arrangements?**

R: Through internet. And there is some advantage from doing it through internet, and we also have some adjustments. Basically the agency told us we have paid the driver and the guide. And we are at a point where we need to tip the driver and the guide. Which is ok to tip. But there seems to be some misunderstanding in what the tip is. In other words, we do not want to pay twice the trip. And we have to be a bit careful. That is why when we go back to Ha Noi tomorrow we will go to the agency to clear this up. Because it is kind of annoying that it looks like the driver and the guide, basically what they want is a second salary which we already have paid.

**E: Yes that is quite strange. But you have searched for everything on the internet and then you booked it at the local agency?**

R: No what I did is that I used a guide. A French tourist guide, a book, it is not lonely planet. I did not like the lonely planet for Vietnam. And I made the travel plan by myself. Submitted it to two agencies. And then I selected finally one. Of course there were a lot of changes along the way, the last days. But so far it is satisfying with some small adjustments as I said.

**E: Ok.**

R: Especially with the people running boats, the Sampa. They are not particularly polite. They expect that you pay quite a lot as a tip.

**E: And you also visited more remote areas, right? Dien Bien and Son La.**

R: Yes.

**E: What were your experiences there?**

R: In that town we never had problems and the advantage was it was kind of peculiar because I was alone with the driver and the guide. Because my wife was not there. So for me for four days we stop for lunch at road restaurants, but they pick the right one. And the advantage of doing that with them this way as supposed to the tourists by themselves who do not know what to order. Because nobody speaks French, English, nothing but Vietnamese and there is not even a menu. By North-American standards the more swirly the more you will have problems with your stomach. So far for me it is not the case. My wife has some small problems but not much. And for most North-

American the level of hygiene you will not see this in my house. But besides that it is ok. It is an advantage. I have seen a side which I would not have seen if I was on a group 20 or 30 tourists.

**E: No, so the experience was good?**

R: The experience was good, as long as you .... First of all I planned the trip so I knew that I would have a driver from point A to point B. So I knew that.

**E: And what kind of facilities are necessary for you to stay in remote areas?**

R: Well, in Mai Chau we stayed at the guest house. Which was actually very nice. Except again the noise and you need another blanket if you don't want to get cold. But you expect this in a guest house in those areas. In the hotel it is a different story. We basically stay in a three star hotel. Which in some places is the top rating hotel you can find in Son La etc. A very positive point about the hotels is that the rooms are large. Very large. And they are usually clean. No problem with the clean or whatsoever. But there is always something that doesn't work. Like yesterday you tried to call. You know what the problem was? Somebody walked away from the wire from the phone to the wall. So we have a phone but it was not connected. That is why the phone didn't ring. That is one point. Sometimes you get three towels, sometimes you get two, you don't need to have a lot of ventilation because it is so much gap between the windows and the wall and the door and the wall that you get ventilation anyway. In some places you have very little eating facilities which in some cases you will need. So the positive side is that the rooms are large. The bathrooms are large and there also seems to be an epidemic here. They buy baths from Korea, but they do not seal the baths to the wall. So the water falls between the bath and the wall and on the floor and it ends up as a very slippery floor and so on. But the other problem we have with the hotel is that a very few people speak English. Forget about French, but a lot only speak Vietnamese and two, three words of English. Actually the minorities speak more English than the Viet.

**E: I would like to ask you some things about your lifestyle and your personal values. Can you tell me something about your life in your country? Like daily activities and what is important for you back home.**

R: Well as I said earlier my wife and I are 63, she is about the same age. Anyway we are both retired we work maybe a month in the whole year, not

more. I had my own company for more than 30 years. And she is a translator. So we both basically freelance. And our activities. That is a good point. My wife likes to go skiing. That is why she did not want to stay more than two months. I do not like skiing because I was born in France I did not know a thing about skiing. So I do some cross-country skiing. In the summer we have a big lake which is about 40 kilometres long. So we do a lot of sailing. Besides that you can go biking, whatever you want.

**E: So an active lifestyle.**

R: It's a retiree active lifestyle. And we also have an apartment in Montreal.

**E: And how would you describe yourself in a few words?**

R: An old hybrid. Because I was born and raised in France. Finished my study in France at 21. And then moving to Canada to work, so I am a mix of French, Canadian and American.

**E: What are important values in your life?**

R: Important values. Well I lost my first wife, she died.

**E: I'm sorry... and what are important values for you when travelling?**

R: Well I travel all my life for my business so I am used to travel and the big advantage I have is that I can sleep anywhere. So someone which travels in Vietnam and has a difficulty to sleep and is sensitive to pollution and noise should avoid Vietnam. In my case I have got a slight problem with the dust, sometimes the noise as well. The traffic in Ha Noi is really annoying that is what I would say. But maybe the trip if we will redo it, I will not redo it the same way as usual.

**E: Of course, you learn from your experiences. And how do you think your lifestyle reflects your choice for Vietnam as a travel destination?**

R: Basically every year in the winter we go away for a month or two. I want to go longer, but my wife doesn't. So you have to make compromises. We visited South-America quite a lot. We have a big advantage, my wife can speak Spanish very well. I do understand Spanish. We kept going to Asia. What we find out when we went to Thailand, even if you prepare yourself and you learn a few sentences they are basically useless. Somebody told me what will you do with your sentences, they will reply to you and you will not understand a thing. He was right. So forget just to learn Camun and Bonjour, good morning, thank you and that is about it. You can not learn an Asian language, Chinese, Vietnamese or Thai or even try to read it. Forget it.

**E: It is really difficult.**

R: It is difficult. The problem with this part of the country, I do not know about the South. I have not been to the South. Is the lack of people which have a basic knowledge of English. This is supposed to be the language when you travel you can manage in most of the places. Here it is not the case.

**E: No, I know.**

R: That is actually the big handicap here. They compensate it with their smile, but sometime when they smile and you ask for something and get something else it doesn't help.

**E: Yes that is true. And I would like to ask some questions about responsible tourism. What is your understanding and ideas about responsible tourism?**

R: Uh, you mean ecotourism and so on.

**E: Yes.**

R: Ok.

**E: Do you have some knowledge about it?**

R: Yes, actually in Dien Bien Phu, I think it was the best hotel in the place. And there is a big sign 'Ecotourism'. I don't understand. Because there is not a single farmer or whatever which is in this area at all. So they label ecotourism. But to me ecotourism is more like what I did in Mai Chau. Going to a guesthouse. We know it is arranged for tourists, especially the place we went to. But that is part of the game. But at least those people get some money. The same thing here is Sa Pa. At some point in Sa Pa when you go to the small villages, you are acting a bit like a voyeur. It is kind of disturbing but on the other way compared to North-American reserve where people don't do a thing. Here at least they manage some of the things and they sell a lot of things. Some of which we don't know where they come from, but that is besides the point. At least they are making their own economic way. There seems to be also some.... I would not say conflict but, the Vietnamese do not like to much the Americans. That is the impression we have. Even from our guide. And I was very tempted to tell him that if the tourists would not be in Sa Pa you will not have a job. So you have to take care of your minorities.

**E: Do you think that you travel in a responsible way?**

R: We try to, I know that we consume too much. Like the way I travel is not very economic. I would not put myself as an eco sensitive traveller. North-Americans we consume way too much in whatever it is.

**E: But you are aware of it?**

R: Yes we are aware of it for sure.

**E: So that is already one thing. And what do you think you can change on your way of travelling to be more responsible?**

R: It is very difficult. First of all as soon as you travel you consume energy. Most of the energy we consume, will it be a car or an airplane and so on is not renewable. But then what do you do? You stay at home? So the other aspect of it is we spend time with people in the hotel, the ones which want to learn a bit of English and so on. We spend some time with them and say it is fine, but speak and change with the tourism, that is a way you will improve your English. Because they do have basically some written knowledge but very few practice experiences. For any language practice is the key. English is not my first language but you can understand.

**E: But your English is good.**

R: Well, thank you but ...

**E: It is also not my first language.**

R: Yes, I know.

**E: Do you think Vietnam is already a responsible tourism destination?**

R: It is very hard to say from the tourists' point of view because we start to understand the mechanism, like all the travel agencies we have dealt with, subcontract to a guide, another guide, another company for providing the car and the driver and so on. So we start to understand the mechanism. But although Vietnam is a communist country, it is very capitalistic. When it becomes to that type of business. Because it is a business. So the boss at the agency makes a lot of money, the people at the agency they know how much we pay. The guide, we don't think he knows how much we pay. And we had an argument with him because we say. When we want to tip the driver, we said we have already paid for the car and the driver, so it is a tip. It is not a second salary. That is not what we agreed to. And he agreed that there are some internal problems as to who gets what. But when you are in Ha Noi and you see people on bicycles trying to make a living with two or three dollars a day. Then you see a brand new Audi Q7, which in our country costs close to 100.000 dollars. You say it is communism at it best.

**E: Yes, I know, it is a big difference. Do you think a responsible approach is important to Vietnam for the future?**

R: Obviously it is. But as I said earlier like in Dien Bien Phu it was ecotourism. To me it has only the banner with ecotourism, that is the only thing which I see was ecotourism.

**E: Only the label.**

R: Only the label and there is no standard for what you call ecotourism. To me ecotourism will be that I will be allowed to go in a village for one week and work with the local people on their forest or their rice plantation or whatsoever. That will be ecotourism to me. Or helping them to develop some sites. That will be ecotourism. But I did not see any of that.

**E: What would you like to see changed about how tourism is managed in Vietnam?**

R: Well one of the things that is annoying is the sampans people, the boatpeople they seem to be misunderstanding as far as what we pay for and what needs to be seen as a tip. You basically pay a certain amount when you rent a boat and at the end they expect you to pay as much. So which is that is not a understanding of the way tips work in our country and I think, we don't know if it is a game yet but we will find out soon. If it is a game. The guide book we bought gives some guidelines. They are in line with what we are used to. But this morning we met two couple from Australia. And they ask a Vietnamese person how much they should tip a guide per day. They say fifty dollars.

**E: Per day ?**

R: Per day. This is crazy. The average revenue in Vietnam if I understand is about maybe 4 dollar, 5 dollar a day. So it is ridiculous. But that is kind of a game. If they have the change they will rip off tourism. And at the end it will work against them because people will go back from Vietnam and maybe they say we have been ripped off. And others will not come here.

**E: I even heard that you don't have to tip in Vietnam. They do not expect it.**

R: No in restaurants you don't tip, you are supposed to tip the driver and the guide. That is understood. But in our guide, they give us a guideline of two dollar per person per day. Which is 4 dollar a day. Which for me is ok, maybe 5, maybe 6 but not more, otherwise what you is that you unbalance completely the economy. And I also have seen this in Africa when I travelled there for business. But of course it is a poor country so if a person has a change to make some money, they will. But it is up to the tourist to be

aware of it and to behave in a responsible way. To me it is not responsible to give a tip of 50 dollars a day.

**E: I do not think much tourist will do that, but you never know of course. Did you experience in the North-West that tourism is supporting poverty reduction?**

R: Well, I think we touched the subject before because although Vietnam is a socialist country it has socialism only in the name. But there are still some old 1950 or 1960 things which you do not see in the big towns like Sa Pa but you can see in the small villages. Like we spend the night at Bac Ha so again usually people do a day trip to Bac Ha to see the market on a Sunday. So we were at the hotel we were only with four persons. But with two Americans and ourselves. And on six o'clock in the morning you get the speaker on the hill of the village which is giving the news at 6 am. For 35 minutes. But you see that in Bac Ha, I have seen it also in Mai Chau. So those are remains of the old communist way it is kind of strange that they do this in a more ethnic area than in their own. So that is all I can say but it is like if you see a movie from the 1960s. With the speaker telling you all the good things the party has been doing for you. Basically one word what we understand is Ha Noi. And that is what you hear every two minutes. Ha Noi, Ha Noi, Ha Noi.

**E: Ok, but did you see anything of the poverty reduction?**

R: Poverty reduction not really, yesterday we went to a very small village which is the Quong Do village, a very small village, the tourists don't go there regularly, very few. And of course you see the child walking naked and not very clean. So you see something which you will not see in our country, I hope anyway. But there is a lot of improvements to be made. Yesterday another village to me they are at a stage in the country where maybe in France they were in the 1930s-1940s. So there is a gap of about 50-60 years. But the country is developing very fast. So recon in Bac Ha for example 10 year ago of 15 years ago everything was done with horses. Well the horses have been replaced by Chinese motorcycles with a Honda sign, which is a fake Honda sign. And what is happening most likely in five or ten years is that maybe one tenth of this motorcycles will be cars and then it will be a mess. So that is what I see.

**E: And what about environmental protection? Did you see any of that?**

R: No I think that it is capitalist at it worst. So the top of the ladder gets a lot of money and if you are midway of the ladder, you get very little. So there is very little return to the bottom.

**E: And also no protection of the environment yet?**

R: No, no, no. Not at all.

**E: I experienced that too. Ok, my next questions are about the information sources you have used. You already told me that you use a guidebook and you used internet. Which sources have proven to be useful to you?**

R: The book to plan the trip. There are some good agencies who provide in Vietnam. But they do this 14-17 days tours which go only to Ha Noi, Ha Long Bay, Hue, Danang and Ho Chi Minh and a few days in the delta and back. And that is not the type of trip we wanted. So that is why we are planning differently. The advantages and disadvantages is that those two operators they always put tourists in three/four/five star hotels, very clean I suppose and good food and so on. They are also selling the transportation and everything. So you see what you want to see and see differently depending on the way you travel. If you travel backpack on a local bus than you see the real local Vietnamese, the way they really travel from town to town and one may have a rooster sitting next to him, we have experienced this in other countries. So that is the way it is here. It is all depending on how you travel. But for poverty reduction Yes there will be some poverty reduction as some people get a lot of money. They also spend their money, some of it here. Which in some countries it is not the case. In some countries, rich people they do not invest in their own country. But I think in Vietnam, rich people seems to invest in their country because there is so many construction going on. And I do not think that the government is paying for the new hotels. So they do invest in their own country. So there is some windfall to the lower level but not much. I think it is disproportionate.

**E: And the information sources? What could be improved for you? Did you find enough information?**

R: Well, the problem with travel books is always the same. The first thing is that you select a book and then the first thing you look at is what edition is it. So in a country like Vietnam where maybe the cost of living is going 10 of 15 percent up a year if you have a guide which is five years old, you are out of touch. They tell you the hotel is one dollar and maybe it is fifteen.

So that type of thing. So that is where you have to watch. Internet is also very misleading because you get the best and the worst on internet. Of course the hotel, they give you a shot of their room on internet which sometimes is the real room. But it is professionally photographed.

**E: And your overall experience. How satisfied are you with your trip to Vietnam?**

R: Well, for me it is a kind of travel which is called discovery travel. In a way that you want to see something different. And which you want to experience by yourself. And it is a choice, will I do it again? Most likely not the same way. And we are at an age also, where changing hotel every night, is very tiring. Especially for my wife, she is not used to it. I have been travelling all my life to very remote areas. So I am use to sleep everywhere in every different condition. But when we are a tourist we expect a certain level of comfort. Like in Bac Ha for example the mattress was basically a piece of hard wood. So my wife said no and we managed to get a mattress from the other room, to be able to sleep. It is not surprising for Vietnam. What is surprising and we did not expecting so much differences between Thailand and Vietnam. Thailand I would say is at least 10 or 15 years ahead of Vietnam. And that is kind of a surprise, we did not expect to see that much poverty, maybe at some places. And the overall conditions we were quite surprised, we were thinking it would be similar like Thailand, but not so far from it.

