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## Vietnamese Domestic Tourism: An Investigation of Travel Motivations

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*This article approaches domestic tourism in Vietnam from a native Asian perspective aiming to examine Vietnamese domestic travel motivations. This quantitative study is based on a self-administered questionnaire to survey 230 Vietnamese domestic travellers. Results highlight the significant roles of the employer sponsoring the trip, family, travel promotion, and favourable weather in determining travel, in addition to their motivations to seek time for leisure and recreation. Moreover, the study detected a perception gap between the tourist's demand and the travel agent's supply. The behaviour of Vietnamese domestic travellers reflects the characteristics of a transition economy and reveals certain aspects which are also peculiar to other Asian countries.*

**Keywords:** Domestic Tourism, Travel Motivations, Social Tourism, Urban Tourism, Vietnam

*Die hier präsentierte quantitative Studie untersucht Reisemotive vietnamesischer InlandstouristInnen mittels eines an 230 ProbandInnen gerichteten Fragebogens. Die Ergebnisse heben neben dem Motiv der Freizeitgestaltung und Erholung die signifikante Rolle der Reisefinanzierung durch ArbeitgeberInnen, der Familie, der Tourismuswerbung sowie der Wetterbedingungen für die Reiseentscheidung hervor. Außerdem ergab die Studie, dass sich die touristischen Motivationen vom Angebot der Reiseagenturen unterscheiden. Die Autorinnen argumentieren, dass das Urlaubsverhalten vietnamesischer InlandstouristInnen Charakteristika eines im wirtschaftlichen Umbruch befindenden Landes widerspiegelt sowie Aspekte aufzeigt, die auch in anderen asiatischen Ländern eine wichtige Rolle spielen.*

**Schlagworte:** Inlandstourismus, Reisemotive, Sozialer Tourismus, Städtetourismus, Vietnam

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## **Introduction**

Over the last two decades, South-East Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific have experienced the most rapid growth in regional tourist arrivals in the world, averaging 9.2 percent per annum (Hitchcock, King, & Parnwell, 2009). Since the 1990s tourism has become one of South-East Asia's foremost industries (Hitchcock, King, & Parnwell, 1993). The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2010) estimates that travel and tourism contributed USD59 billion to the region's GDP, and created 8.2 million jobs in 2010 and expect an average growth rate of 6.6 percent per annum between 2010 and 2020. Tourism in the region has gradually recovered from the Asian financial crisis in 1997, the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemics in 2003 and the massive earthquake and tsunami in 2004 that seriously shrank international demand. The significant growth of regional tourism despite these crises and disasters has proven that the tourism industry in South-East Asia has not been over-dependent on international arrivals and indeed has greatly benefited from its massive domestic demand. Vietnam's tourism development also shares similar attributes (Suntikul, Butler, & Airey, 2008).

Vietnam has been recognised as an emerging economy with a significant and growing tourism market (Bennet, 2009). The country has undergone radical economic reform since 1986 (Berger, 2005), turning since the 2000s into an emerging low-cost destination for international tourists. Besides this significant increase in international arrivals, Vietnam has a population of 89 million people, with one in every three residents travelling domestically in 2009: this made for a total of 25 million domestic travellers (VNAT, 2010). While the significance of this huge domestic market is ignored by government policy, planning, and promotion efforts, there has been some attention paid to the emergence of domestic tourism in Vietnam in the literature (Gillen, 2008; 2010).

The current Western approach to tourism as a subject of study in South-East Asia, and to Vietnam in particular, often places domestic travel in a marginal position, as Alneng (2002a) claims in *The Modern Does Not Cater for the Native*. This treatment of native tourists coupled with the negligence of the local government in recognising this sector has hindered the progress of research on domestic travel in South-East Asia. Despite the potential challenge of mismatching Western travel theory to native

(South-East) Asian travellers, and the lack of well-established theories to fully explain the behaviour of (South-East) Asian travellers, it is now timely to investigate this relatively under-researched topic of domestic travel in South-East Asia through the case of Vietnam.

This research thus views Vietnamese domestic tourism within the context of the transition from a centrally planned to a market-driven economy; providing an analysis of Vietnamese domestic tourist motivations from a native Asian perspective. One author was born and raised in Vietnam and both authors have had training and consulting experience in tourism-related institutions in Vietnam. In addition, the survey instrument was in Vietnamese, and was carried out with Vietnamese participants, blending the unique characteristics of Vietnamese tourism with existing Western theories. Addressing the lack of reliable statistics on domestic tourist behaviours, the researchers conducted an empirical study to elaborate motivations and travel patterns, complementing simple descriptive government tourism data. Understanding the characteristics of domestic tourists is vital to comprehending the challenges for the emerging tourism industry in Vietnam in particular and in South-East Asia in general.

