

# Responsible Tourism Guide

## To Tourism Trade Fairs and Exhibitions in Vietnam



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Responsible Tourism Capacity Development Programme

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#### **About this publication**

The *Responsible Tourism Guide for Tourism Trade Fairs & Exhibitions in Vietnam* has been produced by the Environmentally and Socially Responsible Tourism Capacity Development Programme (ESRT) in collaboration with the Vietnam Society of Travel Agents (VISTA) Organising Committee as a part of the preparations for the first Vietnam International Travel Mart Hanoi 2013. The ESRT programme aims to support the Vietnam tourism sector to implement a more responsible and sustainable approach towards tourism development and practice. It is hoped that this publication will provide trade fair and exhibition organisers in Vietnam with a range of practical and low cost strategies that they can implement in order to contribute to more sustainable tourism future for Vietnam.



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# Why do we need a **Responsible Tourism** approach to trade fairs and exhibitions?

Meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) is one of the fastest growing segments within the tourism industry and an important generator of tourism expenditure, investment, foreign exchange earnings and employment.

While national statistics on the size of the industry in Vietnam are difficult to attain, a 1996 study conducted by Vietnam’s General Statistics Office showed that among the 1.85 million foreign tourists traveling to Vietnam in the first six months of the year, as many as 15% (278,000) travelled in combination with attending seminars or conferences; an increase of 26% over the same period in the previous year.

With the *Vietnam Strategy for Tourism Development 2011 – 2020* predicting almost five times more domestic travellers (35 million) by 2015 than international travellers (7.5 million), the total size and value of the MICE segment takes on even greater significance.

However whilst business tourism clearly has a range of positive impacts, it can also create a range of challenges on the local community and natural environment. This is particularly the case with large scale trade fairs and exhibitions which can bring together hundreds, and sometimes thousands of participants to one concentrated destination for a short period of time.

Such events make greater demands on transport infrastructure and destination services including utilities such as power and water which may be already be in limited supply. A high degree of waste is also produced from the often thousands of sheets of paper used to print delegate materials, as well as from food and beverage packaging and waste.

Trade fairs and exhibitions that incorporate a leisure programme can result in masses of tourists descending upon a single natural area or local community, disturbing the natural ecosystem and local people. Business tourists coming from outside destinations often do not learn about the language or culture before they depart due to the short nature of their visit, in turn leading to potential cultural conflict. Moreover, business tourists also tend to be more demanding and expect higher-quality facilities for less – even in impoverished towns and cities.

The importance of business & meetings travel <sup>1</sup>	
Percentage of growth in world trade driven by business travel	33%
Global job creation driven by growth in business travel	400 mill
Percentage of total global job creation driven by growth in business travel	20%
Global business travel expenditure growth forecast for 2011	+9.2%
Global business travel expenditure forecast for 2011	US\$ 1.0 trill
International conventions globally	9,120
Direct spend by international conventions globally	US\$ 15 bill
International conventions in Asia	1,737

<sup>1</sup> World Travel and Tourism Council 2011, *Global Business Travel Spending Outlook, 2011–2015*, International Congress and Convention Association 2010

# How will taking a **Responsible Tourism** approach benefit you?

## **You will meet consumer demand**

Taking a Responsible Tourism approach to your trade fair or exhibition is responding to consumer demand for greater corporate social responsibility. Consumers have greater expectations of businesses and are more vocal in demanding that they have ethical policies, pay their staff fair wages, provide good working conditions, and not harm the environment.

## **It will add value to your product**

A Responsible Tourism approach also adds value to your product. Consumers (public and participants alike), feel good that they are supporting something that is positively contributing to the protection of the environment and is supporting the local people economically and socially. Where price, quality and availability are similar between competing trade fairs / exhibitions, the ethical or responsible element of your trade fair / exhibition may be the tie-breaker.

## **It will generate community support**

By implementing demonstratable measures to protect the environment and positively benefit the local people and economy, you will be more favourably received by the local businesses, community and government. This can create a myriad of opportunities down the track with local partners, customers and collaborators and the community more likely to show an interest and support your event.

## **It will create positive media attention**

Being a responsible trade fair / exhibition can also generate positive local media attention which in turn will help drive sales and create further business opportunities down the track. Taking a Responsible Tourism approach differentiates your event from the rest and

provides a unique angle for press releases that is different to that of standard trade fairs and exhibitions.