**E: But if you have to mention a level of satisfaction, are you satisfied?**

R: Yes I am satisfied, well first of all we had a preview with different internet sites. But it is always different if you look at a documentary on discovery channel. And the actual condition when you are in the condition. So yes we are surprised. The happy surprise for me because I always try to be on the safe side, I do not like pick pockets. And so far the experience is good. It is not like we have experienced in other countries where you have to be very careful. So far. But we will continue to be safe.

**E: And how satisfied are you by visiting the current tourism hubs, like Sa Pa, Dien Bien Phu and Mai Chau?**

R: Ok, I was very satisfied with Mai Chau, it is ok. Dien Bien Phu also, it is very well arranged for tourism. Sa Pa also is very well arranged for tourism and you can get a daytrip wherever you want or longer. Arranged directly on the site, if you want to. So about that I am satisfied. But I think for the loop I did until there is a proper transportation from Dien Bien Phu to Sa Pa

I will not suggest tourists to do it. The other disadvantage is sometimes the Vietnamese they do not tell you the whole truth. For example we change the plan for my wife to come on the night train. From Ha Noi to Lao Cai. And they told us there are only four person sleeping cabins. Which in fact doesn't seem to be true. We also learned from tourists that there is actually a day train. But they say it is not for tourism. But it is not up to them. Is the local bus only for the locals? So they are playing the tourist game.

**E: And what is the most positive experience you have had in Vietnam?**

R: I would say the attitude of the people. They are nice, we have never seen people aggressive. They are always smiling. Of course they can not help too much because there is the communication gap. A very few speak a foreign language. English or French. English for us is the way to travel. So that is a real handicap. Because they want to help you but they can not, because they can not understand what you want. And even if they reply to you, you do not know what they say. So the language barrier is the most restraining part.

**E: So that is a negative point?**

R: But it was expected. If a Vietnamese comes to our house he expects us to help him in Vietnamese forget it. You will have the same problem. But I know if I go to Holland I will be able to manage my way with English. Eventually French or Spanish. But this is not the case here. Not in this area. Maybe in the South they speak more English, but not here. That is a big handicap.

**E: Ok, I also wanted to ask you about your negative experience. So you see that they do not speak English as negative or is there something else?**

R: Well for tourism, if they want to develop tourism, like it seems they want to develop tourism I think they have to put their receptionist of the hotel and so on to understand more than good morning, where are you, what is your name, what is your age and how many children do you have? And they have to go a bit further than that. And I think that is where they have to improve a lot. We have met a lot of young people and what is also a surprise is the number of people who are under 25. It is huge. Like in Ha Noi for example I said what will happen to Ha Noi in ten years. All this people they would want to have work, money, spend money and so on. So that country will change tremendously in the next ten to fifteen years because of the age of the population. And they continue also to have a lot of children. So Vietnam I think will change quit a lot. The new generation has very little connection with the political level. So how will that affect Vietnam? I do not know.

And I know what they are trying to do. They are trying to make a way of living. Get as much money as they can to buy the next scooter or motorbike, which is ok. The other problem with tourism if you want to buy clothing, watch out because if you look at the norm of your country you will need a XXXXL. To get anything which will fit.

**E: I know, I noticed that already. What could change to make your negative experiences more positive?**

R: Well, I repeat myself. I will say more knowledge of English will help in the touristic areas. Not if you are off the beaten path, it is ok. You do not expect a farmer to speak English. So that is the key I would say.

**E: Ok, and are you planning to come back to Vietnam in the future?**

R: Not really, I am too old. Well, maybe in the South. I do not know. I am still looking for that place where I can go for a month in the winter to relax. But as a North-American I need a minimum level of comfort and I also need some privacy. Which is something in Vietnam you don't realise. Vietnamese do not realise that we need space. So we are not used to have 10 people around you all the time. And that is also something for Vietnamese it is ok, because they always live in a small quarter. And that is why we are so happy with the rooms, because they are big.

**E: Would you recommend Vietnam to others?**

R: I would recommend but you have to know what the people are expecting. And so I will make different recommendations. Some of our friends I will tell them, never go to Vietnam. Some other, more adventurous yes. Like we see some people on bikes, bicycles with a backpack. We have seen maybe 10 or 15 in the north. Which is quit tough because there is not much to do. I mean it is very difficult to get your way around. So depending on the type of travel you do.

**E: I saw one man in Ha Giang, just in the middle of nowhere, with a backpack and biking. My last question. If you could make a movie about Vietnam after your trip, what kind of movie would you make? And what will it be about?**

R: The movie will have two parts really. Our guide is not really strong on that, we Europeans and North-Americans we like history. So we expected more about the history of the country. But we hear very little of the history of the country. Ok, in Dien Bien Phu it is slightly different because that is where the French lost the war to the Viet Minh. So there is history in that part. But in Son La for example, there is the remain of the French jail. Well,

I am quite sure only the French people go there. French origin people go there. But we do not learn much about history. So I think if I will make a movie I will add to that movie which we did not see so far is a bit more of history. Ok, what happened 500 years ago, what was Vietnam 500 years ago when China ruled. So I would like to learn more about history. The second part will be the people. The people are what makes a country. Ok, the scenery is one thing, like here it is absolutely gorgeous. The second part will be the people. Focussing on the people, the real people I mean, the ones which are working in the field or even working in a travel agency or whatsoever. That would be the second part of it. Of course in the background is the scenery, because the scenery is actually the main reason why I did that trip on the North-West part of Vietnam. Which is very different from Thailand. Here it is very nice. I took some pictures which you normally only see in movies, with the fog coming up. So it is very nice. So that will be where I will be focussing on with that movie. But incorporating some history as well, that is what is lacking. As far as the minorities. Because I still want to touch some minorities. Most people come here because of the minorities. It is a two edge sword. We know that we help the community by buying their stuff 10 times the price. So that is a way they make a living even if you bargain you still pay 10 times the price. But that is part of the game, if you are a tourist you have to accept that. However you also do not have to spoil them and give them 100 times the price. There is a balance to be hold. The other thing is if tourism explodes in this area I am not sure what would be the end result. In a sense that ... I would say that Sa Pa. The way it is at the moment with the level of tourism, which we have seen in the three/four days in which we have been here, my wife has been a bit longer. The level of tourism there is here is ok. But if you multiply this by ten I do not think it will be ok. Because it will be unbalanced. I think. And the nice minority people with their smile and good morning, how are you and so on will quick find out that they do not have to do that much at the moment which is to be nice and so on. Will get their money much easier and most likely their attitude will change. So you will not have 10 people following you to Cat Cat and so on. And at the moment that is what is nice and most likely will change. As soon as you get mass tourism then the attitude of all the people will change. And I am not sure that in the villages they will appreciate 10-50 seat busses coming every day. Because it will disturb their lifestyle. We are at the limit I would say of the

volume for those villages. Because we already go to far, looking inside of their homes. I do not want to see a bus of 10 Dutch people coming into my house and see how I cook my meal and so on. I am not afraid of it but eventually that is a part that will be difficult to balance. Thank you for your time.

**E: Yes, are there any other things you would like to add?**

R: Not really, I say there are some positive sides basically you feel secure in Sa Pa, you do not feel that you go back with a snatch, like motor cycles and so on. Because I did not know about that situation. Really the market in Bac Ha is so crowded. But we never heard anybody say “hey where is my stuff”? So that is a nice thing at this moment. How it will evolve will remain to be seen. I will recommend it for the people which are more adventurous. Which have not too much problem with pollution. If you have a problem with pollution or asthma, forget it, stay at home. But otherwise it is a nice country to discover.

**E: Ok, thank you very much.**



### **Tourist interview 5+6+7**

**Name:** Stephanie Schaub / Stefan Boeff/ Mai Anh Dao

**Age:** 24 / 24 / 23

**Occupation:** Tourism students

**Nationality:** German

**Location:** Sa Pa

**Date:** 02-02-2010

**Time:** 20.30

**Interview time:** 1.54.12

**Did not visit remote areas in North-West Vietnam, visited only Sa Pa.**

**E: Ellen**

S: Stephanie

St: Stefan

M: Mai Anh

**E: Why did you choose Vietnam as your travel destination?**

St: I guess Steffie visited some other countries here in South-East Asia for example Thailand, Malaysia and so on. And I did not. But now we wanted to go on holiday together and we chose Vietnam.

S: And I met so many people talking about Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. That we decided that we want to see this countries.

**E: Ok. And for you?**

M: I am doing my internship here. But I decided first of all to go to Vietnam because it is the home country of my parents. I have been here already several times. I have been in Saigon and Nha Trang. I had never been to the North of Vietnam and a lot of people are telling me that the North of Vietnam is the most beautiful part.

**E: So for you Stephanie and Stefan it is the first time that you visit Vietnam?**

S+St: Yes

**E: And for you?**

M: The fifth time.

**E: How long are you travelling through Vietnam?**

St: Two months

S: No Vietnam is just 6,5 weeks.

**E: And you, how long are you travelling?**

M: Well, I am always travelling during the weekends, but now I am travelling to the North of Vietnam for 10 days. And the other time I am spending in the South.

**E: Can you describe Vietnam in five words?**

S: Good food, rainy.

M: It is manifold and controvert.

S: Can I say bargain as well? I mean it is not... bargaining.

St: Not service oriented.

S: Not always, you can not say not service oriented.

St: Yes not always.

S: Not clean, no clean sheets.

St: There are no standards throughout the country.

M: That is true.

**E: You mean by no standards hotels? Like two stars, three stars? What do you mean by that?**

M: The quality.

St: Yes.

S: Motorbikes. Do you need more words?

**E: No it is ok. And your travel route through Vietnam? From North to South? Of South to North?**

S+St: South to North. Saigon, Nha Trang, Buon Ma Thout, Pleiku, Kon Tum, Quang Ngai, Hoi An, Dong Hoi, Hue, Ha Noi and the last stop is here in Sa Pa.

**E: And you Mai Anh?**

M: I have been to the Mekong Delta first and then Hue, Hoi An, Nha Trang and now Ha Noi, Sa Pa, Ha Noi and then back to Saigon.

**E: Because you have to go on with your internship after this?**

M: No, my family lives in Saigon. And I fly back from there.

**E: And this question you answered already, are you also going to the North-West? But you are only going to Sa Pa right?**

S+St+M: Yes

**E: What modes of transportation do you use to travel through Vietnam?**

S: Mini busses.

St: Mainly public transport. Some minibuses and a few times a train.

**E: Ok, but not flying through the country?**

S: No we fly out.

M: I went by bus.

**E: Is it ok, the public bus to travel?**

St: Yes, it is ok.

S: The public bus is good, but the mini busses are the most ...

St: There are no standards, it is always different.

M: I would not travel by public bus.

**E: Tomorrow I have to be in a bus for 8 hours.**

S: But that is ok, I think the worst thing is... I think when you are a lot of times in the North-West as we have been in the Central Highlands you need to take a lot of times those minibuses. And this is really terrible. This is probably some information you need because I think it is not a difference here. I think you need to take a lot of time with minibuses because it is the only way to get around, when there are no local busses, or something like that. And this is really terrible.

**E: Yes? And in what way is it terrible?**

S: There are 15 seats and we counted 32 people in it. And I think it is the same in the North-West. I think there is no difference. And this is really terrible. Because someone threw up in the bus.

St: They are driving really crazy.

S: And when the police stops them to count how many people are in the bus. There were too many people in it, so we needed to pay the police. So they got really angry. And then they putted even more people in. And I think this is really hard for tourists.

**E: Yes that is a problem. How did you make your travel arrangements? Did you do it independently, travel around. Or did you arrange everything by a travel agency?**

S: We did everything on or own.

M: I did some tours. I did a tour for Vietnamese people and one for tourists from abroad. Both to the Mekong Delta. And there was a big difference.

**E: O you wanted to see the difference?**

M: Yes, I wanted to see the difference.

**E: And what was the difference?**

M: The Vietnamese one is more entertaining. They are singing and playing games in the bus and you get way more information in Vietnamese. I think there English is ok, but it is not good enough to give you all information you need. Definitely not. And the flights are always booked beforehand. And the train as well. But the problem with the train I think is you have to

book the train tickets at the train station, you can't book it. For example I was in Saigon and I wanted to book a train ticket back from Nha Trang back to Saigon and there was no change.

**E: Not on the internet?**

M: Not on the internet. I think it is very difficult to book something on the internet.

S: Yes we tried it, it is not possible.

M: You can't even book flights on the internet.

S: With Vietnam airlines, we tried to book a flight from Saigon to Nha Trang and it was not possible from Germany. So she did it for us.

St: With a travel agency.

S: Probably you can do it with a travel agency in Germany but the flight, I think in the end we paid like 800.000 for 1 flight. This is like 30 euro's. And in Germany I called a travel agency and they could have done it for us but for 150 euro's.

**E: Wow, that is a big difference.**

M: And there is always a difference between Vietnamese people and tourists.

**E: Yes I believe that, you have to pay more when you are a foreigner. Which destinations in the North-West are you familiar with? Do you know some areas here? Places? Or not at all?**

S: I read some thing probably about Mai Chau, I just read some things.

**E: You have heard about it? I also do a survey and most people do not know any places in the North-West, only Sa Pa.**

M: Actually Sa Pa is the place which people recommend mostly. When I worked at the travel agency, we also did some surveys with our guests. And most of them were satisfied and they always recommend Sa Pa.

**E: Yes, Sa Pa is one of the main tourism destinations here.**

S: Is it a different question, like why have you not visited other places in the North-West?

**E: Yes that is the next question, but you can answer it.**

S: Because we have not made good travel experiences in the central highlands because it is really not easy. If you want to travel on or own, not making any tours, it is hard. The hotels are really terrible. I think why should everyone speak English, that is not the problem. But, I do not know. It is really hard, all the minibuses and the hotels are really, really bad and what else?

St: The communication is quit hard because the don't speak English or not well. And for example we had this Lonely Planet phrasebook with Vietnamese sentences in it. And we ....sometimes there is a perfect sentence for a situation and we show it to a guy at a counter or something like this. And he reads it and it seems as he does not understand or does not want to understand. And sometimes there were situations where they did not help us or where they would help us but.....So it is quite hard to communicate.

S: And in not touristic areas there are too less tourists. Because they are really like no tourists. This is what we learned as well. In the one hand it is really nice, because they are so interested everyone said hello and they did not want to sell us they were just interested in us. I think it is nice, but sometimes it is too difficult.

**E: You are not travelling to the remote areas. But what are your expectations of this areas?**

S: I think the hotels are really terrible.

M: I haven't even considered travelling to any place in the North. Because a lot people here, the locals, told me it is not interesting at all. And if locals are telling you, you shouldn't go there then you think even locals are not satisfied or don't expect a lot.

S: That is really true because Mr Bu said to us no. Why do you go to Buon ma Thuot and Pleiku and Kon Tum? That is not interesting, what do you want there? And we were like, we want to see Vietnam.

M: They always say, there is nothing to see and it is boring.

**E: But don't you think the opinion of Vietnamese travellers is completely different of the Western tourists?**

M: I know that the way the Vietnamese are travelling is completely different to Europeans. Because most Vietnamese want to have an all inclusive holiday. And they really want to stay in their group. They are not that individual travellers. And they do not want to explore something. They just want to have everything already organised for them. And therefore they... I think Vietnamese people are less interested in doing trekking tours. I knew that before but when they tell me the there is like nothing and the tourism is not developed and you shouldn't go there because you are alone and girls shouldn't travel alone in areas that are not that developed.