### ***Literature Review***

The review aims to provide contextual and theoretical grounds for the study. It starts with an overview of tourism studies in the context of South-East Asia and points to the limitations of existing approaches. This is followed by reviews of current research on domestic tourism in Asia and Vietnam, highlighting research gaps to be addressed. Finally, a theoretical foundation for the study is built upon the existing literature on tourist motivation, identifying some influential socio-cultural factors.

### ***South-East Asia Regional Studies – Tourism in Context***

The term ‘South-East Asia’ was created primarily during World War II to impose conceptual, geographical, and strategic order on a medley of territories lying to the east of India and south of China (Kratoska, Raben, & Nordholt, 2005). The South-East Asia region includes Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Brunei, Laos,

Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar and latterly East Timor. Tourism within a regional boundary is a well-justified subject of South-East Asian studies according to Hitchcock, King and Parnwell (2009). First, there is an official tourism region of 'South-East Asia' recognised by the Pacific Asia Tourism Association (PATA). Second, the traditions of the colonial era in the region make tourism here a favourable topic for study in Western literature.

South-East Asia, as a part of the developing world, has been addressed in the tourism literature largely from an economic angle where tourism contributes to the local economy and in the context of host-guest relations between the rich, mainly tourist-generating regions of the North, and the poor, mainly tourist-receiving regions of the South (Ghimire, 2001; Selwyn, 1990; Winter, Teo, & Chang, 2009a) including Vietnam (Biles, Lloyd, & Logan, 1999, Lloyd, 2003; 2004). The region is known for its diverse cultures, rich heritage, and inexpensive tourism services, making it a favourite destination for young Western backpackers seeking authentic experiences with a limited budget (Cohen, 2004; 2006; Richards & Wilson, 2004). From an anthropological perspective, South-East Asia is seen as an indigenous society that primarily creates a kind of fantasy to motivate travelling here amongst Westerners (Burns, 2004; van Egmond, 2007). This approach to South-East Asian studies reflects a colonial view that places the Northern rich tourists at the centre. However, over the last several decades, South-East Asia's economy has dramatically developed, leading to an expansion of the tourism industry (Hitchcock et al., 2009, Winter et al., 2009a) helping to reposition the region on the world tourism map. Consequently, domestic tourism in South-East Asia has increasingly been recognised as a novel topic in tourism research (Singh, 2009), adding a new perspective to the existing colonial, Western-centric view on South-East Asia tourism (Winter, Teo, & Chang, 2009b).

### ***Domestic Tourism in Asia***

Domestic tourism is defined as "journeys and visits within a person's home country" (Singh, 2009, p. 1) and the domestic tourist is understood as "any person residing in a country who travels to a place within the country, outside his/her usual environment for a period not exceeding 12 months" (UNTWO, 1995, p. 4). Indeed, from the academic and policy perspective, domestic tourism is a poor and undervalued

cousin to international tourism, particularly in Asia (Richter, 1989). Earlier research on the domestic tourist in Asia was initiated by Richter's (1989) seminal work *The Politics of Tourism in Asia*. It focuses on the unique circumstances that characterise tourism in Asian countries. More recently, *Domestic Tourism in Asia* edited by Singh (2009) brings the Asian domestic tourist into the centre of the discussion, as do Winter et al. (2009a) in *Asia on Tour: Exploring the Rise of Asian Tourism*. China and India, the most populous countries in the world, also have the two largest domestic tourism markets. Consequently, research on domestic tourism cannot ignore these markets. Pilgrimage travel is popular amongst Indian domestic travellers (Edensor, 1998; Ghimire, 2001; Singh, 2005) as well as for the Vietnamese (Alneng, 2009) while research on Chinese domestic tourists reveals a focus on different motivations such as family togetherness, company-sponsored trips (Chan, 2006) and normative destination choices (Nyiri, 2006).