## **It will save you money**

By implementing Responsible Tourism measures real cost savings can be achieved. Printing information on double sided paper for example, will achieve an instant 50% reduction in paper cost. Asking staff to switch off their computers at night and installing energy saving modes during the day will reduce energy costs. So too will using natural ventilation in the office or keeping the airconditioner thermostat to 24-26°C. The many Responsible Tourism principles provided in this guide are simple and in most cases inexpensive making financial savings all the more achievable.

# So, what is Responsible Tourism?

As we have just found, tourism brings many positive benefits such as employment, income, and the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, but when not properly managed can bring a range of negative impacts such as over or uneven development, environmental pollution, and cultural conflict from insensitive or disruptive visitors.

Responsible tourism offers a pathway forward to minimise the negative impacts of tourism and enhance its positive impacts. Responsible Tourism is firmly grounded in the principles of sustainable tourism, which aims to:<sup>2</sup>

1. Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity
2. Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their build and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance
3. Ensure viable, long term economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation

Responsible Tourism is however, more than just about achieving sustainability; it requests all of us, from tourists to managers and staff in restaurants and hotels, through to tourism governing authorities, to be active participants in the creating of positive change by making decisions and implementing actions on a daily basis that will maximise economic, social and

environmental benefits and minimise associated negative impacts.

Responsible Tourism is thus an *approach* or method and not a *destination*. The outcome of Responsible Tourism is therefore “better places for people to live in, and for people to visit”,<sup>3</sup> and the measure of success being such things as higher incomes, more satisfying jobs, and improved social, cultural and natural environments.

Key to the success of Responsible Tourism therefore, is an acceptance of responsibility by all stakeholders. Every one of the decisions we make on a daily basis can have an impact on the people and the environment around us. Implementing Responsible Tourism requires us to be guided by our ethics, morals and the laws of our society, and to make decisions as both producers and consumers of tourism that will have the most positive net benefit on the people and environment around us. In short, Responsible Tourism requires us to be **accountable** for our actions (and omissions), to have some **capacity** or capability to act, and to then **respond** to make a positive difference.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> UNEP & WTO 2005, *Making Tourism More Sustainable: A Guide for Policy Makers*, UNEP

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<sup>3</sup> 2002 Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism

<sup>4</sup> Goodwin H. 2011, *Taking Responsibility for Tourism: Responsible Tourism Management*, Goodfellow Publishers Ltd, Oxford, UK

## Planning & preparation

The planning and preparation stage of your trade fair / exhibition involves all of the administration work required to put together a successful event, from establishing a steering committee or events co-ordination team, through to organising logistics, marketing the event to potential sponsors, exhibitors and consumers, making sales, and managing finances. If being a “responsible” trade fair / exhibition is a core characteristic of your event then it is important that you start implementing relevant Responsible Tourism measures from the very beginning.

If not well considered, practices undertaken by the co-ordination team within the office can result in large amounts of paper (and often food) waste, high energy consumption, and water wastage. Inadequate employment conditions and a poor work environment that does not meet (or exceed) legal requirements can also result in unhappy and less productive staff. Moreover, without local stakeholder engagement in the planning of the trade fair / exhibition there is a higher chance of cultural and social problems down the track and lost opportunities that could have been seized.

Some simple responsible measures in planning and preparation that may be implemented include:

### *Environmental considerations*

- Develop a trade fair website and direct all enquiries to the website for information (including your trade fair / exhibition brochure)
- Use an online registration / payment system

- Provide electronic follow-up / confirmation of registrations / bookings / enquiries
- Provide details and promote the use of exhibition booth design companies that incorporate green principles in booth design (e.g. using recyclable walls, plantation timber etc)
- Implement “green office” principles for your management team:
  - Reduce energy consumption (switch off computers and lights when not in use, car pool, video conference, use natural ventilation or keep airconditioning between 24-26°C)
  - Reduce paper and printing and increase recycling (print double sided, use recycled paper and printer cartridges, use scrap paper for notes, don't print emails and read / edit documents on screen)
  - Minimise waste (use crockery not disposables, order food for meetings carefully, provide recycle bins for staff)
  - Save water (use water saving mechanisms such as dual flush toilets and low flow taps in bathrooms, report and act on leaks, ensure taps are completely turned off after use)

### *Social & economic considerations*

- Prioritise the purchase of all materials and services from local producers / suppliers
- Incorporate local businesses / the local community into planning (e.g. as a trade fair advisory committee)