**E: So you did not want to do it?**

M: No, I did not want to do it.

**E: What facilities would be necessary for you to stay in the remote areas?**

St: Nice, clean hotels.

S: Good busses.

St: Proper places to eat. It can be a street kitchen or something like this.

S: But I think you will find this.

**E: Yes there are some. But you need to know where they are. If you don't know where they are it is really difficult.**

M: I think it is necessary that people from abroad that they have a menu in English.

S: And it would be nice if the English menus would be the same as the Vietnamese menus. Because it can be different prices when they need to have different prices, I don't care if it is a bit more expensive. But I think they just give you a menu what they think Europeans people are interested in.

St: Often it is just a tenth of the regular menu.

M: I think they don't have an understanding of the attitude of European travel manner. Do you know what I mean? They just think that Europeans want to travel in the same way as Vietnamese people. And then they are having a kind of imagination what kind of food they would like to eat. But in the end, I think most people would travel to Vietnam to see, to taste, to hear. The do not want to have spaghetti.

S: You don't get the local food.

**E: What are your barriers for not visiting the North-West?**

St: Often times it is the transportation. Because it is not safe, it takes too much time. And the time it takes is also the time they leave, or the time they arrive often they are not correct.

S: I would not care when it is slow. But it should be safe. And I don't think it is.

M: And this people are telling you, yes it is really secure and you don't have to worry. And in the end they just want to sell their ticket. And then you never know if it is true what they are telling you. Even in travel agencies which have foreign customers. One thing I learned here is, do not believe in everything they are saying. When you ask the locals they say you should not go there, it is not easy to go there. And the travel agency tells you it is very beautiful and it is very easy to get there.

**E: They also told me it is really easy to travel around. But I noticed that it is not really.**

S: Probably there should be a good travel book for the North-West area, or something like that. Because we read a lot of books and we compare them. And I think there is not a lot of information on the North-West.

**E: No there is not.**

S: They are just half a page. Probably they need to give more information to all those travel books agencies.

M: Especially concerning landmines, show they should give you a reason why to travel there.

**E: So lack of information is a big thing. Ok, my next questions are about your lifestyles and your personal values. This is for all of you separately. Could you tell me something about your life in your country and your daily activities? What is important for you back home?**

M: For me it is always important to have good food.

St: You will hear that three times.

**E: But now I am talking about your life at home.**

M: My life at home. We are living in Innsbruck.

**E: What are your daily activities?**

M: My daily activities, I am studying and after that I really like to enjoy the nature. Hiking, going by bike, skiing. That is quite important and when it comes to travelling ... do you want to know that as well?

**E: Yes that is the next thing, but you can tell me already.**

M: It is important to be flexible. I don't like to book something which is already packaged. And very detailed organised. Actually the most important thing for me and to travel to certain areas is the food. And I really want to get to know the people. So that was also one of the reasons why I want to do my internship here, because then you get really close to the locals. And you don't get any change if you do all inclusive travelling.

**E: But this is also different for you I think because this is your home country or where your parents come from.**

M: Yes, but I do not feel like it is my home country. Not at all. But that is something what I experienced when I came here. So now I can say it.

**E: You know it now?**

M: Yes, I know it now. Before I wasn't sure because I didn't know a lot of Vietnamese people. I just had a kind of imagination, but now I really now. And I really feel it.

**E: You feel much more European? Of much more German?**

M: Yes definitely. Because often I am so wondering about their attitude.

S: It is really funny because she understands what they say.

M: They are always so kind when they speak English and when it comes to Vietnamese they smile into your face, but say something very rude. You know if I understand it I can .. when we went to the hotel we just stay, we just speak English so that Mr. Ha doesn't know that I am Vietnamese. I just check out what he is really saying. There are often big differences.

**E: And important values in your life?**

M: It is a very difficult question. I think to stay honest, to do things that I am really satisfied with. I am really looking forward to learn and to get new experiences in everything I am doing.

**E: Ok, that is a good answer. And when travelling do you have the same values?**

M: I think so yes. I think that my eager to get to know locals comes from that value that I am not a superficial person. You shouldn't travel to Vietnam if you just want to like lay on the beach.

**E: How does your lifestyle reflects your choice for Vietnam as a travel destination?**

M: I think I am quite flexible in my lifestyle. I have a direction in my life, but I do not need to plan everything. And I think if you travel to countries in Vietnam or Cambodia or Laos or South-America you just can't plan anything. You can't book rooms because if you come the rooms are very disappointing. People who travel to Vietnam should be very flexible. I have also done some tours I talked to several tourists and actually Germans really like to plan a lot beforehand. But people who do that they just don't really get to know the country and they can't feel the atmosphere.

**E: But the people who plan are they mostly older and travel with a big group?**

M: No most Germans like to do that. Older people form France and Britain, I haven't met American people yet. I only talked to Germans and Asian people. They really like to plan everything. And they really like to go in groups.

**E: Ok, can I ask the same questions to you two? Ok, the first one was can you tell me something about your life, your activities and what you do?**

St: Yes as we mentioned I am studying too. During the semester studying is almost all I do. Besides of sleeping and eating.

S: We have university on Saturday sometimes.

M: We have classes for the whole day, it is from 9 till 5.

St: And you have to do a lot of homework, languages and projects, case studies.

**E: Wow studying on a Saturday, that is tough.**

M: And we are having 12-13 exams in one week.

S: But we have a half year of studying and a half year free.

M: We have to write two bachelor thesis.

St: And besides studying I really love to cook. And buying food and looking for food on markets. And a big issue is doing sports. Going to the gym.

**E: And how would you describe yourself in a few words?**

St: I am willing to learn and I love to study at the moment. But I am not quite sure what I am doing after it. Which branch, which section I am going in. And I need a lot more time to orientate me. Yes I am really into living well, try to be healthy although I smoke. But I try to stop, but it doesn't work.

**E: Ok, that is enough. Do you want to answer it still?**

M: I think I am really... I really like to work. I think in my work life I am different than in private life. And I really want to enjoy life. And especially my spare time. In my work life I have to organise everything and that is the reason why I really like to enjoy my private life without organising. And I really like to do something which is more spontaneous. Because I kind of need a work, life balance. I think if you have a good job, with a good income you can enjoy your life, travel a lot.

**E: Ok, we go on with you. What are important values in your life?**

St: Being successful and still having opportunities to enjoy my life. Sometimes I want to be a businessman, really straightforward and on the other side I am a small hippie. So I am a mixture of all. The pursuit of happiness, that is what I want, because for well living you need a certain amount of money. And to get a certain amount of money you have to work. You have to have a job, a nice salary. But not too much and too time consuming.

**E: You also want to have a nice life, not only working.**

St: Not only working no.

**E: I understand what you mean. And when travelling what is important for you?**

St: When travelling? That I am travelling to a country where I can afford travelling. Because when I travel to Europe I can not afford going to a restaurant every day or staying in nice hotels like we did here. And I don't like guides, I really don't like them. I don't like to be taken by the hand to certain places. I like to explore them myself.

**E: And how does your lifestyle reflects your choice for Vietnam as a travel destination?**

St: Yes as I said I love food.

M: But some people do not care.

S: We spend a lot of money on food, all of us.

St: Yes often times we spend more money on food than on two days of sleeping. Yes I want to explore and I was not so keen to learn about the Vietnamese kitchen. But I can't differ between the Asian kitchen and the Vietnamese, no I can, but before I couldn't. As I said I am curious and I wanted to try all the different curious food that is offered here.

**E: So mostly food.**

St: Yes and I like the backpacking style but living in a nice accommodation. So I don't worry on eating on a street kitchen but when I sleep I want a nice bed.

**E: So not in a hostel with 20 other people?**

St: Not in a dormitory.

**E: Ok, now it is your turn Stephanie. Can you tell me something about your life?**

S: Well, as the others I have to study a lot. I like to do a lot of sports. I like to do yoga. I like to meet friends walking around in cities, having nice things, nice bars, going dancing.

**E: What is important?**

S: To have a nice place where I am living. I think you can live cheaper than we do it. But it is really important to have a nice flat where we can come back to.

**E: And how would you describe yourself?**

S: I am a really active person. And I always like to have ideas and doing different things like other people do. I think I always like to be happy. When there is something that I can not be happy I am really nervous. I think

it is just nervous because I just want to enjoy my life and I don't want to think of a lot of things and just smile and enjoy.

**E: Ok. And important values?**

S: To have really good friends. And honest friends where you can really discuss and develop. I think this is really important.

**E: And when travelling? Is it the same?**

S: Yes it is the same. When I am at home I really need a good place to stay. I don't feel comfortable, I mean I can do it for a few days in a hotel which it is not so nice. Where the bathroom is ... or something. I have done it already for 4 months. I stayed in a lot of dormitories. But I think when you do it all the time you get really sick probably. You can see it on the skin and I don't like this so I need a really comfortable stay. And good food and being active and doing something else what other people do. I don't like to travel, for example with the lonely planet. I think it is interesting to read it and probably take some ideas. But I don't really like to walk through the city with the lonely planet in my hand so that everybody can see. Yesterday for example we travelled with the lonely planet and we went to restaurants and I had the lonely planet in my hand. And he said to us, go upstairs there is a nice view, like what the lonely planet said. And we went upstairs and there is no view. And probably five years ago there was a nice view but now someone else build a house in front of it so.

**E: I was talking to Mr. Ha from the hotel and he said to me. People come to me with the lonely planet and they say this hotel is four dollars he says that is ridiculous that was 10 years ago.**

M: Sometimes we were wondering if they pay the lonely planet, I really can imagine that because there was a hotel and it was recommended in the lonely planet. But I think it depends on the country. Because I have friends who are travelling through Thailand and they are very satisfied with the lonely planet. In Vietnam, the information is not true.

S: I have another idea. As I said I am not interested in what other people do. We really like to sit in the street and watch people. In Vietnam it is not that easy because there is the language barrier. But I like to ask local people where should we go for dinner or something. Because it is always better. And for example when we have been in all those cities, we just have done the touristic things because you can not have been in Hue and have not seen the Emperor palace. So we have done it, but at the end I think we are more interested in to watch and explore.

**E: See the real life?**

S: Do something else and get lost. We really love to get lost so we have our city map I don't know anywhere and we just walk for hours until we get really tired and maybe forget that we are hungry and then it is already three o'clock and we just have breakfast or something. And because we are really flashed and amazed by all the smells and what you see. That is what we have done, all the times. When someone asks us what have you done today, we can just say we walked around because that is what we do.

St: It is a bit strange because we don't like the remote areas so much, because of the accommodation. But what I also don't like are these tourists' quarters where there is fish and chips and a big sign for buy one beer, get one free. It is so annoying, it is really annoying. That is not why I travel.

**E: Where did you see that?**

St: For example in Hue. You see it often times.

S: In Nha Trang I think it is the same.

M: And in Vietnam, because he said that he don't like to have guides. But since I have already done a tour I would. It is so difficult to get to know the lifestyle of people when you are from abroad. You are missing some information when you don't have a guide.

St: Yes you are our guide. I said it yesterday to her. I said I do not like guides, what I mean with that is I don't like the guide you book for a day. You pay him a certain amount and he shows you around. I would like to have a guide which accompanies us for two months and becomes almost a friend, who is loyal to us and who we can approach every time. And who really shows us what it is and what he is talking. Like she does that.

S: She really told us a lot of things I think. You won't get that information from just a local guide.

M: On the one hand I got it from my family and local people, my colleagues at work. And a lot of information, when I went for example to the Mekong Delta, the landscape is beautiful, the scenery is beautiful. But the way they live... sometimes it is really fun to go to a place where they produce coconut candies for example. And then they explain to you why they do it, or how they do rice paper. I am really looking forward for those things. But it is enough to do that for a half day tour and I think there are some agencies for example the one I was working for. They offer guides who accompany you for your whole trip. But you can't afford it. Only rich people can.

**E: I met a Canadian couple, I also interviewed them, they had a guide for two months. And a driver and a car.**

M: And their language skills are very good. They have drivers and cars but it is so expensive.

S: I think my lifestyle probably does not reflect my choice for Vietnam.

**E: No?**

M: Why?

S: Because I really just made the decision because I have seen Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore already. And because I heard good things about Vietnam. That is why I have made this choice. I think I have not known before that Vietnamese food is that good, not at all.

M: But I think that you two are very curious about new things and I couldn't imagine that you travel to a place that is very crowded.

S: I thought I want to see something else, I need to be able to afford it. I want to go there for two months. Because I think you see more things. So the only choice we had was Asia. Because it is that cheap. And because I went to all the other countries already we decided to go here.

**E: My next questions are about responsible tourism and because you are studying tourism I think you have more knowledge on this topic than most people I interviewed. But what is your understanding and ideas about responsible tourism?**

St: In general or here in Vietnam?

**E: No what you know already.**

St: Being a guest in a country.

M: Behave like a guest.

St: Behave like a guest, not trying to change a culture, or not trying to change a culture unconsciously. So that people in a certain district will change their offers or something. And of course the responsible environment. Tourism here in Vietnam, sometimes locals throw things out of the window, that is what I experienced. Respecting the local people. Don't change them. Don't change their offers. Try to be fair enough because when I travel here, sometimes I feel like I am being cheated when I buy something. For example a jacket I bought yesterday. At a certain point you have to remember what you would pay for it in your home country. And then you should not bargain so hard that it is unfair.

**E: Anything you would like to add on this about responsible tourism?**

M: Try to adapt yourself to the culture and respect it.

**E: Do you have special courses on sustainable or responsible tourism in your studies?**

M: No.

St: No, it is discussed sometimes but it is not a subject.

**E: In my bachelor I had one class about it and then I decided that I wanted to do my masters on Responsible tourism.**

S: I just wanted to add that in undeveloped countries like here, I think it is good, we have been in a lot of places, for example all those bakeries where they give a really food job to children who usually would live in the street. And they are giving them an apprenticeship for two years and they get a good job. I think this is a good part of responsible tourism.

M: And to inform yourself beforehand because we were talking about this in Nha Trang because there were two women with two little babies. And they wanted to sell us chewing gums. And I knew before that they have gangs who were kidnapping children from the mountains or Cambodia and they bring them to the city and then they just go around and they are saying, I am having a baby and I do not have enough money. You shouldn't give anybody money. One day we just bought food we were asking them, are you hungry? So we can buy you food. These are things which not a lot of people know about in Vietnam. And they just see, oh they look so poor. This is responsible as well, because the government has a kind of raise the population. And they should tell tourists on forehand they shouldn't give money.

S: That is something that I wanted to ask you, I mean responsible tourism, I think it has two sides. On the one hand the tourists and we just talk about the tourists and I think that the government should give more information to the people coming here. How to react on different situations. I think this is what lacks here.

St: I think it even has three sides because you are working for a Dutch company?

**E: Yes a development organisation.**

St: A development organisation, but if you are coming here and opening a hotel as a foreigner or something. It is really important to integrate yourself into the local community. And sometimes we saw resorts owned by foreign companies or entrepreneurs. And they seem to be like small islands in a city or region. Totally different, not integrated into the regional or local markets.

M: There should be regulations from the government.

S: I have not been in Laos yet, but I read a lot of things and I think that they are more into responsible tourism. I can not give you any information but probably you should talk in two weeks.

M: In the lonely planet they say it a lot. And the problem here in Vietnam is that the government is really corrupt. Maybe they are really willing to change something, but in the end there is just any investment company and they say they want to open a resort which is for people from abroad and they pay a lot of money, so they don't have any other choice.