The ongoing growth of Asian tourism demands a reappraisal of how tourism is analysed and conceptualised (Winter et al., 2009b). For example, Alneng (2002a) states that some patterns of Asian domestic travellers may be different to those of their Western counterparts. Studying the symbolism of the World Heritage Site the Taj Mahal that appeals to the native Indian tourist, led Edensor (1998) to conclude that Western travel behaviour theories might be little applicable to Asian tourists. In addition, Chan (2006, p. 205) calls the behaviour of searching for modernity by Chinese travellers "inadequacy", which is similar to what Oakes (1998, p. 229) labels "false modernity" in comparison to Western assumptions. Another study of a Chinese scenic spot by Nyiri (2006) records a reverse perception of destination attributes when domestic tourists are compared to their Western counterparts. Similarly, Gillen (2008) addresses these points directly in relation to Vietnamese. These findings from previous studies may provide some indication of what the Vietnamese domestic tourist might be like in terms of behaviour, beyond the explanations offered by existing Western travel theories.

### ***An Overview of Domestic Tourism in Vietnam***

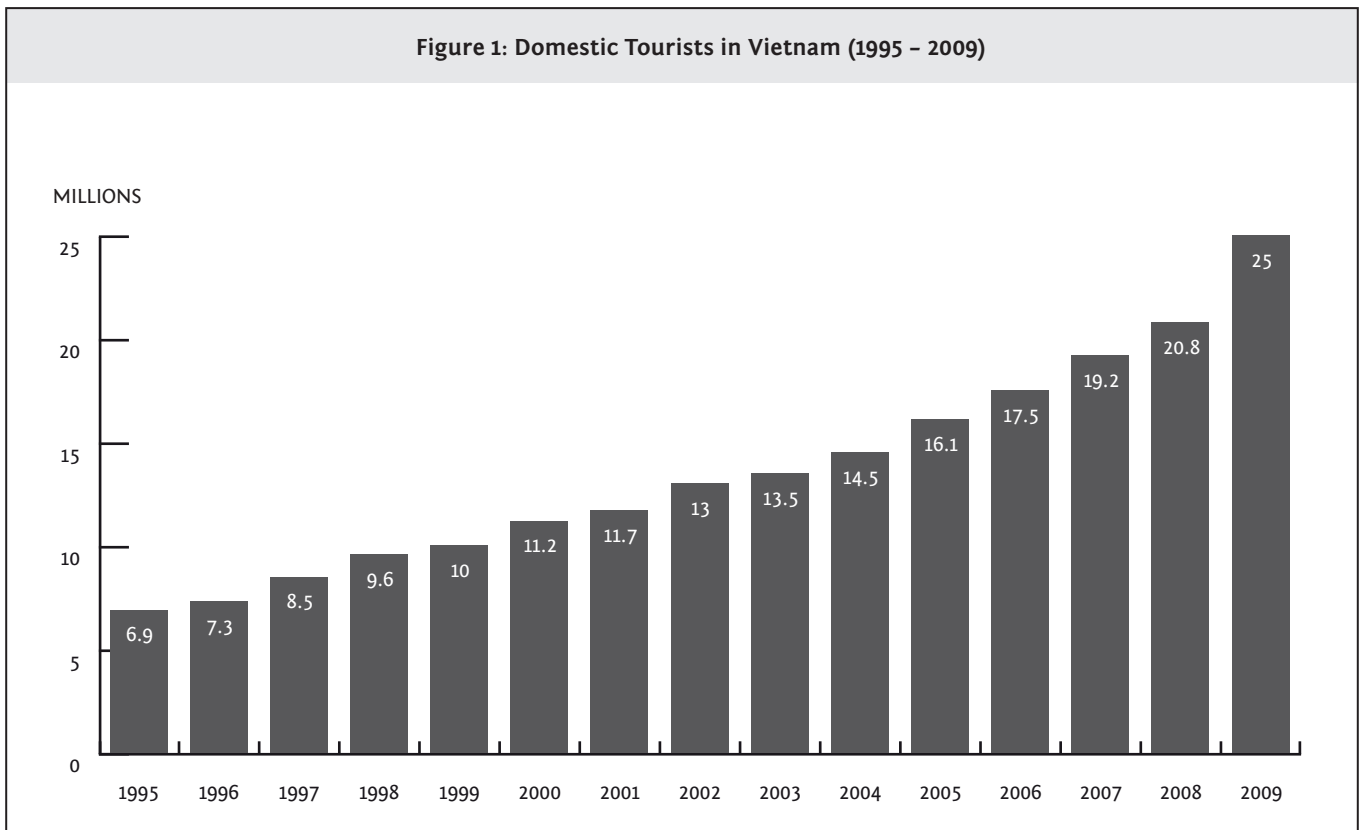
Vietnam obtained membership in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1995, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in 1998 and the World Trade