- Provide good employment and working conditions:
  - Pay staff award or above award wages  
Provide industry accepted employment benefits (work health cover, leave entitlements, work hours etc)
  - Provide an adequate work space with suitable furniture, lighting, access to ICT
  - Instigate gender equity employment policies
  - Provide training opportunities for staff
  - Prioritise employment of local staff
- For all non-local delegates include information about the local people, history and culture on the website and information packs (including a list of expected cultural and environmental “Do’s and Don’ts”).

negative impact on the local people and culture. Traditional culture can be eroded if performances are adapted to meet foreign tastes or alternatively performed outside of the original context or intended purpose of the performance. Bringing in performance groups from outside the local area reduces employment opportunities for the local people, and not providing adequate conditions of employment may not only be against the law, but also creates disharmony amongst the group and a potentially lower quality performance as a result. Moreover, taking uninformed visitors on tours to local communities or natural areas can create disturbance to the environment and people and result in culture clash and feelings of resentment amongst the local population.

Simple Responsible Tourism measures that can be implemented in the organisation and operation of entertainment and tours include:

#### *Environmental considerations*

- Respect neighbours by restricting loud noise from musical performers to the day time and within volume limits accepted by council
- Encourage the use of props and stage sets for performers that are made from recycled material or can be reused (e.g. donated to a local school)
- If tours are provided:
  - Maintain small group sizes when visiting natural environments
  - Inform delegates of “Do’s and Don’ts” when visiting natural areas (e.g. Don’t litter (carry out waste), Stay on the trail, Respect wildlife (do not touch or

## **Entertainment & tours**

Combining entertainment such as music, performances, and demonstrations for participants, or even a tours programme for non-local delegates or “hosted buyers” (typically trade fair delegates from overseas who are paid to attend the fair / exhibition with an expectation that some trade will result) is a great way to attract business by creating an additional dimension to the event. A well planned entertainment programme that runs throughout the event can also act to keep consumers at the event longer, thereby increasing the opportunity for sales.

However, when poorly planned or managed the entertainment and tours can have a

- Inform delegates about the importance of the local natural environment such as its biological and social value, the need for conservation etc
- Provide delegates with the opportunity to donate to environmental projects related to the places visited
- Inform delegates about the local culture, its importance, social issues and challenges etc
- Inform delegates of “Do’s and Don’ts” when visiting local communities (e.g. Don’t take photos of locals without permission, Purchase locally made handicrafts etc)
- Visit local family restaurants and cafes instead of chain-restaurants
- Foster ethnic and gender diversity with guides
- Provide delegates the opportunity to donate to community development projects related to the places visited
- Give delegates the opportunity to purchase handicrafts from local artisans

*Social & economic considerations*

- Use local performance groups and prioritise marginalised people (e.g. women, youth, ethnic minorities)
- Pay performance groups award or above award rates
- Provide adequate breaks for performers and the provision of refreshments or meals for long performance programmes
- Provide information and interpretation to the audience on the meaning and significance of the performance as well as the background of the people (e.g. through announcements before or after the performance, including information in programmes / brochures)
- Provide a space for local handicraft merchants to display and trade their handicrafts to delegates.
- Incorporate local performers into conference dinners and special events
- If tours are provided:
  - Focus on local experiences
  - Employ local guides with award or above award employment conditions

**Destination & venue**

The foremost consideration when selecting a location for your trade fair / exhibition is for it to be accessible to your target market, whilst the main consideration in selecting a venue typically relates to capacity requirements and budgetary constraints. Tourism however, is also about creating and selling experiences, and so the destination and venue of your trade fair / exhibition should also be appropriately chosen to generate a positive and memorable experience for exhibitors and participants that is also reflective of the trade fair / exhibition theme and positively promotes the local culture and environment.

Placing a large scale trade fair / exhibition in a small community can result in strains on the local resources such as power, water and food which may already be in limited supply. Using



a venue that does not reflect well on the local culture or environment in its architectural design does not create a feeling of place and loses an opportunity to promote the local culture. Moreover, poor policies and practices on the side of the venue can also diminish the “green” credentials of your trade fair / exhibition if they do not follow good Corporate Social Responsibility measures (e.g. employing local staff, implementing strategies to minimise impacts on the environment, supporting local community initiatives etc).