**E: Yes it is very difficult. And do you think that you travel in a responsible way?**

M: Yes

S: Do you think flying is responsible?

St: Maybe not because we avoid home stays.

M: But it is just because we don't feel really secure.

St: It is not about security, it is about cleanliness.

**E: But I think you are very aware on you impacts on destinations, right?**

M: Because we always keep our garbage with us.

S: We have not seen one bin in Cat Cat for example, this is really bad.

M: Because we are carrying it with us all the time.

St: And not even in Cat Cat but also in small cities.

S: You can not even travel responsible.

**E: Have you been to India? I've been and there it is so much worse. Compared to that Vietnam is quite clean.**

M: They have hidden places here where they keep the trash.

**E: What do you think could you change about your way of travelling to be more responsible?**

S: Probably learn the language at home a bit.

M: The basic language.

St: Support local restaurants or dining places, owned by locals.

M: I think sometimes it is quite difficult because it is always depending on your budget.

S: Paying one dollar when you make a picture of them.

**E: You should always ask if you can make a picture.**

S: Yes we try to do that.

St: Don't shower to long.

S: Yes that is a really good idea.

**E: And do you think, right now, Vietnam is a responsible travel destination?**

All: No

S: Not at all. And I think the most important problem is that they are not caring about the nature.

St: They are on a different stage of tourism. When tourism began in Europe it was the same. And now tourism is developing here and in a few years they mind the effects on the environment or the culture, then they try to set up figures or something like that on which they can measure is tourism in this expense still ok or not and the next step they are really caring about that and their selves and their country.

S: How can you do responsible tourism when you are not interested in nature? Or when the local people do not care about nature.

M: That is the main problem here. They should educate and raise their people first. And they should try to develop a certain kind of program. They should organise themselves much better and they should try to control tourism organisations. I think it wouldn't be that hard to do it. Sure, for the first time it is quite hard to find a way how you can develop a program like a system. But it would make travelling way easier. If they for example set up a kind of standard program to say ok we... I mean the government should control all hotels and restaurants. For example they could set up some certificates to prove that this hotel is very environmentally friendly.

S: Good idea.

M: At the same way they are promoting their country. They are saying we are really caring about our environment and about our people. So this would be another reason why I would travel to a country. Because I think ok, the support is there and people are really thinking about it.

S: I think usually it is like that the local people caring. I think in Europe it is like that, they are caring about their nature and where they are living and they are proud. So the tourists come and they are showing them, we are responsible for our nature so please be responsible too. But I think here probably it is a good idea to... because from local people I have the feeling that they do not care at all. And probably the tourists need to show the local people that how we want to have it. That is how we do it in Europe. And then how Mai Anh said, they are making some projects that there are hotels which care about the nature and everything. And I think a lot of people would go there because they are interested and they see how everything is



here. And probably the local people see it and probably they get more aware of it.

M: I think the input should come from Vietnam itself.

S: Yes of course, of course.

M: But the problem is that everything here is about money. And we have a different kind of lifestyle in Europe. It is affordable for us to think about those things. But here people they have to think about really basic issues. For example if they have enough money to buy food for the next days. So they don't care if they cheat on tourists. Because they have to survive and it should be the first step for the government to make sure that people here can live in a kind of good way. So after that they can think about tourism.

S: That is true but on the other hand, I mean when a local goes from A to B with a local bus which is paid by the government and he throws all his stuff out of the window, this is as well tourism. The government should make some policies, it is not allowed to throw things out of the window when the bus is driving. And the people who work in the bus will care about it and will check it, I think this would be the beginning.

M: Actually there are regulations, but the problem is that everything is so corrupt.

S: Yes that is true.

M: And there is no one who controls it. Because they don't get paid for that work. And then they just think hey I don't care. Even policemen here are corrupt. They really have to think how they can survive for the next few years. And then if a tourist comes and he doesn't have a drivers licence, just a simple example. You just have to give them like 400.000 Vietnam Dong and then you can go on. Even though if they are drunk. And it is the same with the locals. So they should introduce a kind of living standard here first.

St: Yes but tourism can do this. Because other industries or branches are not that big here.

M: I am not very sure about that.

St: I think tourism is a big engine for the economy here. And if the tourism, which is provided by foreign owners provides reasonable salaries for their employees. So they can think of other things than how do I make my living. And it maybe affects there families.

S: I think this conversation goes really deep now, because as Duk said to us they can't do multitasking. So you need 30 people to work in a restaurant where you will need 5 in Germany. And how should you give them the

same salary for what you pay for one person in Germany. It is not possible. Because then can just do one thing.

M: And the problem is that people here don't have the kind of commitment we have. If they work for a company they do it for the money. They don't identify themselves with the company. In most cases they don't and it is because the political system. It is a socialist country. And they know that after their probation period it is very hard for a entrepreneur to fire them. So they just lean back and do what they want.

**E: But they also have a lot of private businesses now right? So it is changing.**

M: It is still very hard, especially for foreign companies. Because I am doing my internship at Siemens now and the CEO told me that is really hard to find good employees. Still he has to control them. And that is the part, he always had to control you, control you, control you.

**E: Do you experience that tourism is supporting poverty reduction?**

S: Sa Pa was really poor I read and now some tourists and they buy from the locals.

M: For the minorities it is a very big support.

**E: So you saw it especially here in Sa Pa?**

S: And as Stefan already said that is where they get a lot of money for the country. It is like one big section here and it is growing.

**E: And what about environmental protection? You don't see that right? Because of the tourism.**

S: As we said there are no bins for example.

M: But it was worse before. I have been to Saigon 7 years ago and it was so dirty, it really was. And a lot of beggars were everywhere. And now the government is trying to change that. They are trying to introduce a kind of system.

**E: So it is slowly changing?**

M: Very slowly. I think the money is going to a very small amount of people. And actually it should go to the local and poor people. Of course it might be an engine and yes I think you are right. And since Vietnam is quite corrupt, as I already said, it is very hard.

S: Probably the gap gets bigger.

M: Yes bigger. Because for poor people it is really hard to change and improve their lifestyle.

S: I think tourism in Vietnam is not easy because you have to change a lot in the head of the people. And I think this is the most difficult thing. There are so many things I could count now. For example that they think that we are really rich. I mean of course we have a good standard of living at home. But I mean we are students and of course we probably have 600 euro's in a month but we need to pay 300 euro's for rent or even more. And everything is so expensive, and I think they just that everything is gold in Germany.

M: Many diamonds.

S: And that is something they really need to get in the head, those people, because they just want to have your money. We really had a good time here, and Stefan is a good bargainer so I think we got good prices for everything. But I think they really cheat a lot and when you don't travel for already 6 weeks and you don't know that you can get a bottle of water for 6000 dong you pay always 10. I don't know everything. For example you know that a bus for Lao Cai to Sa Pa doesn't cost 400.000 dong. And this is really not that good, because you bring the information back home and you tell other people. And I think they probably don't know that when you go back you have a list of places where it was very nice and where you would recommend to everyone to go back and there are so many people going to Vietnam and you give them a list, just go there because it is nice. Just forget about the other places because they are just cheating on you. And I really think they live like that, they think, ok they are here now, we want their money we don't care if the food is good or not because they won't tell us so.

St: They can't tell us and they won't come back.

S: This is really narrow minded I think.

M: It is because of the gap. We have been talking to a waitress today. She is working 10 hours a day, 7 days a week. And she gets 1 million Vietnam Dong.

**E: In a week or in a month?**

M: In a month! That is probably 35 euro's.

St: Or budget is probably 1 million a day.

M: How can she survive with that? And then she is working in a restaurant where a lot of tourists come. And then she sees what they are eating and drinking. And they are having bottles of wine for 40 dollars. And of course she is thinking that they are rich. But I think it wouldn't be that hard to, for a place like Sa Pa very small, you could have trainings for all the locals. It wouldn't be that hard.

St: Introducing destination management would be good.

S: But we saw so many tourist offices where the tourists come in. Probably where they think about the things they should do when they are at a destination. And when you see those people, those old men working there. I think they are even worse than Austrian tourist government heads (Touristen Verband Schaft). I think they are really narrow minded and you should start with them and get in their heads that they need to change something. For example in Hoi An things are made for you and they should fit you. Then you have to go there 5 times because they are just interested in your money. I think the tourists office have to tell them. They go back and they will tell someone else. And those people are not coming back and when we are not caring about our reputation, in five years Hoi An is nothing. No one comes back.

M: It would be a good idea for example for Ha Giang. The input could also come from other organisations. We could have training and introduce colleges to the local people. How people in Europe, in Western countries live. And what values they have and that you offer them reasonable salaries. But on the other hand you want them to serve a certain kind of standard and quality. So just try to make them understand what people who are travelling to Vietnam, or travelling to Ha Giang are expecting. And I think it would be a good step to start with the locals. To tell them, of course you can ask higher prices for tourists and they even would pay it, but then you have to serve a certain standard. It is a win-win situation. You make your guests happy and you get paid well.

**E: Maybe I can tell you what they do already. Eight tour operators in Ha Noi form the responsible travel club. So they are going to work all together and also together with SNV. You have Caritas and organisation from Swiss. And they are all going to work together and they start with some little villages. But they start really small, just one village. They give trainings to the people, educate them. And they tell the people, it is not like next week you have money. It will take a long time. But then you will get money, but they get training in Hygiene courses, also in attitude courses and how Western tourists live and also in English and so on. That is how they start, but of course you can not do the whole area, you have to start really small.**

M: No you can't. You have to do everything step by step.

**E: But that is how they are starting, I think it is really good.**

M: And just tell people that they should work together. Not against each other. Because you can go to a hotel and say, well this hotel is giving me that price. And then they are giving you a lower price. So if you tell them you should communicate with each other. So you can just have a standard price and don't go under that price. It is a win-win situation. I think it is a good idea.

St: Yes. I think it is always good to try to meet the expectations of the tourists. But for example when we went hiking today. We came into a small village. And it was so nice, and even though there were some handicraft shops for tourists. We did not feel like we were not in an authentic region, destination. But then suddenly through a speaker they were playing Vietnamese music. The whole village has no speakers, probably they have a television but there is no technology. And then tourists hear music from speakers, it is so like am I in Disneyland or what? Try to meet the expectations but don't lose your identity. Don't make Disneyland out of it.

M: Don't exaggerate.

**E: The next questions are about information sources. You told me already that you use travel books and internet to find information.**

S: Yes.

St: Internet and travel books. Everything we have in the travel books, we double check in the internet. Recommendations and so. But it is not that easy because we found that a lot of recommendations on the internet weren't true, or written by themselves.

S: But I think you can not trust the books at all and you can not trust internet, the best this is just to go and see and check.

M: Have your own opinion.

S: Because on the one hand lots of times it is more expensive than what the travel book says. But on the other hand you stay for a week and you just stay there you can discuss the price.

**E: And what has proven to be useful to you. What you just said, go there and check.**

S: I think nothing else.

St: Yes, because in the guidebook it said it is a beautiful hotel and the recommendation said the same. And we go there and the bathrooms are dirty.

S: Probably the best thing is to talk to other travellers.

M: Not only the travellers, try to make an effort to talk to the locals. They give you the best ideas.

S: Like you did today.

St: But I am not sure because in Hoi An I made the trouser in a tailor shop and we were looking for a good tailor for shoes. And she recommended a shop, and they are supporting their families, their relatives who own the shops and it is not always that good to ask. That is my experience.

M: No you have to have both kind of opinions. For example if you are sitting in the taxi and talking to the taxi driver and he feels that you are a nice person then he may give you the right hints. As you already said you like to sit on the streets and just watch people and then just talk to somebody.

**E: But for you it is of course a little bit easier because you speak the language.**

M: Yes.

**E: Because I try to talk to lots of people and it is ok, but sometimes you just can not talk to them. Ok, the last questions are about the overall experience you had in Vietnam. How satisfied are you to date with your trip in Vietnam?**

M: As a kind of ranking?

**E: You can say very satisfied, satisfied, not satisfied.....**

St: I am very satisfied because we make the best out of it. Not because it is not good, yes it is good. It is really nice. Most of the people are. At least the English sentences they are saying to us are really nice. It seems to be honest. It is a nice experience. It is worth travelling here.

S: I think all the bad points we already told you.

**E: But it is really interesting because lots of people have a lot of negative points. But if I ask are you satisfied they are all very satisfied. Even though there are negative points.**

S: I think what was really good for us that Mai Anh helped us a lot. What is really Vietnamese food, when we wouldn't have met her we probably wouldn't have the experience.

St: How you order, that you share all the dishes. We would have ordered two dishes and share them.

**E: Yes it is really nice, but you have to be with more people. Because I am alone and I am not going to order 10 things of course.**

S: And probably we would have understood it after four weeks but probably not. I don't know. I think we wouldn't have understood it. Because as we said the menus in English are not the same as in Vietnamese. That is what she told us, we probably wouldn't have found out ourselves. Even when you show them the picture that you want to have, a whole fish, they just bring you a piece.

St: When you ask the negative expressions or always the bigger ones, I don't know how to express this. And that is what you tell, so we tell you the negative points and all and all I am very satisfied.

M: It is depending on your experiences and expectations.

**E: And it is also how easy going you are. And of course we are young so it is easier. Because I also talked to people from 60+ and they had some problems. The woman got sick, she could not sleep, the beds were not ok. Than it is difficult. Because when I sleep in a bed which is not really ok, it is not really a problem.**

M: But when you go back you always remember the good things.

S: And it is how you are. We had three weeks of raining but we had so much fun. And I think when people come here and they expect something else, sunny weather, it is ruining their whole holiday. And probably there are people who expect that they can have a really good pizza here. I mean you can not expect this so it is just how flexible and happy you are in life.

**E: I think you have to be a typical traveller to go to Vietnam. Don't bother to much if anything is going wrong and just let it go. Just laugh about it.**

M: You should do that, because you have to wait a lot.

S: I really think you can not do Vietnam in two weeks. You don't have any idea.

**E: But most of the travel groups, they do it.**

M: It is a waste of time and money.

**E: Yes, from South to North, from North to South.**

S: I think they probably spend the same amount of money what we do in six weeks.

M: It is just to come back and tell your friends that you have been in Vietnam.

S: You don't feel it. You don't have the time to sit and watch.

**E: How satisfied are you by visiting Sa Pa? What is your opinion about Sa Pa?**

M: Actually I am very satisfied, because the hotel thing, we already expected that we have to bargain and there are a lot of issues. But I thought it would be quit hard to have trekking tours on your own. Because I know that the Vietnamese infrastructure is not that developed.

S: I think one of the bad points and it is really worse, we can not be nice. That the food is not Vietnamese. Like you can not find a Vietnamese place for eating. And this is really bad. You just walk through the street and everybody says Western food, Western food.

**E: You have one area with only Vietnamese restaurants. Close to the lake. I've heard this from the Vietnamese.**

M: But the most important reason for us to travel here was to see the scenery and that is amazing. And we have such great weather here. One week ago it was raining and cold.

S: And it was such a beautiful day and the hiking was ...

M: And the people are so friendly if you compare them to Ha Noi.

S: Even if they want to sell you something, they are so sweet and they are always in for a joke.

M: Even if you don't buy anything. We are joking a lot with them and they are always laughing.

S: I think one of the cutest things was that she was asking an old lady when she buys something if she can make a picture and the old lady says, should I sit or should I stand. And I think that this shows that she is really proud of herself and she is proud of her ethnic minority, her identity. She is interested in tourists and I think a lot of Vietnamese people could learn something of those old people of the ethnic minorities.