Organisation (WTO) in 2007. These memberships hastened Vietnam's integration into the world economy, and facilitated Vietnam's active participation in regional integration initiatives, including tourism. Tourism in Vietnam has thus been the focus of a number of anthropological studies addressing host (Vietnamese) and guest (foreign tourist) perspectives (Alneng, 2002a; 2002b; Chan, 2006; Michaud & Turner, 2006). In criticising the anthropological approach as a superficial 'looking glass', Alneng (2002a) calls for addressing a more comprehensive picture of the Vietnamese as tourists. His latest publication (Alneng, 2009) on Zen tourism is a pioneering attempt to understand pilgrimage tourism in Vietnam. Michaud & Turner (2006) discuss the blend between market-driven demand and centrally-planned command economies that produce a form of social tourism sponsored by their employers called *bien che*. This occurs when the person who is on the permanent payroll of an organisation receives a company-sponsored holiday as part of the organisation's employment package.

From the standpoint of the South-East Asian tourism industry, domestic travellers are seen as a primary market, now and in the future. In Vietnam, economic achievements have led to the emerging urban middle class being a driving force for consumption. As a matter of fact, with the global recession in full swing, tourists are trying to save money yet still travel, so travel within their own country is an attractive option. In addition, domestic tourists can stimulate the local economy by reducing overseas travel. As a consequence, the number of domestic tourists in Vietnam has increased almost threefold in 15 years, peaking in 2009 at 25 million tourists (Figure 1), nearly reaching the projection by the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) of 30 million domestic trips by 2010 (VNAT, 2007). This spectacular growth in domestic travel and tourism has been caused by both economic and social factors.

Vietnam has the sixth largest population in Asia with 89 million people in 2009, of which 68.3 percent lies within the working age of 15-64 and 29.6 percent are urban residents, according to the General Statistics Office (GSO, 2006b). In terms of economic development, the GDP per capita of Vietnamese has increased sevenfold over the last 15 years, resulting in USD700 in 2007. The continued increase in disposable income opens additional opportunities for the development of domestic tourism. A 2005 survey (GSO, 2006a) reveals that the majority of domestic visitors travelled independently, arranging their own itineraries (88.1 percent). The average expenditure

Figure 1: Domestic Tourists in Vietnam (1995 – 2009)



Source: Vietnam Administration of Tourism (VNAT, 2010)

per domestic tourist travelling independently was USD118 for an average of 3.5 days, around USD35 per day.

The major problems with existing tourism databases in Vietnam are that the patterns of domestic tourists are much more complicated than reported, well beyond the simple descriptive statistics in national surveys and official government documentation. This gap signifies the need to conduct an empirical study informed by a framework based on theories of travel behaviours.

### ***Theoretical Foundations***

The theoretical framework for this study is drawn from a functional approach to travel demand, including economic factors together with a socio-psychological approach dealing with intrinsic factors. Ryan (2003, p. vii) has confirmed it is necessary to adopt both in an approach to the study of recreational tourism: “In one sense economic factors enable holiday choice to be exercised while the social and psychologi-



cal variables help to shape the nature of choice to be made ... The factors are interdependent". These factors such as income, availability of time, and favourable weather primarily determine the propensity to travel. Ryan (2003) defines economic factors as level of income and the cost of travel. Several studies have confirmed the impacts of income in generating travel demand (Crouch, 1995; Lim, 1997; Morley, 1992). Similarly, Leiper (2004) states that to turn needs into demand, the persons must have enough money. In addition, the impacts of time, in regards to seasonality and weather conditions, are specified as influencing travel demand (Goh & Law, 2002). There is also growing debate on climatic impacts on travel demand (de Freitas, 2005; Hamilton & Tol, 2004; Lise & Tol, 2002). Specifically, Martín and Belén (2005) consider the influence that climate and weather exert on the geographical space, demand, supply, and market agents of the tourism system.

From the social and psychological perspectives, the theoretical framework of the study is therefore grounded in various theories of tourist motivations. Western motivational theory in tourism is marked by a seminal empirical study by Dann (1977) who introduces 'push' and 'pull' factors. Iso-Ahola (1982; 1980) defines the key components of a satisfactory experience as both intrinsic motivation, i.e. psychological rewards from participation in leisure activities, and extrinsic motivation, i.e. the pressures of daily life. Mayo and Jarvis (1981) mention two types of motivation: physiological and psychological. Motivation for travel and tourism changes with experience as a longitudinal dimension, labelled as a 'travel career' by Pearce (1988). He also proposes a travel-need model based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Further work by Pearce on the social role of tourist has an emphasis on the role of reference groups (2005).

