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# DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ON CAT BA ISLAND, VIETNAM – SURVEY OF THE EFFECTS OF TOURISM IN THE VILLAGES



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## DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ON CAT BA ISLAND, VIETNAM – SURVEY OF THE EFFECTS OF TOURISM IN THE VILLAGES

Tourism creates jobs and brings in money to the destination and provides experiences for tourists. However, uncontrolled tourism development may cause a wide range of social and environmental problems. Sustainable tourism takes economic, social and environmental aspects of tourism into account. The need for sustainable tourism is internationally recognised. In practice, the sustainability of tourism is poorly taken into account.

Cat Ba Island is located in northern Vietnam and it was declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2004 because of the unique nature of the island. Cat Ba is also a popular tourist destination. There are more than one million annual visitors to the island. Tourism development causes threats to local people and the environment. Despite the rapid growth of tourism, local people seem to live modestly and get their income mainly from agriculture. The population of the island seems to be divided into two groups: those, who come from other parts of the country and benefit from tourism, and local people who do not benefit from it.

This research was conducted to work as a pre-report for the project of Turku University of Applied Sciences. The objective of this study was to find out the opinions of local people on how tourism affects their lives and the environment, and how to make tourism more sustainable in Cat Ba in the future. Open interviews were chosen as the research method and they were performed by interviewing local people in two villages and the staff at the Cat Ba National Park.

The interview results show that local people feel that tourism has mainly positive effects on their lives and the environment. They also have ideas on how to benefit more from tourism. They identify poorly the negative effects of tourism. Environmental awareness should be improved for better recognition of the problems. According to previous studies, waste management and conservation also need to be developed.

### KEYWORDS:

Sustainable tourism, community development, project planning, involvement

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# KESTÄVÄN MATKAILUN KEHITTÄMINEN VIETNAMIN CAT BAN SAARELLA – KARTOITUS MATKAILUN VAIKUTUKSISTA KYLISSÄ

Matkailu tuo työtä ja rahaa matkakohteisiin, sekä tarjoaa kokemuksia ja elämyksiä matkailijoille. Hallitsematon matkailukehitys voi kuitenkin aiheuttaa monenlaisia sosiaalisia ongelmia ja ympäristöhaittoja. Kestävä matkailu on matkailua, jonka taloudelliset, sosiaaliset ja ympäristövaikutukset on huomioitu mahdollisimman hyvin. Tarve kestävän matkailun kehittämiseksi on kansainvälisesti tunnustettu. Käytännössä matkailun kestävyys huomiointi on maailmalla kuitenkin usein heikkoa.

Pohjois-Vietnamissa sijaitseva Cat Ban saaristo on julistettu vuonna 2004 Unescon biosfäärialueeksi sen ainutlaatuisen luonnon vuoksi. Cat Ban saari on myös suosittu lomakohde, jossa käy yli miljoona vierailijaa vuosittain. Saariston matkailukehitys luo uhkia sen asukkaille ja ympäristölle. Huolimatta nopeasti kasvavasta matkailusta saaren asukkaat vaikuttavat elävän vaatimattomasti ja saavan elantonsa pääosin maanviljelystä. Saariston väestö näyttää jakautuneen kahtia, matkailusta hyötyviin muualta tuleviin, ja hyödyn ulkopuolelle jäävään paikallisväestöön.

Tämä tutkimus toimii Cat Ban kestävän matkailun kehittämisen hanketta valmistelevana raporttina Turun Ammattikorkeakoululle. Työn tarkoituksena on selvittää, miten paikalliset kokevat matkailun vaikuttavan heidän elämäänsä ja ympäristöönsä sekä miten saaren matkailua saataisiin kestävämmäksi. Tutkimusmetodinä käytettiin avoimia keskusteluhaastatteluita, jotka suoritettiin haastatteleamalla Cat Balla kahdessa kylässä paikallisia asukkaita sekä kansallispuiston henkilökuntaa.

Haastatteluista ilmeni, että paikalliset ihmiset tunsivat matkailun vaikuttavan heidän elämäänsä ja ympäristöönsä pääosin positiivisesti. Heillä oli myös ideoita miten hyötyä matkailusta tulevaisuudessa enemmän. Paikalliset ihmiset tunnistivat huonosti matkailun aiheuttamia ongelmia. Ongelmien paremmaksi tiedostamiseksi ympäristötietoisuutta tulisi lisätä. Saariston jätehuollossa ja ympäristön suojelussa on myös tutkimustiedon mukaan kehityksen tarvetta.