M: Especially of the H'mong people. They are so nice. And if we go somewhere they just say ok, you can try everything although you don't buy anything don't worry. And if you go to Ha Noi, nobody says that to you. They are like, do you want to buy something and actually I am not sure and go ahead and find another place.

**E: So you don't feel when you walk down the streets that you get harassed by the people?**

S: No they are nice, we love it.

St: You have to cope with it.

**E: But what I do, I always smile to them and say no thank you I don't want to buy and they are really nice. But I also saw some tourists getting really angry.**

St: That is the wrong way.

M: But here it works. In some places you have to be a kind of rude.

S: It is true.

M: Because otherwise they are really harassing you. And they are really like you should buy chewing gum and you should help me, because I can not buy food for today.

**E: But it is good to hear that you think the people are really nice and you even like it. Because I heard some different stories.**

S: We had so much fun today. Like here is our hotel, and here is the other place and you know they are fixing the street. And usually when you go out of the hotel you would cross this street thing over here and there were like five girls standing there. And we were waving and they were waving back. And then we walked and here, so we did not cross this street and we walked there and we were making fun of them and it seemed like we wanted to cross the street over there so they walked there and then we walked back and they walked back. And they walked forward again and were laughing. And we were laughing. And today we met an old lady and I thought she wanted money but she just walked with us.

M: She said I am going to accompany you a little bit because I feel so boring, I just want to talk a bit.

S: And she really did not want to have money.

M: And she said if you want to buy something, just tell me. And if not it is fine with me.

**E: I did not hear anybody say that to me.**

M: She was talking in Vietnamese. And sometimes they can not express themselves very good in English. And they only learn a small amount of sentences.

S: "Come in my shop"

M: "Buy something from me"

**E: So if you look at the whole experience, what would you say is the most positive and the most negative?**

M: Since it is a mixture of my internship, like a kind of living here and travelling around I would say the most positive is to get to know the people. Because I am really interested in people. And it wanted to talk to them and that was the most positive thing, to see how diversified Vietnam is. From the South to the North. And how different people are and it was such a great experience. Most negative is, I think most disappointing is the government.

**E: That they are so corrupt you mean?**

M: Yes and that they don't make an effort although people are here, I think they are really strong. They really have an ability to do something out of their country and to develop. But I think the greatest barrier is the government. And that is the most disappointing.

**E: What could be changed about that?**

M: To change the government it is very difficult. Because it is a really long story. If you know how the government developed. They are just farmers, they don't have any education at all. And what could be changed is that there are organisations from abroad which are coming to Vietnam and try to make an effort and try to give support and show them and advice them how to do it in the right way. Although the government is corrupt but I think it is not that hard to establish your own thing and a kind of result, just anything. At least you can help a certain amount of people. So that could be changed. I think it is already changing.

**E: And what about you?**

S: I think the most positive experience, even when I don't want to go back was the Central Highlands because I have seen how interested they are and how nice. Even with the big language barrier. They are so sweet and just talking in Vietnamese to you. And caring, they showed us how to eat the food. We did not have this experience in touristic areas. Because they just put the food on one plate and they don't care. And they really showed us how to do it, that was nice. And I think the worse experience is that bargaining is a lot of fun but to get cheated to much is not fair. And the owner of a hotel does maybe not understand that you pay a lot of money so you need to get a clean sheet. You don't want to have black hairs on your bad.

St: I am not sure but one bad experience was, we had a room, we booked a room and stayed there for a couple of hours and we didn't feel quite comfortable there and then we decided to check out. We used it for 5 hours or something and changed to a different hotel.

S: May I add something.

St: Yes.

S: I was really ill and the woman has seen that I had probably some fever, my nose was running, my eyes were running. I really felt bad.

St: So we decided to change to another hotel because it was not that comfortable. And I would even say it wasn't worth the money and we gave

up some laundry. And when we checked out, their faces changed a little bit. They were somewhat angry. And they charged almost the whole amount as if we stayed a whole night and had breakfast there or something. And the laundry was so expensive. Even in the most expensive hotel we stayed it wasn't that expensive. And they charged us so much. Or in Hoi An we went to a laundry shop and we gave up our laundry and it was one bag and she put it on the scale and it was 8,5 kilo. And she told us the price of it and we weren't satisfied and they were not that clean and so we went on to another shop and we put the bag on it and it was 4,5 kilo. The same bag. That was bad.

**E: So they just messed up the scale.**

St: I don't know what the best was, maybe you know?

S: No I don't know.

St: One thing which comes in my mind, I don't know if it is the best. But we were in Kon Tum and we went to a small street kitchen and we were not sure if we should eat there and finally we decided to eat there and they were so kind to us and they planned everything and it was so delicious. It was even so delicious that we came the next day to eat there again.

**E: That is good.**

S: It is so funny because we always say that the central highlands were so hard and the hotels were not nice. But it is one of the most nicest places at the end.

**E: Eventually you look back at it as one of the best experiences.**

S: It was different.

St: The people were very nice.

**E: Are you planning to come back to Vietnam in the future?**

M: Maybe some day.

**E: Yes you because of your family maybe?**

M: Apart from my family I think it is pretty nice to have your holidays here. If you know how to prepare yourself and to inform yourself. Yes, I would definitely come back, but I have several other destinations I want to visit. I think it will take a lot of years.

**E: And you, would you come back?**

S: I think yes, I think we are very curious so we want to see something else its like a list in the head. But one thing I would really come back for is the food, because it is amazing and so fresh and so nice.

M: There is never enough time if you travel. You always have some others spots of which you think I really have to go there. For example Ha Long Bay.

**E: Yes I will go, at the end of my trip.**

S: Cool.

St: I don't think I would come here again. Not because it is not worth it, or it is not nice. But I think the way of travelling is changing and I feel like I want to go somewhere else. There are so many countries I could go to. So coming to Vietnam again, the change that it happens is quite small.

**E: And would you recommend it to other people as a travel destination?**

M: Yes, but I would add a lot of but. I wouldn't recommend it like, yes you should go there. I will tell them you should be aware of ..... and then give a lot of information.

S: And I would tell them, don't go there for two weeks.

**E: Go there for a long time.**

S: Yes.

**E: My final question: If you could make a movie about Vietnam after your trip, what kind of movie would it be. And what would it be about?**

S: We were talking about that yesterday.

**E: Yes? That is funny.**

M: Because we bought skirts on the market and we had the same one. So we were like we have to tell each other when to wear which skirt and the idea came out that we should take a video for our colleagues at the University. And like, I am talking Vietnamese and she is talking English and she is saying very nice and kind things and I am just translating it in Vietnamese but in the wrong way. Like how Vietnamese people really would say it. And we are talking to each other. And then having a subtitle with the translation.

**E: Wow that is funny, so you thought about this already.**

S: I think it would be a very funny movie. Like it is here, it is so funny.

St: It should be.

**E: You should laugh about everything actually.**

S: O we had so much fun. We laughed so much here.

St: I would make a motorbike film. From the perspective of a motorbike driver. Driving through the landscape and some cities and stopping at a bakery and ordering from the street and shouting inside and somebody is coming inside.

M: I would collect all my memories and show not all the bad things, but the things that could happen to you. Just showing the real Vietnam.

S: It would not be a romantic movie and it would not be a thriller.

**E: Just a honest movie.**

S: Yes. Because it is really something, it is so safe here. I have never felt unsafe here.

**E: That was it, anything else you would like to add?**

S: It was really interesting.

**E: Thank you very much, I think it was really nice.**

## Tourist interview 8

**Name:** Bert Voskamp

**Age:** 60

**Occupation:** Retired policeman, freelancer fox travel

**Nationality:** Dutch

**Location:** Mai Chau

**Date:** 09-02-2010

**Time:** 11.00

**Interview time:** 43.42

**He is a tour leader of fox travel from the Netherland and is travelling around Vietnam with a Dutch group in a bus, not visiting the North-West.**

**E: Ellen**

B: Bert

**E: Mijn eerste vraag is, waarom heb je Vietnam gekozen als bestemming?**

B: Laat ik het zo zeggen ik ben 11 jaar geleden als toerist ook geweest. Nou ik doe als freelancer voor Fox begeleiden. Ik heb jarenland Sri Lanka gedaan, ik heb Borneo en Maleisië gedaan, de Filippijnen gedaan en ik ben uiteindelijk hier terecht gekomen. Dus de laatste 4-5 jaar doe ik alleen maar Vietnam. Omdat dit mijn favoriete land is. Dus het is wel een bewuste keuze eigenlijk om Vietnam te begeleiden.

**E: Maar waarom is Vietnam zo bijzonder voor u?**

B: Uh als je het vergelijkt met andere Aziatische landen vind ik ten eerste de bevolking veel vriendelijker, ze staan veel meer open voor de toerist. Ze zijn nog niet zo commercieel. Laten eigenlijk alles toe. Gewoon foto's maken tot ontmoeten, tot iets drinken. Tot uitnodigingen en noem maar op. Ze zeggen wel eens, Thailand is het land van de glimlach, dat ben ik met je eens. Maar ik vind Vietnam het echte land van de glimlach. En de echte mensen. En zeker als je vergelijkt, het Zuiden met het Noorden. Qua karakter zijn de Zuiderlingen wat zachtaardiger dan de Noorderlingen. En dat heeft weer te maken met afkomst uit China. Ook de bouw van de mensen is heel anders. Ik weet niet of je in het Zuiden geweest bent?

**E: Nee.**

B: De Zuid Vietnamese is qua lichaamsbouw wat tener, de Noord Vietnamese is wat grover.

**E: Hoe vaak heeft u Vietnam bezocht?**

B: Alles bij elkaar nu bijna 30 keer.

**E: En hoe lang reist u door Vietnam?**

B: Normaal gesproken is het 'the best of Vietnam' dit is een reis vanuit het Zuiden naar het Noorden, die is 21 dagen en de singlestrip is 16 dagen. We hebben ook nog een ANWB reis gehad en die was 18 dagen. En de ANWB reis ging ook langs Mai Chau.

**E: En de reis gaat meestal van Noord naar Zuid?**

B: De Single reis gaat van Noord naar Zuid en de ANWB reis van verleden jaar ging ook van Noord naar Zuid maar de 'best of Vietnam' gaat eigenlijk van Zuid naar Noord.

**E: Het is altijd wel het hele land? Of soms ook een stukje?**

B: 'Best of Vietnam' is het hele land. We beginnen dan in Ho Chi Minh City, dan gaan we eerst naar de Mekong Delta, daarna gaan we van de Mekong Delta naar het Noorden. Phan Thiet, Nha Trang, Qui Nhon, Hoi An, Hue, Dong Hoi, Vinh, Ha Noi, Ha Long Bay. Dus dan zit niet in het programma de berggebieden. De policy die daar achter zit is dan moet je toch weer minimaal 3 dagen extra ervoor uit trekken. Dan krijgen we dus een 24-daagse rondreis, 25-daagse rondreis en dat is dan vaak voor een bepaalde doelgroep te lang. Dan praat ik nog niet over het geld. En dan heb je kans dat er minder mensen boeken. Er zijn natuurlijk wel reisorganisaties, ik geloof Summum en Baobab die doen wel Sa Pa erbij, maar die zitten dan ook wat langer in het land.

**E: Maar niet iedereen kan natuurlijk lange tijd vrij zijn.**

B: Nee, en Fox reizen is de enige organisatie op dit moment nog die alles, van het Zuiden naar het Noorden doet met de bus. Dus niet met vliegtuig en niet met de trein.

**E: Dus de hele reis is met de bus.**

B: Ja. Ik zeg ook altijd dan als u vliegt is het altijd mooi weer boven de wolken, maar u ziet niets. En met die treinreis, het is 12 uur als je de nachttrein hebt, dan zie je ook niets. En dan overbrug je wel van Hue naar Ha Noi of andersom ruim 600 kilometer maar je gaat 's avonds om 7 uur in de trein en je bent de volgende ochtend om 7 uur op de bestemming. En dan zie je niets. En dat mis je dus. En je mist dan een hele boel. Een heleboel organisaties weten niet wat je tussen Hue en Ha Noi kan doen.



**E: Er zijn inderdaad veel mensen die dat stuk overslaan.**

B: Ja dat ze dus de reis te lang vinden qua kilometerafstanden. Het is ook een hele afstand, maar je doet zo veel dingen, zeker vanaf Hue naar Ha Noi. Het is eigenlijk een heel goede aanvulling op je rondreis en je beleeft daar het echte Vietnam. Want daar komt geen toerisme. Op lokale markten, of waar je ook bent, niet even de toeristen de bijzonderheden maar je wordt aangekeken. Dat is heel erg apart. Ik zeg ook wel is tegen mijn groep, je moet niet gek staan te kijken als er een Vietnamees naast je komt staan als je wat langer of forser bent van bouw. Dan gaan ze naast je staan en kijken ze of dat wel klopt ja of nee.

**E: Ja dat heb ik ook echt veel meegemaakt, want ik ben ook in gebieden geweest waar geen toeristen komen en ik loop dan alleen. Dan zie je wel echt bijzondere dingen, dat mensen aan je gaan zitten en in je armen gaan knijpen. Maar wel heel erg leuk. Bent u toch wel bekend met de gebieden in het Noord Westen? U hebt er wel van gehoord?**

B: Ja uiteraard, ik ben in Sa Pa zelf niet geweest, maar als je de folders leest dan weet je waar Sa Pa ligt en dan weet je ook wat het gebied inhoud. Wat ik dan wel vaak gehoord heb en ook wel weet uit ervaring is dat het heel erg toeristisch is geworden, Sa Pa. Dat de bevolking ook minder openstaat naar de toerist en dat ze dus heel goed weten, daar is wat te halen. En dan bedelen in de zin van het woord, niet echt bedelen om geld maar bedelen om toch wat te kopen en in hun huis te komen. Dus om geld te verdienen aan de toerist. Op zich niet slecht natuurlijk, maar dat heb ik dan gehoord, het is wat hinderlijk.

**E: Ja op straat wordt je echt aangeklampt.**

B: Ja jij bent er geweest hé? Dus ik hoop dat ik verwoord wat ik dan gehoord heb van andere mensen.

**E: Ja ik heb ook heel veel van tevoren gehoord en het is wel heel erg mooi, ook het gebied eromheen. En het stadje is best gezellig, je hebt een paar leuke restaurantjes, wel Westers natuurlijk. En wat leuke barretjes. Maar inderdaad de mensen ....**

B: Het is niet meer die puurheid.

**E: Nee.**

B: En dat vind ik dus als ik in het middenstuk zit, vanaf Hue to Ha Noi heb je nog die puurheid.

**E: Ja inderdaad, dat is erg jammer. Zou u geïnteresseerd zijn om die gebieden te bezoeken? In het Noord Westen?**

B: Fox heeft een nieuw programma. Ik weet het niet uit mijn hoofd. Waar ze het stuk van het Noorden van Vietnam erin doen. Ik geloof ook Mai Chau en nog een plaats en vervolgens doorgaan naar China toe. Moet je zelf maar even op de sites kijken [www.fox.nl](http://www.fox.nl). En dan zie je dus de reis die ze in het Noorden gedaan hebben. Ik zelf zeg dus op mijn beurt het is een prachtige ontwikkeling om hier in dit gebied ook reizen te gaan ontwikkelen, want dat verdient zeker deze streek. En ik ben ook een van de weinigen die zegt je moet Mai Chau erin betrekken omdat het hier fantastisch mooi en rustig is. Het is nog puur. Ondanks dat het dus best hier in dit dorp toeristisch aandoet, maar niet te erg.