In the study of domestic Vietnamese travel patterns, it would be erroneous not to mention the socio-cultural background of these tourists that influences their behaviour (Nash, 1996). Vietnam shares many characteristics of Asian culture, placing great value on family relationships (Reid, 1999). Family ties are one of the factors strongly influencing Asian travellers (Chan, 2006; Guo, 2006). The deep value placed on family in Asian societies can be hypothesised to influence the Vietnamese domestic traveller's behaviour.

The economic background of the country should also be noted. The tourism system in Vietnam reflects certain characteristics of a transitional economy transforming from a centrally-planned to market-oriented system (Bennet, 2009; Berger, 2005),

for example in the type of tourism products and experiences, such as the resort visit discussed below. Thus, in this study the researchers incorporate various social, cultural, and economic elements of contemporary Vietnam into the design of the instrument.

### ***Methodology***

This exploratory study aims to generate a profile of Vietnamese domestic travellers by highlighting their demographic characteristics, travel patterns, and motivations through the use of a quantitative questionnaire. The methods used to conduct the study will be discussed in terms of the development of the survey instrument, the choice of participants, and the data analysis.

### ***The Instrument***

The study adopted three different strategies to increase the validity of the survey instrument. Firstly, the items on the travel demand and motivational scales were informed both by existing theories in the literature and by qualitative interviews with a number of domestic tour operators. Secondly, in order to be comparable to previous surveys of the GSO, the categorical design of questions in the demographics and the travel patterns sections were based on categories commonly used in the GSO's travel survey. Finally, the survey items were reviewed and amended through several discussions with tour companies for their feedback. Based on the suggestions of tour operators, a new element of travel demand was hypothesised: the influence of promotional campaigns by the tour companies. The questionnaire consisted of four main sections arranged into three pages presented in Vietnamese. The first section asked about the travel patterns of the travellers. The second part investigated the demographic characteristics of the travellers. The major part of the questionnaire covered six scales to measure demand and motivation, including the factors of weather, timing, promotional activities, economic factors, reference group influences, and psychological factors. Each factor included five smaller statements that were divided into five point scales (1 – 'highly disagree' to 5 – 'highly agree'). The survey items are in Table 3.

### ***The Participants***

The participants were Vietnamese who travelled to Thac Da Resort for a weekend visit. Thac Da is an all-inclusive resort located some 70 kilometres from Hanoi. This mountainous destination resort has increasingly become a popular destination for city residents from Hanoi to spend their weekend at. The survey was carried out in Vietnamese over a three-week period in October 2007. Of the 300 questionnaires distributed there were 244 usable surveys, while 14 were incomplete, leaving a response rate of 81 percent. Participant demographic details are in Table 1.

### ***The Analysis***

The data was analysed using SPSS 15. The demographic characteristics and travel patterns were analysed descriptively. Factor analysis was used to explore travel demand and motivational factors. There were 26 motivational items for factor analysis with the principal component method and promax rotation. There were 230 cases available for analysis, which imposed a limitation because factor analysis should include 10 respondents for each item (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Pett, Lackney, & Sullivan, 2003). However, the sample was not too far from the desirable 260 cases (for 26 motivational items). An exploratory factor analysis was used. Eight factors emerged from the initial solution. Items with low communality (less than .50) and items with a less than .40 loading on any one factor were removed one at a time. Two factors were found to be trivial factors with only one item, therefore these were removed from the analysis. After removing each item, another factor analysis was run to fine-tune the results. The final six-factor solution retained 16 items, accounted for 66 percent of the variance. Summated scale was computed and rescaled (1 to 5). Means and standard deviation for these summated scales were calculated (Table 3).

### ***Findings and Discussion***

The findings from the survey are structured into three parts. The first part describes the demographic characteristics of the respondents (Table 1), followed by the second part highlighting their travel patterns (Table 2), with finally the results of factor

analysis on 26 items on demand and motivation being presented (Table 3).