## ASIASANAT:

Kestävä matkailu, kehitysyhteistyö, hankesuunnittelu, osallistaminen

# CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (OR) SYMBOLS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1. Vietnam and Cat Ba	6
1.2 Environmental and social effects of tourism	9
1.3 Environmental and social effects of tourism in Cat Ba	11
1.4 Previous studies in Cat Ba	12
1.5 Development of Sustainable Tourism on Cat Ba Island, Northern Vietnam	14
<b>2 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM</b>	<b>15</b>
2.1 Sustainable tourism	15
2.2 Sustainable tourism and Cat Ba	16
<b>3 RESEARCH TASK AND PROCESS</b>	<b>20</b>
3.1. Research task	20
3.2 About the interviews	21
3.3. Presentation of the target areas	22
3.4 Construing the interviews	25
<b>4 RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEWS</b>	<b>26</b>
4.1. Impact of tourism on the island now and in the future	26
4.1.1. Villagers' answers about impacts on life	26
4.1.2. Villagers' answers about impacts on the environment	27
4.1.3 Answers of different groups	29
<b>5 DISCUSSION</b>	<b>37</b>
5.1. Local opinions about the effects on lives	37
5.2 Local opinions about the effects on the environment	38
5.3 Answers by occupation	38
5.4 Cat Ba National Park	39
5.4.1 About effects on lives and the environment	39
5.4.2 Plans and potential for villagers to benefit more from tourism	41
<b>6 CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>SOURCE MATERIAL</b>	<b>44</b>

## APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview questions in the villages

Appendix 2. Interview questions in the Cat Ba National Park

## PICTURES

Picture 1. Map of Vietnam (Lonely planet 2008)	6
Picture 2. Cat Ba tourism map	7
Picture 3. Hotels in Cat Ba town (Photograph: Tatu Sundqvist 2011)	9
Picture 4. Farmer's house in Phu Long Village (Photograph: Tatu Sundqvist 2013)	23
Picture 5. A view from Viet Hai Village (Photograph: Tatu Sundqvist 2011)	24
Picture 6. Interviewing a fisherman in Viet Hai village. (Photograph: Tatu Sundqvist 2013)	30
Picture 7. A view from the Cat Ba Amatina construction site (Photograph: Tatu Sundqvist 2011)	36
Picture 8. Cat Ba landfill (Photograph: Tatu Sundqvist 2011)	40

## FIGURES

Figure 1. Villagers' opinions about the environmental effects of tourism	27
Figure 2. Occupation distribution of the interviewed villagers	29

## TABLES

Table 1. Principles of sustainable tourism according to WWF	18
Table 2. Principles of sustainable tourism according to UNWTO	19
Table 3. Villagers' opinions about how tourism impacts on their lives	26
Table 4. Villagers' opinions about how tourism impacts on the environment	28
Table 5. National Parks' opinions about how tourism impacts on people's lives	31
Table 6. National Parks' opinions about how tourism impacts on the environment	32
Table 7. Viet Hai villagers' list of plans and potential to benefit more from tourism	33
Table 8. Phu Long villagers' list of plans and potential to benefit more from tourism	34

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (OR) SYMBOLS**

FFI	Fauna & Flora International
ICRT	The International Centre for Responsible Tourism
TIES	The International Ecotourism Society
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO, Unesco	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Vietnam and Cat Ba

Vietnam (Picture 1.) is a country located in South-East Asia. It has a population of around 88 million people. Vietnam has a creage of around 330,000 km<sup>2</sup>, a little bit less than Finland's area (Tilastokeskus 2013). Vietnam was at war with France and then the United States, which ended in 1976 in North Vietnam's victory, at which time the country became a communist state. In 1986, the war-torn country reformed its economic system, which led to rapid economic growth (World Bank 2013a, National Geographic 2013).



