

At present, the Vietnamese tourism industry is badly affected by the regional economic crisis, but there are many internal obstacles that prevent the Vietnamese tourism industry, and HCMC one as well, from taking off and integrating into the regional tourism business. Although tourist receipts show no sign of decline but HCMC attractiveness seems to be on the decrease. Realities

of tourism products is determined by different services offered to tourists and related to other industries because the tourism industry is an overall economic activity. Thus, speaking of the quality of tourism product means taking a wide range of factors into consideration, so we want to mention here the most important ones.

Coming to HCMC, a tourismagnetic city which is considered as an im-

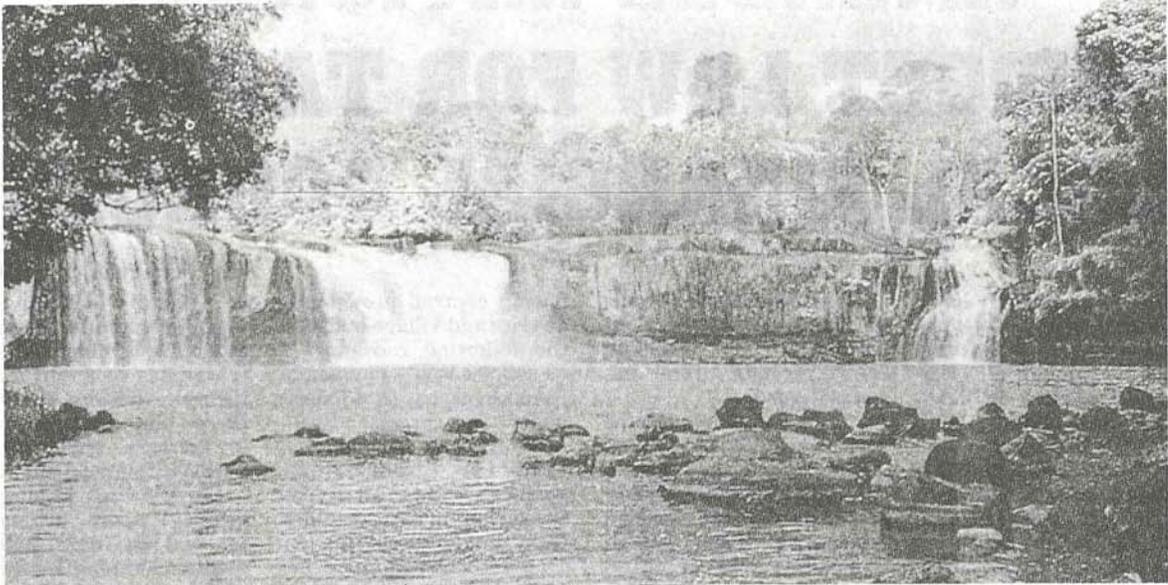
In addition, foreign tourists also meet with untrustworthy tourist agencies. Some agencies offered good tour package but tourists found that everything vanishes into thin air when they came to Vietnam. To reduce costs and compete successfully against rivals, many tour organizers have cut tourism activities and provided tourists with substandard facilities and incompetent tour guides. This reality

ism industry. This is one of reasons why Vietnam's tourism industry can't compete against foreign, even regional, counterparts.

Vietnam's tourism products aren't diverse. Up to now, there is no standard tourist resorts or recreation centers in HCMC. Many historical remains and sights haven't been turned into attractions. There is no attractive rural, ethnic and recreational tours while most tourists

ON QUALITY OF TOURISM PRODUCT IN HCMC

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show that only a few tourists revisited HCMC. To managers of HCMC tourist agencies, it's worth taking trouble to find out causes of the situation and measures to save the day.

There are, of course, many causes of the decrease in tourist flows, but one of the most important is the poor quality of tourism product which are central to the survival and development of tourism industry. The quality

important economic, communication and cultural center, many foreign tourists quickly got annoyed with beggars, pickpockets, hawkers and muggers who get their bread and butter to the detriment of Vietnamese people image. If no measure is taken to prevent these wrongdoings, the situation will cause great damage to the tourism industry and the image of a hospitable country as well.

has created a bad impression of Vietnamese people and Vietnam's tourism industry.

The tourism facilities in Vietnam are poor, communications between big cities and tourist resorts are bad and cause a lot of nuisances to tourists. Generally, the infrastructure, in spite of some improvements, doesn't reach the international standard and fails to help with developing the tour-

want to get the most from a tour (fun, knowledge, participation, etc.). So diversifying Vietnam's tourism products becomes a matter of urgency.

The quality of the army of tourism guides is also a worrying problem. Although many training courses in travel and tourism have been given, many guides are still below the required standard. Lack of general knowledge, especially knowledge of local

history and cultural traditions, is common among them. Competitions and contests among guides deserve study and encouragement, because they provide guides with stimuli to improve their knowledge and skills and meet increasing requirements.