With regards to the demographics of the respondents, the proportion of male

Table 1: Sociodemographic Characteristics of Respondents		
	N	Percent
..... Gender .....		
Male	95	41.3
Female	135	58.7
..... Age .....		
Under 20	10	4.3
20 – 29	112	48.7
30 – 39	33	14.3
40 – 49	47	20.4
50 – 59	22	9.6
Over 59	6	2.6
..... Residency .....		
City	196	85.2
Small Town (Near City)	13	5.7
Rural Town	7	3.0
Other	14	6.1
..... Occupation .....		
Manager/Director	29	12.6
Professional (Doctor, Lawyer, Teacher, etc.)	24	10.4
Technical (Technician, Nursing, etc.)	11	4.8
Office Worker/Administration	62	27.0
Service/Salesperson	18	7.8
Worker/Peasant Farmer/Manual Worker	16	7.0
Student	49	21.3
Other	21	9.1
..... Economic Sector .....		
State-Owned	106	46.1
Private (Non-Foreign-Invested)	59	25.7
Foreign-Invested	28	12.2
Self-Employed	37	16.1
..... Annual Income .....		
Under 10m VND	58	25.2
10 – 19.9m VND	40	17.4
20 – 39.9m VND	35	15.2
40 – 59.9m VND	46	20.0
60 – 79.9m VND	20	8.7
80 – 99.9m VND	11	4.8
100 – 119.9m VND	10	4.3
Over 120m VND	10	4.3

Source: Authors' Survey

and female respondents was 41.3 percent and 58.7 percent respectively. Regarding employment, 46.1 percent were employed in the public sector, with the rest in the private, foreign-invested, and self-employed sectors (25.7, 12.2, and 16.1 percent respectively). More than 80 percent of the respondents were within the 20-49 years age range, the working and childbearing period. Those age groups under 50 make up the majority of the current and potential future domestic market in Vietnam tourism. Distribution of annual gross income was 25.2 percent for “under VND10 million” (equivalent to USD700) and 17.4 percent for “VND10-19.9 million” (USD700-1,200) income groups. The potential lucrative market for tourism is the income group of VND20 million (USD1,200) and over, with 15.2 percent with an average annual income of “VND20-39.9 million” (USD1,200-2,400), 20 percent with “VND40-59.9 million” (USD2,400-3,600), and 8.7 percent with “VND60-79.9 million” (USD3,600-4,800). Based on these responses, the representation of

the sample is applicable to the overall population found in the GSO's 2005 survey. However, the sample reflects an imbalance in the frequency representing occupational groups. As seen in Table 1, almost half of the sample was in the office worker or administration and student categories. There is a disparity of average income between the surveyed respondents and the GSO's samples.

In terms of the travel patterns, the majority (72.6 percent) of respondents choose July, August, and September as a time to travel. This information is congruent with the high season of Vietnamese domestic tourism. The next most popular travel periods were from April to June, and from January to March, (13.5 and 8.7 percent respectively). These periods are the shoulder seasons in Vietnamese tourism. Holiday travel was often organised with family (42.6 percent) or friends (29.1 percent). Domestic tourists travelled with partners (11.7 percent), and other regular contacts, such as colleagues (9.1 percent). A few domestic tourists went alone (6.1 percent) and only 1.3 percent participated in organised tours or group travel. Vietnamese domestic tourists prefer to organise their own tours as opposed to purchasing package tours (59.6 and 40.4 percent respectively). The major source of travel information was from friends (40.4 percent), followed by the internet (28.3 percent), past experience (25.2 percent), and guidebooks (21.3 percent). Travel agents, tour operators and brochures played a very minor role (less than 15 percent) in travel decisions. These figures do not deviate from the general domestic travellers' survey by the government (GSO, 2006b).

The purpose of factor design for the survey is to identify factors that influence travel demand and motivation of Vietnamese domestic tourists. The

Table 2: Travel Patterns		
	N	Percent
..... Travel Time .....		
Jan – Mar	20	8.7
Apr – Jun	31	13.5
Jul – Sep	167	72.6
Oct – Dec	12	5.2
..... Travel Partners .....		
Alone	14	6.1
Your partner	27	11.7
Family (with children)	69	30.0
Family (no children)	29	12.6
Friends	67	29.1
A tour group	3	1.3
Other	21	9.1
..... Travel Arrangements .....		
Tour package	93	40.4
Independent	137	59.6
..... Source of Information .....		
Friends	93	40.4
Past experience	58	25.2
Internet	65	28.3
Tour operator	3	1.3
Travel agent	33	14.3
Television	37	16.1
Magazine	41	17.8
Brochure	34	14.8
Guidebook	49	21.3
Other	21	9.1

Source: Authors' Survey

six-factor solutions include: weather, timing, promotions, income, reference groups, and a psychological element. The result from the analysis revealed a different six-factor structure. Two original factors, time and reference groups were diluted. Two valid items of the time factor (*when I have free time, children have school holidays*) were retained but merged into other two different factors. In a similar fashion, two items in reference groups (*employer sponsorship* and *family suggestion*) were retained but became two different new factors. Two new factors were formulated capturing the influence from employer and family on travel motivation. Items in the company factor were *employers arrange holiday* and *employer's sponsorship*. In the newly formed family factor, three items are *family suggestion* (designated under the reference group), *strengthen family togetherness* (designated for the psychological factor) and *children have school holidays* (designated for the time factor). The dissolution of the timing and reference group factors suggested that these elements might not be determinants of travel motivation.