Picture 1. Map of Vietnam (Lonely planet 2008)

Cat Ba Island is located in northern Vietnam about 150 kilometres south-east of the capital Hanoi (Tuyen et al. 2010, 4). It is close to the World Natural Heritage site Halong Bay and has a similar landscape (Thanh & Bosch 2010, 9). Cat Ba Archipelago, which consists of 366 limestone islands and is around 26,000 hectares wide, was declared a Biosphere Reserve of UNESCO in 2004 (UNESCO 2013a). 15,000 hectares wide, Cat Ba National Park, which was established in 1986, is located in the area. The National Park covers a large area of Cat Ba Island and also some marine areas and small islands around it (Vietnam National Parks 2013). In 2008, the population of Cat Ba Island was around 16,000 and the annual number of visitors to the island was expected to exceed one million people in 2009 (Tuyen et al. 2010, 4). On the Cat Ba tourism map (Picture 2.) the brown line crops the area of the National Park. The National Park's land area is also bold in the picture.



Picture 2. Cat Ba tourism map



There are 2,026 different living species that have been found in the Cat Ba Biosphere Reserve. Many of these are rare or endangered. The most important of the endangered species is the Cat Ba Langur, which does not live in any other place in the world (UNESCO 2013a).

Economic development in Vietnam has been more equal than in many other countries in the same kind of situation (World Bank 2013a), but the economic growth has not always lead to poverty reduction. Statistics on tourism in Cat Ba work as a good example. The number of visitors has increased rapidly between the years 1995 and 2007, from 45,000 visitors to 729,000 visitors. The number of visitors increased in twelve years by more than 16 times. (Tuyen et al. 2010, 6). However, poverty has not decreased much during this time. From 2000 to 2008 the number of people living in poverty has decreased a little bit more than one percent, from a little more than nine percent to slightly less than eight percent (Tuyen et al. 2010, 9). At the same time, the gross national income (GNI) per capita based on purchasing power parity has almost doubled (World Bank 2013b).

Over 100 hotels were built in Cat Ba between the years 1995 and 2009 (Tuyen et al. 2010, 6) and more are being constructed all the time. There is a massive resort project in progress called Cat Ba Amatina, in which around 800 luxury villas and other tourism complexes, such as amusement park, sports areas and an international congress centre, are being built in a 172-hectare area (Knight Frank 2013; Vinaconex – ITC 2013).

The peak season for tourism in Cat Ba is in the summer, between June and August, and especially Vietnamese tourists visit the island during this time. Most of the tourism industry of Cat Ba is located in overdeveloped Cat Ba Town (Picture 3.) in the southern part of the island and the other towns of the island seem to remain mainly untouched by tourism (Lonely Planet 2013). It seems that most of tourists stay on the island only for one or two nights before they

move on. Tourism facilities, such as public transportation, seem to be poor and undeveloped.



Picture 3. Hotels in Cat Ba town (Photograph: Tatu Sundqvist 2011)

## 1.2 Environmental and social effects of tourism

It has been proven that tourism influences the environment in many ways, both positively and negatively. Positive economic and social effects are that tourism brings in money to the host countries and it can help to maintain cultural values (UNEP 2013a; UNEP 2013b). Positive effects for the environment are, for example, the increasing popularity of nature and landscape conservation, ensuring the income of local people which can lead to less poaching and the illegal use of forests, the opportunity to learn from nature and the environment, improved satisfaction, improved cleanliness of the environment, the emergence

of better infrastructure for the environment and the transformation of unprofitable land to profitable. (Hemmi 2005, 42.).

The negative effects on the environment are, for example, the effects on water bodies, such as the effects of shipping, sewage, waste and paints in the sea and coastal ecosystems, coral reefs, animals, fish and plant populations and to pollution and littering of shores. Also, the reduction the drinking water is an example of the negative environmental effects of tourism on the marine environment.

Treading caused by tourism has negative effects on the environment by putting a strain on vegetation and increasing erosion, making changes to the soil's nutrients and moisture conditions, condensing the soil and decreasing the porosity and making changes in the lighting of the habitat and in the competitive conditions for biota (Hemmi 2005, 54-55.).

The negative effects on animals can be divided into direct and indirect effects. The direct effects are, for example, hunting and fishing, interference with animals and reducing their living areas. the indirect effects are, for example, the loss of vegetation that may lead to a decrease in animal populations. Interference with the animals is caused by, for example, watching and observation of birds and other animals, photographing and traffic (Hemmi 2005, 47-50.).