Simple Responsible Tourism measures in destination and venue selection include:

#### *Environmental considerations*

- Select a destination for the trade fair / exhibition that is compatible with the event’s purpose and delegate demographics
- Select a trade fair / exhibition venue that employs “green office” principles (see Planning section), has environmental targets, or actively supports environmental campaigns
- Select a trade fair / exhibition venue that positively reflects the natural environment within its architecture, design, activities and services
- Select a trade fair / exhibition venue that also has lodging
- Select a centrally located trade fair / exhibition venue for public transport or within walking distance
- Provide sufficient rubbish bins (including recycle bins) for delegates around the venue in easy to access places

#### *Social & economic considerations*

- Select a venue that positively reflects the culture of the place / people / culture within its architecture, design, activities and services
- Select a venue that is locally owned, employs local staff and has good CSR policies (e.g. that looks after the environment, has good working and employment conditions, engages in community projects etc)

## **Transport**

Good planning of trade fairs / exhibitions carefully considers accessibility for exhibitors as well as participants; namely, are there sufficient modes of transport that are reasonably priced with the required capacity to deliver all the delegates to the trade fair / exhibition?

Large trade fairs / exhibitions that convene hundreds or thousands of exhibitors and participants can create a strain on transport systems, generate additional localised traffic, and create air and noise pollution.

Simple Responsible Tourism measures in transportation management include:

#### *Environmental considerations*

- Encourage delegates to walk or make bicycles accessible for use to get to the venue
- Obtain a “cheap tickets” deal with public transportation companies for delegates
- Encourage car-pooling for staff and local delegates to / from the venue by providing a car pooling registration service

- Use vehicles that are well-maintained and have green credentials (e.g. electric carts, hybrid cars, gas powered buses etc)
- If transport assistance is being provided to non-local delegates, provide and clearly promote opportunities for travellers to consider the benefits of offsetting their travel with carbon credits

#### *Social & economic considerations*

- Organise local cyclo drivers to be available for delegates (for tours or to get to / from the venue to their hotel) and promote on trade fair website, in brochures, information packs etc

## **Food and beverages**

With most trade fairs and exhibitions typically running over multiple days the provision of food and beverages is a necessity if you want to keep your participants and exhibitors happy and energised throughout the day. A well-planned tourism trade fair / exhibition will also use this as an opportunity to showcase the local cuisine.

However, with large trade fairs and exhibitions the provision of meals can also result in a lot of waste from left over / uneaten food and packaging from snack food, softdrinks cans and plastic drink bottles. Using imported ingredients will provide less benefits to local suppliers and creates more pollution due to the longer distances the food travels to reach the destination, and the serving of exotic protected species is not only unlawful but is adding to the endangerment of the species and the destruction of natural ecosystems.

Key considerations for responsible food and beverage provision include:

#### *Environmental considerations*

- Use ceramic bowls and plates and glasses to serve all food and beverages instead of paper or plastic plates, bowls, cups etc
- Only recommend nearby restaurants or cafes that do not sell food made from wild animals and plants or are protected by law and international protocols
- If food and beverages are being organised / provided by trade fair organisers:
  - Select buffet style menus for closed lunches and donate leftovers to eliminate waste
  - Encourage the use of ingredients that are organic, fair trade, and / or include vegetarian options
  - Ensure caterers adhere to a no-waste policy for containers
  - Ensure menus are comprised of seasonal and local foods to limit the transportation of goods

#### *Social & economic considerations*

- If possible, contract local caterers for food and beverage requirements, in particular companies that employ and train street kids or support social causes, and pay award or above award rates
- Donate leftover food to a local food bank or soup kitchen, or separate for pickup by a composting operation or local farm.

## Conferences and seminars

A conference or seminar program that is run in tandem with a trade fairs / exhibitions that is well considered can add to the learning experience of exhibitors and participants, enhance trade through the inclusion of topics that identify relevant business trends and opportunities, generate additional media attention, and create another draw card for participants to attend the event.

On the flip side, conferences and seminars for large groups of people that include handouts can generate a lot of paper waste, significant energy is required to aircondition rooms and gift packs can often be little more than cheap throw away souvenirs.

Some tips for making your conference or seminar programme more responsible include:

### *Environmental considerations*

- Set up a downloads desk instead of printing handouts
- If printed handouts are required, ensure they are on double-sided, recycled, non-bleached paper
- Use online survey feedback forms
- Provide water in jugs and glasses to delegates rather than plastic bottles
- Use conference and seminar rooms that have low energy lights and natural ventilation
- For airconditioned rooms keep thermostat between 24-26°C
- Recycle all left over paper material or reuse as scrap paper note books
- Provide recycle bins for paper products

### *Social & economic considerations*

- Use handicraft products produced by local artisans or marginalised groups when offering delegate “gift packs” including information about the producers.

*The European Union Funded Environmentally and Socially Responsible  
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