The formulation of two new factors showed that the family and the employer played a more important role than previously anticipated in travel decision-making. The most stable factor was promotions and travel cost, which retained three out of five items. The weather factor retained only two items. The psychological factor had two original design items and a new item (*when I have free time*), so the factor was renamed as 'relaxation'. Detailed results of the factor analysis are shown in Table 3.

The first factor is called 'employer sponsorship'. This factor relates to the practice of social tourism that Michaud and Turner (2006) called *bien che* and accounted for the largest variance (21.24 percent). As 80 percent of the respondents were in the working age group, this might explain the significant role of their employer. The employer involvement in an individual's travel decision has been measured by both the dimensions of timing, when the employer arranges the holiday, and the financial sponsorship of the trip. This characteristic type of travel results from the pre-market economy socialist era, when all aspects of a state employee's life were taken care of by their employer, whose duty was to keep the worker's spirits high. The findings also reflect an ongoing tradition inherited from the communist era before 1986 when the state owned enterprises (SOE) were the most powerful sector in the economy and which had the money, power, and contacts to be able to offer employees free travel in the summer holidays. Despite of the changing role of SOEs in Vietnam after 'doi moi',

this ‘employer sponsorship’ tradition still plays a crucial role in building corporate culture and given birth to an unique corporate tourism product in Vietnam termed ‘team building’. The destination for the employer-sponsored trip as part of social tourism is usually selected collectively or by the head of the unit (Michaud & Turner, 2006). This free trip motivates individuals to travel with co-workers. It is a chance for employees to get to know each other and become closer in order to foster a shared organisational culture. In the new post-socialist Vietnam this *bien che* terminology truly reflects the purpose of employer-sponsored holiday, which is no longer only limited to government workers and SOEs. This practice as a motivational factor has been discussed on a limited basis in Western tourism literature, perhaps simply because it was an exclusive product of a marriage between socialist philosophy and market-driven demand. Vietnamese employers have utilised the company trip as a fringe benefit for workers and also to strengthen the team spirit and collectivism – a vital part of Eastern business culture that is comparable to similar patterns of Chinese travellers found by Chan (2006).

Table 3: Factor Analysis of Motivational Items				
	Mean	SD	Loading	Variance
EMPLOYERS' SPONSORSHIP	3.05	0.8		21.24
.Employer-arranged holidays			0.86	
.Employers' sponsorship			0.81	
RELAXATION	3.32	0.93		12.56
.Change of everyday routine			0.84	
.When I have free time			0.8	
.Reduce stress			0.63	
PROMOTION	3.23	0.87		9.12
.Advertisements are attractive			0.92	
.New products launched			0.75	
.Great discount and promotions			0.6	
COST	2.59	0.86		8.76
.Travel greatly affects my income			0.83	
.Sharing cost with a group			0.68	
.Free trips from my company			0.49	
FAMILY	2.77	0.87		7.42
.Family suggestion			0.78	
.Strengthen family togetherness			0.67	
.Children have school holidays			0.63	
WEATHER	3.75	0.72		6.98
.Safe enough to travel			0.83	
.Fit the form of travel			0.8	

Source: Authors' Survey



The second factor, named 'relaxation', includes the items of *change of everyday routine, when I have free time*, and *reduces stress*, accounting for 12.56 percent of the variance. It corresponded to Iso-Ahola's (1982) theory that travelling is primarily a mode of escape. In a state of disequilibrium, people either try to find more or less stimulation to satisfy their needs and return balance to their life. In today's Vietnamese society, people can be over-stimulated by stress at home or at work, thus they often try to free themselves from daily hassles and to seek a sense of relaxation and renewal.