Other negative regional and local effects caused by traffic are, for example, eutrophication, acidification and pollution of water or soil, deterioration of air quality and noise (Hemmi 2005, 61).

Tourism also has negative environmental effects at the global level. The main global issues are loss of biodiversity, depletion of the ozone layer and the acceleration of climate change. Air traffic is a significant source of ozone depleting substances and a contributor to the greenhouse effect (UNEP 2013c).

The cultural and social negative effects of tourism are, for example, the loss of local identities and values, conflicts between tourism and local industries for

natural resources, such as from land, water or energy, bad working conditions and the use of child labour, conflicts between different cultures, inequality in the level of work between local people and foreigners or urbanized nationals (Coastlearn 2013) and sex tourism (Mowforth et al. 2008, 195-196). The growth of mass tourism also often leads to increasing criminal activity in the area (Coastlearn 2013).

### 1.3 Environmental and social effects of tourism in Cat Ba

Links between tourism and social and environmental problems in Cat Ba have been reported in different studies. 'ITCZM Monograph No. 2 Cat Ba National Park, Vietnam', which was published in 2001, says that tourism causes problems in Cat Ba by, for example, over-exploitation of the forest resources, poaching and uncontrolled tourism development. The study says that people collect from the forests mainly wood, honey, bamboo shoots, roots, frogs and geckos. Poaching is seen as a big threat for animals on the island. The study also claims that there are many issues that threaten marine organisms of the Cat Ba National Park. Those are siltation, dynamite fishing and excavation that destroy the coral reefs, unsustainable fishing practices such as the use of fine-mesh nets, poisons and electro-fishing, pollution from marine traffic and the low level of environmental awareness that hamper the marine conservation (Viet & Lin 2011, 11.).

The study 'Factors Influencing Environmental Law Enforcement of the Cat Ba Biosphere Reserve in Vietnam', which was published in 2010, says that the amount of waste is increasing on Cat Ba Island, and that only less than half of the waste is collected. The study also says that the share of waste caused by tourism is remarkable. The same study reveals that the number of forest violations in Cat Ba National Park has increased between the years 2000 and 2008. The number of violations has varied, but in year 2000 there were eleven violations and after that there has been more than that every year. In 2008,

there were 34 violations. The study also points out that the true number of forest violations is probably much bigger as a local NGO had calculated that in 2006–2007 the number of forest violations had been many times greater compared to official statistics (Tuyen et al. 2010, 4-9.).

An Australian study published in 2009, 'Systems Thinking Approach as a Unique Tool for Sustainable Tourism Development: a Case Study in the Cat Ba Biosphere Reserve of Vietnam', interviewed 76 people working or living on Cat Ba Island. They were asked to identify key issues, potential and threats for developing sustainable tourism in the Cat Ba Biosphere Reserve. The interviewees responded that the key issues included the increased environmental effects of tourism, such as water pollution, waste and waste management issues, loss of biodiversity, limited natural resources, poor tourism services, lack of refreshing opportunities, poor infrastructure and temporary migration. The study claims that the land area needed for the tourism sector is threatening the protected area. It also says that there is a lack of clean water as tourism does not only increase the need for water but also raises the waste stream which in turn degrades the quality of underground water. Tourism and migration also increase the demand for food, which leads to increased food prices. It is also stated in the study that migration has affected the level of education in schools. The increased demand for natural products encourages local people to poach in the protected area. Tourism and migration have also increased prostitution and drug usage on the island (Thanh & Bosch 2010, 10-16.).

#### 1.4 Previous studies in Cat Ba

There have been many conservation and development programmes on Cat Ba Island in the past due to the island's natural values. For example, the World

Wide Fund (WWF), Fauna & Flora International (FFI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have all run projects on the island. (Dawkins 2007, 20). An Australian study published in 2007, 'The Social Impact of People-Oriented Conservation on Cat Ba Island, Vietnam', evaluates how the projects that have been operated in Viet Hai village on Cat Ba have succeeded from the point of view of local people. The study takes six projects into account. Those are "Contributing to biodiversity conservation of Cat Ba National Park through community activity, Cat Ba Langur Conservation Project, Cat Ba Integrated Conservation and Development Program, Endangered Species Conservation Project, Coastal Biodiversity Support Project — Ha Long and Cat Ba and Integrated Conservation and Development program for the conservation of the biodiversity and the Golden-headed Langur on Cat Ba Island." (Dawkins 2007, 24). From those projects, Cat Ba Langur Conservation Project, which was started in 2000, is still active (Cat Ba Langur Conservation Project 2013).