**E: Wat zijn je verwachtingen over de berggebieden in het Noorden?**

B: De puurheid en de openheid van de bevolking. De natuur is ook stukken mooier dan wanneer je naar het Zuiden gaat. Daar heb je helemaal geen bergen, heuvels. Er ligt maar 1 bergje in de buurt van Ho Chi Minh city. Hier zit je natuurlijk in de bergen. En ook langs de highway 1 van het Zuiden naar het Noorden als je de rondreis maakt, zie je maar een beperkt aantal berggebieden. En de meeste liggen natuurlijk allemaal tegen de grens aan met Laos en Cambodja. Dus je krijgt veel meer het berggebied als beeld. En nogmaals het weinige toerisme. En dan zie je niet alleen hier, dat zie je ook als wij van Hue naar Dong Hoi gaan, daar komt geen toeristenbus. En dat maakt juist een land dan zo interessant.

**E: En wat voor soort faciliteiten zouden nodig zijn om in de berggebieden te verblijven?**

B: Je moet natuurlijk voor de groep rekenen, je moet behoorlijke accommodaties hebben. Ik heb vroeger geleerd, bed, bad, brood moet goed zijn. Het bed moet goed zijn, het bad moet goed zijn en het brood moet goed zijn. En met brood bedoel ik het eten. En dat moet natuurlijk hier in Vietnam. Het eten is goed, maar als je in gebieden komt waar je natuurlijk wat minder toerisme hebt krijg je ook wat meer mogelijkheden en onmogelijkheden met de maaltijden natuurlijk. Dus dat moet sowieso goed zijn. Het bed, dus de locatie kan best wel wat beperkter. En dat moet eigenlijk voldoende zijn. De mensen moeten zich ook goed op kunnen frissen. Dus dat zijn de minimale vereisten. Je hoeft geen 4-5 sterren resorts of hotels neer te zetten. Maar je moet wel goede accommodaties kwijt kunnen.

**E: Maar zou een groep ook in een dorpje gaan en in home stays verblijven?**

B: Nee, zeker als je met een groepsrondreis gaat dan gaat dat niet.

**E: Waarom niet?**

B: Nou het kan wel maar dan moet je een accommodatie hebben waar je als groep verblijft.

**E: En wat denkt u dat de potentiële barrières zijn om de gebieden niet te bezoeken?**

B: Ik denk dat het toch zit in de lengte van de reizen die je dan maakt. Ik denk niet dat het ontbreekt aan natuurschoon, ik denk niet dat het ontbreekt aan de mogelijkheden die je hebt in zo'n gebied. Maar ik denk dat het gewoon de tijdsduur is. En buiten de tijdsduur krijg je ook de kosten. En dat zal wel meevallen als je hier blijft reizen. Maar eigenlijk ligt er maar 1 weg hier hé. Eigenlijk 1 rondweg. Zodat je bij Sa Pa links of begint of je begint in Sa Pa rechtsom. Het is maar 1 weg die hier zo rondrijdt.

**E: En een gedeelte van de weg is nog niet klaar, tussen Sa Pa en Dien Bien Phu, dus daar doe je 9 uur over.**

B: Kijk Dien Bien Phu is natuurlijk al een historische plek, die je erin zou kunnen doen. Maar in eigenlijk is het natuurlijk dus als je die hele tour zou willen doen met een bus dan moet je al zeker een dag of 8 erbij trekken?

**E: Ja, sommige wegen zijn echt heel erg slecht. Maar de meeste mensen gaan eerst met de trein naar Sa Pa.**

B: Ja dat overbruggen ze met de trein en in de buurt van Sa Pa gaan ze dan dingen ondernemen, wandelingen, maar ze verblijven in Sa Pa. Eigenlijk hetzelfde wat we hier in Mai Chau ook doen. Je wandelt in de vallei.

**E: Ja hier heb je echt een vallei en dat heb je daar niet echt. Daar is het echt helemaal de bergen in. Ok, dan heb ik wat vragen over u persoonlijk. Kunt u me iets vertellen over u leven in Nederland? Of bent u helemaal nooit meer in Nederland? Wat doet u graag, activiteiten en wat is belangrijk voor u?**

B: Reizen. Voor Fox ben ik een jaar of 6-7 geleden begonnen op vakantiebeurzen, South-Asia advies te geven over landen die ik zelf bezocht heb en ook als trouwe klant van de organisatie om dat te promoten. En de reisvoorbereidingen die ik dan maak voor de groepsrondreizen dat is toch weer elke keer wat proberen te ontdekken. Steeds weer wat nieuws proberen voor de groep te doen. Dat is eigenlijk mijn hobby en ik weet dat is een heel beperkte hobby. Maar voor de rest ik leef heel goed hier. En zeker voor Vietnam.

**E: En hoe vaak bent u per jaar in Vietnam?**

B: Verleden jaar 6 keer en het jaar ervoor 5 keer en ik hoop dit jaar weer 6 keer. 6 keer 3 weken gemiddeld. Zo'n 18 weken hoop ik dit jaar ook weer te doen.

**E: En hoe zou u uzelf omschrijven in een paar woorden?**

B: Reisleider dus je moet soms streng maar rechtvaardig zijn. Dat zegt de groep ook meestal. De eerste twee, drie dagen ben ik als ik als reisleider ben dominant. En daarna dan is de groep gevormd en dan laat je eigenlijk de groep wat meer vieren. Wat ik wel als reisleider dan ben hier is dat ik helemaal hilarisch ben van dit land en ik laat de mensen zoveel mogelijk te laten ruiken, voelen, proeven en bewegen. En alles wat ik zie onderweg daar stop ik voor. Dat is het mooie nog van dit land. Het zijn redelijk goede wegen als je van het Zuiden afkomt maar de highway 1 daar gebeurt alles langs. Langs de linker of rechterkant, daar gebeurt alles. Hele bebouwingen ook langs een snelweg. Dus alles wat je ook ziet, kan je stoppen. En je stopt dus op je vaste plaatsen bijvoorbeeld Hoi An, dat is een 6<sup>e</sup> eeuwse authentiek stadje. Dat is echt toeristisch. Maar de tussengelegen stukken, als je wat ziet, kan je gewoon stoppen. Dus wat ik wil is zoveel mogelijk de mensen van het land meegeven. En als je dan praat over een gemiddeld van het aantal foto's dat tussen de 2000 en 3000 ligt. Met een digitale kaart waarbij ze dus ook best 's avonds nog wel weten om te zeggen nou dat is toch wel een beetje teveel van het goede. Dat ze thuis dus heel veel werk hebben om foto's en film te bekijken en dat is dus het leuke ook, dat je dus die mensen die enthousiasme over kan brengen. Puur als reisleider. Als anders als persoon dan zit je natuurlijk in mijn andere vak als rechercheur, politieagent. Dat is natuurlijk een heel ander beroep. Ik ben gepensioneerd.

**E: En wat zijn belangrijke waarden in uw leven?**

B: Ik wil mijn beleving, mijn gevoel van dit land overgeven aan de gast. En 9 van de 10 keer lukt dit ook. De enthousiasme die ik hier nog heb die overkomt. Want je moet je wel realiseren dat je als tourleader in dit land bent, dat je de normen en waarden die je ook in Nederland eigenlijk zou moeten kennen, dat je die zeker hier moet kennen. Je moet een beetje, dat zal jij misschien ook wel gemerkt hebben, weten hoe de mensen in elkaar steken. Je kunt hier heel erg snel iemand beledigen en dan komt dat ook niet meer goed. Maar het kan hier ook heel snel dat ze je oudere broer noemen of oudere tante en dan respecteren ze je. En als ze dat gaan zeggen, dan heb je respect getoond en dan heb je een heel goede band. En dan gaan ze eigenlijk door het vuur voor je. En dat moet je als tourleader weten. En wat

kan er gebeuren bij een tourleader die denkt dat de baas is. Dat gebeurt echt en dan gaan ze proberen boven de gids te staan, boven de chauffeur of de bijrijder. Zich profileren tegenover de groep als ik ben de baas. En dan heb je dus geen samenwerking en dan krijg je dus die hele sfeer niet aan de gang. Dat hele systeem zoals dat hier nog gevoelsmatig leeft, die traditie als je dat weet dan kun je bij iedereen alles maken en breken. We komen hier net aan, ik ben hier pas 3 keer geweest. Maar dan zie je de herkenning, dan herinneren ze zich o dat is goed geweest. Ondanks dat er soms best is een probleem is in zo'n resort of in een hotel. Hetzij met het eten, hetzij met de kamer, hetzij met een gast. Of met betalingen. Maar daar moet je op een normale manier mee om gaan. Dat moeten we trouwens in Nederland ook doen. Dus dat wel accepteren, dan is het een geweldig land. Maar als tourleader moet je dat wel beseffen en eigenlijk meenemen.

**E: Spreek u ook Vietnamees?**

B: Nee joh, een paar woorden. Het is heel moeilijk, je zit met 6 verschillende toonhoogtes van woorden. Als je bij wijze van spreken het woordje moeder neemt dan heb je 6 keer verschillende toonhoogtes. En dan heb je kans dat je je moeder voor paard uitmaakt als je het verkeerde woordje ma gebruikt.

**E: En de volgende vragen gaan over duurzaam toerisme. Is Fox een duurzame touroperator? Zijn ze daar mee bezig?**

B: Ze zijn er mee bezig ja. Ze hebben nu ook dat ze groene stoelen verkopen. Dat je mensen wat extra laat betalen om de ecologische situatie te verbeteren. Ze hebben verschillende projecten, ze hebben in Borneo een project waarbij ze orang-oetangs gaan ondersteunen. Ze hebben bepaalde andere projecten. Ze hebben een heel goed programma. Een heel goed programma is dat je aan het einde van de rondreis nog verlengt en vrijwilligerswerk gaat doen in dat land. Dus ze werken daar denk ik wel bewust aan.

**E: Het is wel echt aan het opkomen.**

B: Ja. Maar dan moet je zelf maar even op de site kijken. Dan weet je ook even waar ik over gesproken heb.

**E: Ja zeker, dat is leuk. En denkt u dat u nu op dit moment met deze groep op een duurzame manier reist? Bent u daar mee bezig?**

B: Nee, sorry dat moet ik ontkennen.

**E: Nee maar dat mag, natuurlijk.**

B: Wat bedoel je met duurzaam?

**E: Ik bedoel er vooral mee om de lokale cultuur te respecteren.**

B: Ja dat natuurlijk wel. Het is niet zo dat we vuilnis uit de bus gooien omdat ze dat hier wel doen. Daar zal je ook verwonderd van staan hoeveel rommel er overal ligt. Maar dat moet hier ook nog allemaal ontwikkeld worden. Ondanks dat je ziet dat de mensen alle vuil op de weg al scheiden en dan er vrouwen op de fiets volgeladen met gescheiden afval rond zien gaan. Moet men hier zeer zeker nog een heleboel aan leren. Het is eigenlijk nog een ontwikkelingsland hé. En als we dat weer af gaan zetten naar de ontwikkeling zoals een aantal Europese landen dat in de jaren hebben meegemaakt. Kijk maar naar de populaire bestemmingen als Spanje en Griekenland. Hoe moeizaam het daar nog gaat met plastic. Zulke normen en waarden houd je wel in de gaten, in de bussen afvalzakjes een afvalbak en de buschauffeur als je een grotere groep hebt, leegt dat regelmatig in de daarvoor bestemde afvalbakken onderweg. Dus zulke dingen wel.

**E: En wordt er ook van te voren bij de aanvang van een reis tegen de gasten gezegd van 1 keer douchen per dag? Zijn er bepaalde regels?**

B: Nee.

**E: En iets over gepaste kleding?**

B: Wel uiteraard heb je het over kledingvoorschriften, zeker dus als je tempels gaat bezoeken of het mausoleum gaat bezoeken. Dan moet je respect tonen. En dan moet je dus bedekte schouders en dat soort dingen. En kijk met dit weer dan heb je het over de bescherming van je lichaam. Een hoedje dragen, veel water drinken, ondanks dat we dat in Nederland niet gewend zijn. Maar zeker water drinken, dat is een van de meest voorkomende problemen bij groepen. Dus ze voelen zich niet lekker worden omdat ze te weinig gedronken hebben. Die dingen geven we wel mee dus. Maar dat doe je tijdens je welkoms woord.

**E: En wat denkt u dat er veranderd kan worden om er toch bewuster mee bezig te zijn?**

B: Natuurlijk moet het land eerst zelf het land schoon worden. En je bent zelf in Ha Noi geweest. Nou kijk maar eens in zo'n stad als Ha Noi. Kijk maar eens om je heen, de huizen, ook de chaotische reclameborden, hoe men alles neerhangt. Om als toerist hier die bewustwording over te brengen aan de Vietnamees. Ik denk dat dat nog moeizaam zal zijn. En bescherming van de natuur ook wel. Maar daar ben ik als groep wel mee bezig. Om te zeggen, nou jongens hoe kan je hier daadwerkelijk iets doen voor de natuur.

Dan zou je hier de mens veel bewuster moeten maken van jongens let op je bent je land aan het vervuilen of je bent je omgeving aan het vervuilen door.

**E: Denk je dat het voor de toekomst erg belangrijk is voor Vietnam om een duurzame aanpak te handhaven?**

B: Ja ik denk het wel. De ontwikkeling van Vietnam gaat gigantisch hard. Het is nu nog een derde wereldland, ze vallen nog steeds onder de wereldhulporganisaties, wereld voedselbank. Maar als je ziet hoe het land zich ontwikkeld. Met name hoe wegen uit de grond gestampt worden. Nou je hebt het zelf een stukje gezien in Ha Noi. Dan denk je dat ze in Vietnam echt voorzichtig moeten zijn, anders krijg je hetzelfde effect misschien als Maleisië, dat je allemaal 3-4-5-6baans snelwegen krijgt. En dat je dus iets stuk maakt, natuur kwijtraakt. En dan Vietnam daar zelf heel erg mee bezig zou moeten zijn. En ik denk dat ze dat niet erg doen als land zijnde. Ze zijn hier puur bezig met ontwikkeling. Ga je nog ergens anders heen?

**E: Alleen het Noorden.**

B: Als je ziet dat stuk wat ze dus tussen Hue naar het Zuiden richting Nha Trang, als je ziet wat daar voor badplaatsen, hotels ze daar uit de grond stampen. Nou dat is niet normaal meer. Het gaat als een gek, maar dat zijn zulke gigantisch megaprojecten, het liefst allemaal met een golfbaan. Dat hebben ze dan teruggebracht. Je moet je even voorstellen in deze natuur hier, in deze droogte. Golfcourses te hebben, dagelijks het water, wat nu als schaars is zeker in hoogzomer in Ha Noi kan het gebeuren dat ze te weinig water hebben. En ook geen elektriciteit omdat de krachtcentrales opgewekt moeten worden met water. Dan is er geen water voor de eigen elektriciteitsvoorziening. Dus het is zo verspillend om allemaal golfcourses aan te leggen. Daarom zeg ik dit land heeft expansie, maar men moet wel voorzichtig zijn dat men niet aan de eigen expansie verloren gaat. Dat is dan denk ik weer het voordeel als je hier in het Noorden wat ontwikkeld. Dan is het allemaal wat kleinschaliger. Het nadeel is natuurlijk weer dat je in het Noorden meer seizoengebonden bent, daar moet je ook weer rekening mee houden. We hebben nu dan wel prachtig mooi weer, maar twee jaar geleden is er toen in februari de hele rijstooft mislukt omdat ze extreme kou hadden. Dus de maanden november, december, januari zijn toch wat moeilijker toegankelijk dan het Zuiden. Het land is heel het jaar te bereizen maar je wordt wel wat beperkt.