The third factor 'promotion' and the fourth factor 'cost' explained 9.12 percent and 8.76 percent of the total variance. These factors reflected the way in which income and financial arrangements affect travel decisions. The importance and relatively high mean value of the 'promotion' factor (3.23) corresponded to a moderate degree of the agreement of tourists to the price discounting strategy used by domestic tour operators. However, low mean value of the 'cost' factor (2.59) inferred a low propensity to save money in travelling amongst the customers. In other words, while Vietnamese domestic tourists may value opportunities to get discounted prices via travel promotions, this factor might not greatly affect their travel decision since the propensity to save on travel costs is rather weak. These findings can be explained by the fact that nearly 75 percent of the respondents who participated in the survey had annual incomes well above the average of USD700. These findings, in conjunction with the average expenditure of USD118 per trip reported by the GSO survey (2006), have confirmed that Vietnamese domestic travellers have a great propensity to spend on travel. Theoretically, this confirms Leiper's (2004) statement that enough money, time, and freedom from constraints such as family or health were determinant factors in turning needs into travel demands. It appears that, in our study the results from these two factors reflect a perception gap between tour operators and tourists, where the former expect positive responses to travel promotions focusing on price while the latter may be willing to pay more than the operators anticipated.

The fifth factor 'family' can be categorised as a part of the 'social' factor, the influence of kinship group specified by Pearce (2005). However, the cluster of three items originally designed under time, psychology and reference group hang together and formed a new factor explaining for 7.42 percent of the variance. In reference to the respondents' majority age group (between 25 and 49), it is the child-bearing and



child-raising period. The formation of the 'family' factor reveals unique characteristics of the Vietnamese, who are strongly influenced by Confucianism's emphasis on good family relationships (Reid, 1999). The family orientation in travelling is in line with the findings of Guo (2006). It also somewhat matches the statements regarding family togetherness of Chinese travellers to Vietnam (Chan, 2006).

The final factor determined the role of weather, which had the highest mean value (3.75). The important role of weather in travel decisions found in this study supports the argument that weather conditions have significant effects on tourism and its relevant activities (de Freitas, 2005; Hamilton & Tol, 2004; Lise & Tol, 2002). Practically, the weather in Vietnam is perceived to be good and safe for domestic tourist travel in the three summer months in the middle of the year. In the study, the peak period starts from July and continues through September, accounting for more than 70 percent of domestic trips. Apart from the fact that the weather is good, children are off from school in summer. This mid-year time is also convenient for parents since there is less work pressure.

To draw a conclusion from the findings, the relatively young, working, and child-bearing age characteristics of the respondents reflect the strong influence of employer and family on travel decision-making. The domestic Vietnamese predominantly travel for leisure purposes. Their travel motivation can be affected by promotions by travel agents but they were also looking for value-for-money trips. Weather is also a travel determinant.

## **Conclusion**

Domestic tourism in Vietnam is rapidly expanding. The domestic travellers are 'pushed' towards tourism by disposable income, a sense of family togetherness, and motivated by the prospect for relaxation facilitated by their employer's sponsorship. In the meantime, the tourists are 'pulled' by destination weather conditions, and promotional efforts of tour operators. The role of employer sponsorship as a travel motivation facilitator has been discussed and elaborated upon. Fitting the picture of domestic tourists into a wider context of socio-cultural and economic development in Vietnam, some unique behaviour has emerged. In detail, the main influence of family values is reflected in Vietnamese domestic travel patterns. The role of employ-

er sponsorship in shaping individuals' travel decisions reflects a distinctive model of corporate travel (or social tourism) in the transition period from a central-planned to a market economy. The study also identified a perception gap between tour operators who focus on promotion while most travellers seek value for money rather than low cost travel.

The findings from this research can benefit both academic and tourism practitioners. Destination managers can use the result of this study in developing communication materials that appeal to domestic travellers that address the need to relax and the need to be with family. More important, corporate travel is a very important marketing channel for attracting Vietnamese domestic travellers. Such corporate travel should include various activities to serve the goal of building corporate culture while meeting the needs of individuals and their families.

In terms of research implications, this study has explored travel patterns of Vietnamese domestic travellers. Despite the fact that the study took a functional approach to studying the phenomenon, the results revealed that the travel motivations of Vietnamese domestic travellers could be a subject of study beyond Vietnam. This paper has addressed a gap in the literature on domestic tourists' motivation and their travel patterns in Vietnam by providing insight into the behaviour of domestic holidaymakers in Vietnam.

Further research is needed in order to plan for fulfilling the promise of tourism for Vietnamese. Understanding the nature of domestic tourism contributes to the knowledge on South-East Asian studies. There is much more research to be done on domestic tourism in Vietnam. This paper has provided a starting point for further study by identifying and discussing the motivations of domestic tourists in contemporary Vietnam.

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