The HCMC tourism industry won't be able to develop and supply high-quality products without support from different authorities. Many regulations and procedures are now becoming obstacles to the development of tourism

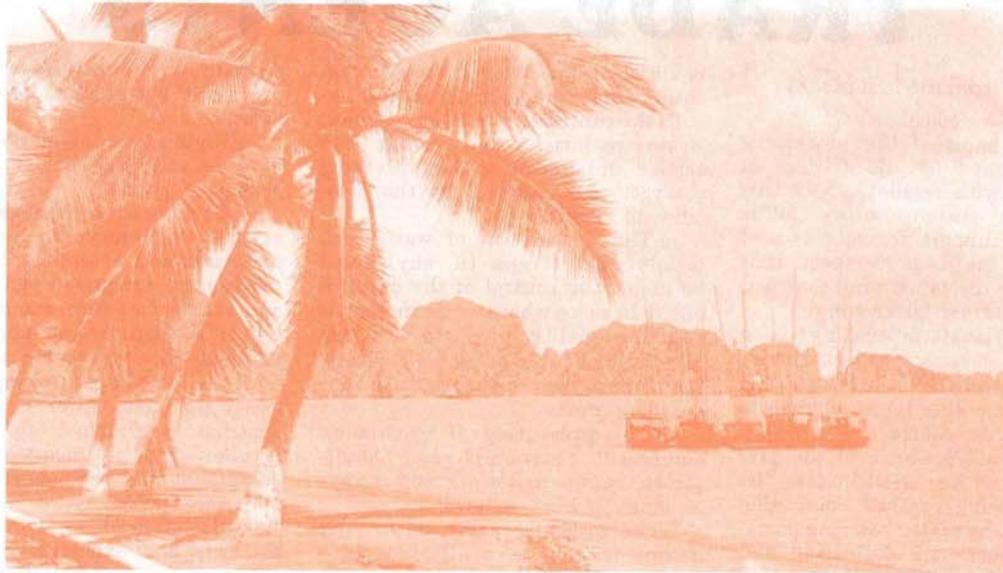
to tourists, such as supplying information and guidance, protecting them from muggers and pickpockets, maintaining law and order in tourist resorts, etc.

+ A Society for Better Quality of Tourism Products could be formed in an effort to deal with dishonest tourist agencies. The Society will be responsible for managing the quality of tourism products, protecting honest agencies and serving as a meeting place for tourist organizers to discuss methods of im-

ditions.

+ HCMC tourism authorities should make plans to diversify tourism products by cooperating with surrounding provincial governments in developing rural or ethnic tours and expanding existing tourist resorts with a view to making tourism products come up to tourists' expectations, because, as we know, young foreign tourists today are eager to learn about exotic cultures and lifestyles, so what they look for in Vietnam are cultural and

authorities should make plan to compile and publish tourists' guidebooks annually, along with tourist magazines in foreign languages. In addition, it's necessary to take part in international tourism fairs and publicize information about Vietnam's potential for tourism business in foreign magazines. In the tourism marketing strategy, supplying five-right products (right market demand, right place, right time, right price and right quality) should be considered as one of main targets.



industry.

The task of marketing tourism products hasn't been carried out properly in foreign countries. Many foreign tourists have found it difficult to get information about tours in Vietnam and HCMC. Most of them got necessary information from friends and relatives by word of mouth. So it's necessary to advertise Vietnam's tourism products in foreign mass media.

They are main causes of the poor quality of Vietnam's tourism products. To deal with these shortcomings, in our opinion, the following measures must be taken:

+ An tourism police force should be formed to undertake tasks of service

proving their services, and protecting tourists' interests. By this Society, tourists could make complaints about services provided. This is one of suggestions made by tourism experts, so HCMC tourism authorities had better consider if they want to help this smokeless industry reach international standard and become attractive to foreign tourists.

+ Another measure is to improve the infrastructure. The Government had better pay full attention to this problem and make plans to build tourism facilities, revamp historical remains and develop systems of tourist resorts that reach international standard and at the same time, enhance our cultural tra-

ethnic tours.

+ Many training courses in travel and tourism guidance have been given to managers and workers in the HCMC tourism industry, but these courses need constant improvements to be appropriate to national training programs applied to the tourism workforce. Other competitions and contests for this workforce are also necessary and should be held annually. Sending qualified personnel to make studies at foreign university specializing in hospitality industry is also a good way to modernize the tourism industry in Vietnam and in HCMC as well.

+ As for marketing strategy, the tourism

+ The tourism industry, on its way to development, is badly in need of support from other authorities (air travel, customs, foreign affairs and internal affairs). Without this support, the tourism industry itself can't develop and contribute to the national modernization process.

Thus, improving the quality of tourism products is absolutely no easy task, however, with incessant effort made by the whole industry, we hope that necessary measures to deal with existing shortcomings and work out new development strategy will be soon found out to turn tourism into one of leading industries that can help others to develop. ■