**E: Wanneer gaan de meeste groepen?**

B: Voor Fox het hele jaar door. Je hebt drie klimaatzones, dat verschilt tussen Noorden, het midden en het Zuiden. Dus je kunt het hele jaar door. Het is nu hoogzomer in het Zuiden nog, het is erg heet op het ogenblik in Ho Chi Minh City. Daar is het wel 35-36 graden. Terwijl het normaal altijd 31 graden is. Dus het is extreem heet. Hier kan het soms wel heter zijn. Het kan hier tegen de 40 graden aan worden. In Ha Noi en ook hier in deze regio kan het extreem heet zijn. Dus je hebt verschillende klimaatzones en in oktober-november heb je weer kans dat hier een tyfoon komt. Omdat je heftige regenval hebt, dus de wegen weer geblokkeerd worden door de landverschuivingen. Dus dat is een beperktheid voor het Noorden.

**E: En denkt u dat er door middel van toerisme minder armoede is?**

B: O ja zeer zeker, nogmaals je ziet de ontwikkeling zeker in het gebied van Nha Trang tot Hue, dat is zo in ontwikkeling dat hele gebied. Dan heb je dus werkgelegenheid door de bouw, door de investeringen. Maar ook voor de mensen die daar gaan werken. Maar er is ook erg veel leegstand op het ogenblik. Men heeft ook te veel vier en vijf sterren hotels op het ogenblik. Terwijl er meer behoefte gaat worden, ook vanwege de prijs, aan twee en drie sterren hotels. De drie sterren hotels zitten bijna allemaal vol. Dus daar moet je wel voorzichtig mee zijn natuurlijk.

**E: Zeker. U hebt heel veel gereisd in Vietnam. Kunt u mij vertellen wat de meest positieve ervaring is die u hier heeft meegemaakt? Of een van de mooiste ervaringen?**

B: Ik heb mijn eigen feel good projectje. Het is schitterend, ik zal het je straks laten zien op een fotootje. Wat mijn meest leuke ervaring is, is het contact met de mensen. Dat is eigenlijk het positieve ervan. Voordat ik in Vietnam kwam kende je Vietnam van het beeld dat je altijd gekregen hebt. Van tour of duty and acopolipse en al die films, dat was Vietnam. Maar met de oorlog en gelet op mijn leeftijd en ook gelet op de doelgroep, heel veel toeristen die bij Fox zijn dat zijn heel veel vijftigplussers. Echt die groepen die er nu zijn en die er ook in de toekomst zullen zijn zie je grotendeels dat ze vijftigplussers zijn. En die worden allemaal weer geconfronteerd met de historie. Dat maakt dit land zo bijzonder interessant voor de toerist. Je hebt dus historie, je hebt cultuur, je hebt natuur en je hebt stranden. Je hebt eigenlijk een hele mix van alles. En dat maakt juist dit land heel erg interessant. Zo ben je een dag bezig alleen maar met de natuur, zo ben je een dag bezig met cultuur en dan ineens krijg je toch weer een moment van historie die dan weer bij heel veel mensen op het netvlies komen. Het begint

dan in Ho Chi Minh City bij het oorlogsmuseum, daarna ga je naar de tunnelcomplexen, de Co Chi tunnels. Gelukkig ben je er niet de hele dag mee bezig, want als je de Mekong delta ingaat is het prachtig, en allemaal varen. De lokale bevolking zien, hoe ze daar alles maken. Dat is ook zo bijzonder in dit land, het is eigenlijk selfsupporting hé. Ze hebben alles behalve goud en diamanten, voor de rest hebben ze geloof ik alles. Ze hebben gas, olie, hout. En de Vietnamees gebruikt ook alles. Ik zie nu hier een bananenboom staan. Het bananenblad gebruiken ze, de bloem van de banaan, de bananen zelf, de stam van de banaan, alles gebruiken ze. En dat is eigenlijk het mooie van dit land. De gekste dingen wordt je mee geconfronteerd is dat eten ze en dat maken ze en dat gebruiken ze. En het land is heel erg selfsupporting, dat zie je ook aan de bevolking, de een verkoopt dit, de ander verkoopt dat. En ook al hebben ze maar een klein beetje, ze verkopen, ze zijn bezig. Een Vietnamees, ook in het buitenland is actief. Ook al denk je dat ze op straat even zitten te slapen, maar ze zijn eigenlijk dag en nacht bezig. Dat is het mooie van dit land. En ook gezinnen, als je normaal een baan hebt dan hebben ze een tweede baan erbij. Of ze hebben een winkeltje erbij. Ze zijn vrij snel tevreden. Je ziet wel verschil tussen Ha Noi en Ho Chi Minh City. Dat in Ha Noi nu het gemotoriseerde verkeer veel meer toeneemt. In Ho Chi Minh City heb je heel veel meer bromfietsjes. En in Ha Noi zie je veel meer auto's. Dat heeft deels te maken met de overheidsinstanties, die daar gevestigd zijn ook de ambassades die daar gevestigd zijn. Die hebben allemaal auto's. En dat zie je veel minder in Ho Chi Minh City. Ik had het even over mijn eigen feel good projectje. Dat is in Trang Bang. Dat is de plaats waar als wij terugkomen van de Co Chi tunnels de plek bezoeken waar het meisje van de napalm, dat incident geweest is. Ik weet niet of je daar wat van weet, de World Press foto. Dat jonge kleine meisje ziet lopen nadat het gebombardeerd is. Dat is daar dus de plek waar zij woont, gewoond heeft. En die bezoeken we dan en daar krijgen we dan een DVD te zien met de geschiedenis van haar. Maar dat restaurantje van haar ouders dat was helemaal aan het verminderen, aan het aftakelen en de tourleaders kwamen daar niet meer want het was niet schoon. Daar heb ik het weer, bed, bad, brood. Het was niet schoon, je kon niet naar het toilet, ze had eigenlijk niets meer om te drinken en te eten te geven. Of thee te schenken, of frisdrank te schenken. Dus toen heb ik gezegd tegen haar ik ga jou helpen. Ze heeft een nieuwe televisie gekregen van mij met een DVD recorder om die film weer te laten zien. Want we

zagen dat op een heel vies, oud tv'tje. Ik heb geld gegeven en daarvan heeft ze alles een beetje opgeknaapt, het dak een beetje gerepareerd, geveerd een schuttinkje gemaakt. Ik heb nieuwe tafels en stoelen gegeven. En ze heeft van een andere van mijn groep toen spontaan een koelkast gekregen voor de frisdranken. Dat is mijn eigen feel good project. En dat is dus Kim Voek zoals dat meisje van de napalm heet.

**E: Maar dat is dus echt het meisje van de foto?**

B: Ja. Die woont dus zelf in Canada, maar dat is haar schoonzus. Haar broer is overleden en zij die schoonzus wordt niet ondersteund door de familie, heeft geen inkomsten meer en dan zie je dat ze helemaal afzakken. Dus toen heb ik tegen haar gezegd ik help je, even die betrokkenheid. Dus zo heb ik ook een betrokkenheid in Mi Lay. Mi Lay dat is een dorp waar 504 mensen omgekomen zijn door de Amerikanen toen. Allemaal neergeschoten. Daar bezoeken we dan ook die plek en daar woont nog een vrouw die dat overleefd heeft. En meestal bezoeken we haar ook even en dan heb je toch een soort band. Zo zijn er eigenlijk nog een heleboel dingen waarbij je dus met de historie geconfronteerd wordt en wat bij de toerist heel erg ingrijpend is. Daar moet je ook mee omgaan, je moet ook het verhaal goed vertellen. De gids die ik nu heb, die begon vanochtend om een klein voorbeeldje te noemen. Dan krijg je een stukje onbegrip in de groep. Die begon vanochtend heel negatief te doen over het communisme en die haalde als voorbeeld Oost Duitsland met de nazi's enz. En toen had ik iets van dit gaat niet de goede kant op. Dus ik heb hem even apart genomen en gezegd van waarom reageerde je zo? Ik had wel een vermoeden. Nou wat blijkt nou, zijn vader is dus in het heropvoedingskamp overleden. Hoe hij dan overleden is weet ik niet. Maar na de oorlog moest iedereen van het Zuiden die tegen de Noord Vietnamees gewerkt had die moest in het heropvoedingskamp. Hij zelf was als bootvluchteling gevlucht maar de boot stopte, dus ze werden opgepakt en zijn in de gevangenis gezet. Dus hij heeft een heel ander gevoel bij het Vietnam wat wij als toerist zien. Toen heb ik ook tegen hem gezegd van ik kan me dat voorstellen die gevoelens maar je moet dit bij de groep wel op een andere manier overbrengen. Want hij vergeleek alles met de nazi's en dat is heel gevaarlijk. Ik kan me het voorstellen, maar je moet heel erg voorzichtig daarmee zijn. Terwijl hij dus ook in zijn beroep helemaal niet zo mag reageren. Ik kan het me wel voorstellen. Want als jij dus wat meer leest en leert over dit land en het is maar recente geschiedenis hé. Het is nog maar 30-35 jaar geleden. Het is

vrij recent. En daar komt ook bij dat Vietnam pas 35 jaar echt vrij is. Daarvoor zijn ze overheerst door de Chinezen, daarna door de Fransen en daarna dus een gedeelte door de Amerikanen. Dus het is pas een paar jaar een land dat vrij is. En dan heb je dus heel erg dat het door het communisme overheerst is geweest. En er is nog steeds onbewust spanning tussen de Zuiderlingen en de Noorderlingen. Het is 1 land met 1 regering maar ze worden nog duidelijk op een communistische manier gedirigeerd. Vietnam doet het als regering zijnde redelijk goed, want ze laten heel voorzichtig de vleugels vieren. En het is niet zo dus wat je in Oost Europa gehad hebt ineens was erg geen communistisch systeem meer en dan verviel ook alles. En hier laten ze heel voorzichtig de teugels vieren. En dat is de kracht van deze regering die de vrijheden heel voorzichtig toelaat. En in onze beleveniswereld gaat het veel te traag. Maar voor de mensen hier is het denk ik heel goed. En dan heb je recentelijk ook weer dat de mensen, de activisten die wat tegen de gematigdheid en rustigheid van deze regering zijn. Maar ik vraag mezelf ook wel eens af, zijn wij zo gelukkig in onze democratische wereld? Met al die partijtjes en partijen. Het is vrijheid, maar.....

**E: Wat is het meest negatieve wat u heeft meegemaakt in Vietnam?**

B: In de rondreis heb ik dus geen negatieve aspecten. Wat ik negatief vind, maar dat is de ontwikkeling van het toerisme dat rondom hotels en zeker in

het Zuiden ga je het sekstoerisme zien. Dat is een ontwikkeling waarbij je dus in dit land ook mee te maken gaat krijgen. En dan niet zo zeer kinderprostitutie maar wel prostitutie. Maar dat zie je nu eigenlijk bij een heleboel hotels waar de Westerlingen verblijven zie je dit ontstaan. Dat vind ik een negatief aspect. Dus dan heb je weer van hoe moet je dat hier dan ontwikkelen. Maar ik denk dat ze dat hier voorlopig de eerste jaren nog niet krijgen. Snap je, dat is de zuiverheid in het Noorden.

**E: Ok, mijn laatste vraag. Als u een film kon maken over Vietnam, waar zou die dan over gaan? Wat zou u de mensen willen laten zien?**

B: Nou de combinatie van hoe het geweest is en hoe men zich nu aan het ontwikkelen is. En dan de veerkracht van deze mensen. En als je nu vraagt aan hen, hoe heb je dit nu beleefd, hoe heb je dit ervaren, hoe kan dit eigenlijk nog zo recent, dan zeggen ze we vergeven het ze, maar vergeten doen we niet. Nou ik zou dus een film maken vergeven en vergeten.

**E: Iets anders wat u nog zou willen delen?**

B: Nee, ik zou nog wel willen zeggen, maak een tour van het Zuiden naar het Noorden en doe het op deze manier en dan proef je zelf ook het hele land. En dan zie je ook een heleboel dingen.

**E: Dank u wel.**

## Tourist interview 9

**Name:** Frank

**Age:** 31

**Occupation:** Unemployed, previous job planner at Adidas.

**Nationality:** Dutch

**Location:** Ha Noi

**Date:** 17-02-2010

**Time:** 10.00

**Interview time:** 27.17

**Travelling around the North-West by motorbike.**

**E: Ellen**

F: Frank

**E: Waarom heb je Vietnam en Noord West Vietnam gekozen als reisbestemming?**

F: Het was de makkelijkste manier om vanuit Laos naar Vietnam te gaan. En wij wilden eigenlijk van Noord naar Zuid reizen in Vietnam. We zijn bij Huay Xai de grens overgegaan in Thailand. En vanaf Laos bij Dien Bien Phu.

**E: En jullie zijn dus ook al in andere landen gereisd?**

F: Ja we hebben de Transmongolië express genomen en toen China, zijn we vanaf daar naar Singapore gevolgen, toen weer helemaal naar het noorden. Maleisië, Thailand, Laos en dan Vietnam.

**E: En dit is de eerste keer dat je Vietnam bezoekt?**

F: Ja.

**E: Hoe reis je door Vietnam?**

F: Totaal zal het ongeveer een maand zijn.

**E: Jullie zijn nog niet heel lang in Vietnam, maar zou je Vietnam in vijf woorden kunnen omschrijven?**

F: Mooi, vriendelijk, rustig, tenminste het Noord Westen dan. Gewoon vriendelijke mensen. Terwijl je eerst hoorde dat ze best stug kunnen zijn, maar misschien omdat je met de motor rijdt iedereen heel vriendelijk is. Maar dat merken wij wel.

**E: Merk je geen verschil hier in Ha Noi? Dat de mensen minder vriendelijk zijn?**

F: Nee, valt wel mee. Waar we zijn geweest dat is absoluut niet toeristisch natuurlijk. Daar komen weinig Westerlingen denk ik. Dus dat is wel uniek voor die mensen daar. Dat vinden ze zelf ook heel leuk.

**E: Jullie reizen van Noord naar Zuid, en je gaat het hele land door op de motor?**

F: Ja, als hij het volhoudt ja.

**E: Maar jullie gaan dus niet vliegen of met de trein.**

F: Nee, we proberen het hele stuk met de motor te doen.

**E: De volgende vraag gaat over het transport in het Noord Westen of dit goed is, ik weet niet of je deze kunt beantwoorden omdat jullie met de motor zijn.**

F: Ja we hebben alleen het eerste stuk, van Dien Bien Phu naar Sa Pa zijn we met verschillende bussen gegaan.

**E: Maar dat is niet zo'n goede weg.**

F: Dat is wel een goede weg, je raakt eraan gewend.

**E: Hebben jullie alle reisplannen zelf gemaakt? Of hebben jullie ook dingen geboekt?**

F: Nee, we hebben alles zelf gedaan, dus echt een beetje van dag tot dag kijken. Vooral in het begin als je met openbaar vervoer gaan, op een gegeven moment ben je het wel helemaal zat als je 9 uur in de bus zit.

**E: Ja, welke bestemmingen hebben jullie bezocht in het Noord Westen? Je zei Dien Bien Phu en Sa Pa.**

F: Ja in Dien Bien Phu zijn we dus aangekomen toen hebben we eigenlijk direct de bus gepakt naar Muong Lay, Lai Chau, daar hebben we geslapen. Toen zijn we doorgeslagen naar Sa Pa. Vanaf daar zijn we naar Bac Ha gegaan. Van Bac Ha naar Xin Man en van Xin Man naar Ty Quang en toen zijn we hier beland in Ha Noi.

**E: En waren de faciliteiten in die gebieden goed genoeg om te verblijven?**

F: Ja, het is natuurlijk niet super luxe, maar het waren goede hotels. Goede bedden, schoon, warm water.

**E: De volgende vragen gaan over je eigen leven, kun je iets vertellen over je leven in Nederland, dagelijkse activiteiten.**

F: Voorheen toen ik een baan had was het een beetje standaard, 9 tot 5 baan, veel vrienden, weekend sporten, biertjes drinken. Toch eigenlijk wel een redelijk standaard leven.

**E: En wat is belangrijk voor je als je thuis bent?**

F: Vrienden is belangrijk, familie. Ja, natuurlijk inkomsten om wat te kunnen doen.

**E: En hoe zou je jezelf omschrijven in een paar woorden?**

F: Rustig, afwachtend, grappig. Eigenlijk niet zo heel veel.

**E: Wat is belangrijk voor je wanneer je reist? Belangrijke waarden?**

F: Dat is heel verschillend. Als ik een tijdje alleen maar noodles en rijst eet dan wil ik echt weer een keertje biefstuk. Als je een tijdje in armoedige hutjes hebt geslapen zonder warm water, dan wil je wel weer een beetje wat je thuis gewent bent. Aan de andere kant, als je dan weer een paar dagen in Ha Noi bent dan wil je weer wat rustiger. Het hangt een beetje af van hoe lang je in een bepaalde situatie zit. Kijk nu zitten we in een drukke stad en dan vind ik het straks wel weer lekker om ergens in een plek te zitten waar het rustig is. En vooral afwisseling, ik hoef niet een week lang aan het strand te liggen. Ik vind het heel erg leuk om afwisseling te hebben.

**E: Hoe denk je dat jou levensstijl je keuze voor Vietnam beïnvloed?**

F: Of het echt iets met mijn levensstijl te maken heeft. Het heeft meer iets te maken met, je gaat langere tijd op reis, je wilt niet te veel geld uitgeven, dus kies je voor Zuidoost Azië. Het is niet specifiek iets wat met mijn levensstijl te maken heeft.

**E: Maar hoe lang zijn jullie op reis in totaal?**

F: We zijn nu vijf maanden onderweg en ik denk dat we nog 1,5 maand weg blijven.

**E: Ok, de volgende vragen gaan over 'responsible tourism', duurzaam toerisme. Heb jij enige kennis van duurzaam toerisme? Weet je wat het betekent? Heb je er wel eens van gehoord?**

F: Ik heb er wel van gehoord, zelf nog niets van gezien. Ja trouwens wel. Maar dat was in Laos.

**E: Ok, wat heb je daar gezien dan?**

F: Nee dat was the gibbon experience. Ik weet niet of je dat kent?

**E: Ik heb het volgens mij wel iets over gehoord.**

F: In een jungle hebben ze dan allemaal kabelbanen aangelegd en dan kan je honderden meters vanaf roetsjen. Dat komt ten goede aan de mensen daar, de lokale mensen en aan het behoud van het reservaat. Maar in Vietnam heb ik nog niets gezien.

**E: En denk je dat jullie op een duurzame manier reizen? Zijn jullie daar mee bezig, of totaal niet?**

F: Ja, we vliegen zo min mogelijk. We zijn er niet bewust mee bezig. Misschien als je onbewust kijkt we zijn met een motor in plaats van vliegen.

**E: Ja dat is inderdaad al beter, maar niet bewust dus. Maar wat denk je als je er echt over nadent wat je zou kunnen veranderen aan je reisstijl?**

F: Ja dan zou je misschien een bewuste keuze moeten maken om naar gebieden te gaan waar ze dat soort activiteiten hebben, ecotoerisme of iets dergelijks.

**E: Ik denk dat het in Vietnam op dit moment heel erg in opkomst is, ze hebben wel een paar projecten en er zijn een aantal duurzame touroperators in Ha Noi. En die gaan allemaal samenwerken. Dus het begint echt te komen, maar ...**

F: Hoe heet dat?

**E: The responsible travel club. Dit zijn 8 tour operators in Ha Noi die gaan samenwerken en proberen goede producten neer te zetten. Maar er zijn er echt al een paar, Footprint travel en Buffalo Tours die doen echt duurzame reizen.**

F: Dat zag ik ook wel in Laos, daar had je dat ook best heel veel. Daar had je heel veel green adventure geloof ik. Dan betaal je wel meer, maar komt wel een deel ten goede aan een gebied of aan de mensen. Wij hebben ook niet heel veel tripjes gedaan, ook in Sa Pa niet. We hadden er niet zo'n zin in dus we hebben ons er ook niet echt in verdiept of er van dat soort organisaties zijn.

**E: Maar je zei dus dat je in Vietnam nog niets hebt gezien van responsible tourism?**

F: Nee niet wat ik zo 1,2,3 kan bedenken.

**E: Denk je dat het belangrijk is voor Vietnam? Heb je dingen gezien waarvan je denkt dat zou echt wel anders kunnen?**

F: Of het belangrijk is voor Vietnam? Ik weet niet of de mensen er echt mee bezig zijn. Ik denk dat mensen eerder denken van geld verdienen, en niet kijken op wat voor manier. Dus ja dat vind ik lastig om te beantwoorden. Kijk zoals in Sa Pa als je naar zo'n H'mong village gaat vind ik helemaal niets meer met toerisme te maken hebben. Dat is gewoon een grote toeristisch trekpleister. Het heeft niets meer met primitief toerisme te maken. Dus het is voor mij voornamelijk geld verdienen, geld verdienen, geld verdienen.



**E: En heb je nog iets anders dat je veranderd zou willen zien, Sa Pa vond je dus niet echt een succes?**

F: Het primitieve staat mij wel aan, dus als men dat zou kunnen veranderen. Gewoon eerlijk toerisme. De mensen zijn oprecht vriendelijk, oprecht geïnteresseerd in je, en andersom dan is het gewoon een stuk leuker.

**E: Dus gewoon heel kleinschalig houden en niet zoals Sa Pa. Maar dat is ook het plan voor de toekomst inderdaad. En heb je gezien dat door het toerisme de mensen minder arm zijn?**

F: Dat vind ik moeilijk. Als je in Sa Pa bent en je ziet al die restaurants en hotels ik vraag me altijd af, de eigenaren daarvan zijn dat wel Vietnamezen of zijn dat Westelingen die even een restaurantje hebben opgezet en dit laten draaien door een paar Vietnamezen. En zelf in Europa op het strand liggen het hele jaar door. Dus dat vind ik lastig. Het is misschien ook leuker om echt in een typisch Vietnamees hotel te zitten, dan een typisch Westers of backpackers hotel. Aan de andere kant, de sfeer zal minder leuk zijn, maar je ziet dan wel meer de lokale mensen.

**E: Je hebt ook heel veel government hotels, maar de meeste zien er niet heel erg leuk uit.**

F: Ja de sfeer is een stuk minder.

**E: De volgende vragen gaan over informatie die je opzoekt voordat je op reis gaat of als je op reis bent. Ik zie dat jullie de lonely planet gebruiken. Gebruiken jullie ook andere bronnen, Internet of heb je in Nederland al heel veel dingen uitgezocht?**

F: In Nederland hebben we sowieso niets uitgezocht over Vietnam want dat was zo lang weg, nu is het vijf maanden later en zijn we pas in Vietnam. Af en toe gebruiken we wel eens Internet. Dan kijken we wat voor weer het is of nu met het motorrijden dat we gewoon andere verhalen opzoeken hoe hun gereden zijn, wat leuk is om te zien. In bepaalde gebieden of je in kan zien of iets dergelijks.

**E: Maar het meeste gebruiken jullie de lonely planet?**

F: Uh ja, of gewoon door mensen in een hotel te spreken, hoe kun je het beste daar en daar komen. Dus nee het is niet 100% dit boek.

**E: Jullie kijken gewoon op het moment dus, welke informatie hebben we nodig en dan zoeken jullie het op?**

F: Nou ja we leven echt van dag tot dag. We hebben bijvoorbeeld gekeken naar het weer en Ha Long Bay is niet zo goed, dus we hebben niet zo veel zin om naar Ha Long Bay te gaan dan gaan we lekker naar het Zuiden.

**E: Wat was handig om te gebruiken? De lonely planet dus en Internet zei je?**

F: Ja en gewoon de lokale bevolking als je je verstaanbaar kunt maken van beide kanten.

**E: En iets waarvan je denkt dit zou verbeterd kunnen worden?**

F: Het verbaasd mij eigenlijk wel hoe weinig mensen Engels kunnen. Als je kijkt wat we in Laos zagen, wat toch minder ontwikkeld is, maar er wonen ook 23 keer minder mensen dan Vietnam natuurlijk. Vond ik nog dat best veel mensen Engels spraken. Ook in de minder ontwikkelde gebieden qua toerisme. En hier vind ik dat eigenlijk toch best wel tegenvallen. Dus ja, Engelse taal.

**E: Engelse taal. De laatste vragen gaan over je ervaringen in Vietnam. Hoe tevreden ben je met je reis door Vietnam en Noord Vietnam tot nu toe?**

F: Ja best tevreden eigenlijk. Begin, dus de eerste twee dagen toen hadden we echt een beetje een cultuurschok van Laos, zulke vriendelijke mensen, zo aardig, naar Vietnam we ze een beetje bot vonden. Maar wat ik eerder al zei, sinds we die motor hebben lijkt iedereen wel vriendelijker. Als je ook maar stil staan, dan stoppen de mensen ook. Ze zijn heel behulpzaam en we worden uitgenodigd om te blijven eten. Dus ja, heel tevreden. En ook de route die we hebben genomen is gewoon heel mooi. Het is geen alledaagse route die we hebben genomen, niet de highway of zo, dat is zo saai. We hebben een kaart gekocht en daar stond op de scenic route, dus die hebben we gepakt en dat is echt super mooi.

**E: En dan zie je inderdaad ook andere dingen dan de meeste toeristen. Jullie zijn ook in Dien Bien Phu en Sa Pa geweest. Wat vonden jullie daar van? Sa Pa was niet wat.**

F: Sa Pa was aan de ene kant wel leuk omdat we gewoon weer even Westers konden eten en even internetten. We zaten al 1,5 week zonder Internet. Dan heb je weer even dat Westerse wat je wilt hebben. Qua toerisme en dan die H'mong people die altijd iets proberen aan te smeren nee dat vind ik niks. Dien Bien Phu zijn we eigenlijk aangekomen en direct weer weg gegaan maar wat we daar hebben gezien, had ik niet het idee dat ik daar lang wilde zitten.

**E: Ja ik had gehoord dat het een ontzettende toeristenplek was vanwege de oorlog en wat er allemaal gebeurd is, maar ik was er en ik vond het echt niks.**

F: Daar had ik echt de indruk die mensen zijn heel onvriendelijk.

**E: Ja maar ook gewoon niemand kon Engels en ik liep daar in mijn eentje en ik ontmoette niemand. Dus dan loop je daar twee dagen en dan denk je het zou wel leuk zijn om met iemand te kunnen praten. Dus dat is best wel bijzonder. En wat is de meest positieve ervaring die je tot nu toe gehad hebt in Vietnam?**

F: Dat was toen onze motor vlak voor Xin Man kapot ging. Caro ging vooruit om mensen te halen en gelijk moest ze bier gaan drinken. Nee, nee mijn vriend staat daarginds. Dus toen we eindelijk in het dorpje kwamen, die mensen gingen knutselen en wij gingen beneden van die wijn drinken en we kregen noodlesoup, het hele dorp kwam kijken en we mochten overal kijken in het dorp. Dus huisjes in en 's avonds dat we gewoon bij die man thuis, bij zijn familie Tet avond konden vieren. Gewoon eten, drinken en ze gingen met ons mee om een hotel te zoeken. Dat was gewoon echt super vriendelijk, gastvrij. Dat was tot nu toe wel de mooiste ervaring. En de route die je rijdt, door de rijstvelden, door de bergen.

**E: En de meest negatieve ervaring?**

F: Ik weet niet of het een negatieve ervaring is maar in sommige kleinere plaatsen lijken de hotelprijzen wel erg duur. Als je ziet wat je betaald in een klein plaatsje. 200.000 geloof ik, bij een ander is het dan 150.000 dong. Dan ik van klopt dat wel.

**E: Dat ze misschien toeristen meer geld vragen dan de lokale bevolking?**

F: Ja aan de ene kant is het ook wel logisch maar aan de andere kant denk ik van ja volgens mij klopt er iets niet. En misschien dat het ook wel is omdat het Tet is want men zegt dat de prijzen dan sowieso al duurder zijn. En ja, de eerste twee dagen dat we niet echt positieve reacties kregen van de mensen. Dat ze een beetje bot waren, je een beetje aanstaren.

**E: Wat zou er kunnen veranderen om de ervaring positiever te maken. De prijs omlaag dus, en ja de mensen daar kun je weinig aan veranderen natuurlijk.**

F: Ja, maar er hoeft voor mij zoals het nu is niet heel veel te veranderen eigenlijk, ik vind het nu prima. Als de motors maar blijven lopen en we komen van A naar B.

**E: Ja precies.**

F: En de mensen blijven zo, of misschien iets botter maar als dat eenmaal in hun aard zit dan is dat zo. Je raakt er ook aan gewend op een gegeven moment.

**E: Je kunt mensen niet zomaar veranderen. Ben je van plan om terug te komen naar Vietnam in de toekomst denk je?**

F: Nee, dat denk ik niet. Als wij nu helemaal van Noord naar Zuid rijden dan heb je denk ik alles wel gezien. Dan kiezen we liever een andere bestemming.

**E: En zou je Vietnam aanbevelen aan vrienden en familie?**

F: Tot dusver wat we gezien hebben wel. Maar we hebben eigenlijk nog maar een heel klein stukje gezien van het hele Vietnam. Maar qua natuur zou ik het zeker aanraden.

**E: Ok. Mijn laatste vraag. Als je een film zou kunnen maken over Vietnam, Noord West Vietnam waar zou deze dan over gaan? Iets wat je echt zou willen laten zien thuis, dit is Vietnam zoals ik het beleefd heb.**

F: Ja dan komen toch de rijstvelden erin voor, de kleine dorpjes die langs die rijstvelden staan. En hoe de mensen daar bezig zijn. Ze zien er allemaal wel vriendelijk uit. Iedereen zit bij elkaar. Alle kinderen lijken gelukkig. Ondanks dat ze niet teveel hebben. Dus dat zou er zeker in voorkomen. Wijn drinken. Ik zou er wel een positieve film van maken. Natuur, mensen, levensstijl.

**E: Klinkt goed.**

F: Nog wel ja, hopen dat het zo blijft.

**E: Is er iets anders dat je nog zou willen toevoegen?**

F: Misschien dat Noord West informatievoorziening vind ik eigenlijk wel redelijk beperkt. Wij kwamen met geluk een wegenkaart tegen maar daar hebben we wel even voor moeten zoeken. Informatiekantoorjes kun je ook niet echt vinden.

**E: Nee en dan bedoel je vooral in de afgelegen gebieden?**

F: Ja. Het is ook wel logisch natuurlijk. Als er geen toerist komt dan ga je er ook geen kantoorje neerzetten. Dus dan ben je wel echt op zo'n boek aangewezen. En verder succes met je onderzoek en met je afstuderen.

**E: Dankjewel.**