In 2011, Vietnam MAB, UNESCO and Haiphong City Council launched a 'Biosphere Reserves for Environmental and Economic Security (BREES)' project which is supposed to use biosphere reserves as learning centres on the ability of humans and the environment to adapt to climate change (UNESCO 2013b).

'Systems Thinking for Sustainable Tourism in the Cat Ba Biosphere Reserve of Vietnam' from 2010 applies systems thinking to study sustainable tourism on Cat Ba Island (Thanh & Kambiz 2010).

Another Australian study from 2008 that applies systems thinking is 'The Importance of Systems Thinking and Practice for Creating Biosphere Reserves as "Learning Laboratories for Sustainable Development"'. The purpose of the research is to help UNESCO to build the Biosphere Reserves to work as learning laboratories for sustainable development (Nguyen et al. 2008.).

The learning laboratory concept is a theme also found in the Australian-Vietnamese research entitled 'Establishing the Cat Ba Biosphere, Vietnam as a

Learning Laboratory for Sustainable Development' published in 2009 (Bosch & Tri 2009).

Elina Kallio from Lahti University of Applied Sciences has written a thesis 'Stay Sustainable While Travelling (*Kestävän matkailun oppaan toteuttaminen Ecotourism-kurssille*)' which looks at sustainable tourism both in general and also in Cat Ba (Kallio 2011).

### 1.5 Development of Sustainable Tourism on Cat Ba Island, Northern Vietnam

From 2010, Turku University of Applied Sciences has prepared a project called 'Development of Sustainable Tourism on Cat Ba Island, Northern Vietnam' to be implemented in cooperation with Haiphong University, Cat Ba National Park and Archipelago Sea Area Biosphere Reserve. In the years 2011 and 2012 there have been intensive courses considering sustainable tourism, organised on Cat Ba Island by Turku University of Applied Sciences, Haiphong University, Archipelago Sea Area Biosphere Reserve, Cat Ba Biosphere Reserve and Cat Ba National Park. There has also been a student exchange programme between Turku University of Applied Sciences and Haiphong University since 2010. Students of Sustainable Development from Turku University of Applied Sciences have also performed internships working for Cat Ba National Park on Cat Ba Island.

The project for sustainable tourism in Cat Ba is still waiting for funding and it has so far been on a small-scale, funded by Turku University of Applied Sciences. This thesis is intended to work as a pre-report for the project.

## 2 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

### 2.1 Sustainable tourism

The terms 'ecotourism', 'sustainable tourism' and 'responsible tourism' are overlapping and they can be interpreted in many different ways. Also, the separation of the ecological and social dimension is not necessarily meaningful as in reality those two are always intertwined. The International Ecotourism Society TIES defined ecotourism in 1990 to mean "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people" (TIES 2013).

The International Centre of Responsible Tourism ICRT defines responsible tourism as the kind of tourism that :

- "minimises negative economic, environmental, and social impacts;
- generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry;
- involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances;
- makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity;
- provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues;
- provides access for physically challenged people; and



- is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence.” (The International Centre for Responsible Tourism 2013.)

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization UNWTO, the definition of sustainable tourism is that the target of sustainable tourism should be able to manage all the resources in such a way that the economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled and at the same time the integrity of cultures, vital ecologic processes, the diversity of nature and life-supporting systems can be maintained (Hemmi 2005, 80).

For this study, sustainable tourism was chosen from those three terms, as unlike ecotourism, it is usable also in areas other than natural areas, although the separation of natural or non-natural area may be challenging. It has also been found that the term ecotourism is understood in many different ways in Vietnam, often as a synonym for nature tourism, so choosing a different and less well known term seemed reasonable. Also, the definition of responsible tourism is quite wide and sustainable development is not at the heart of it in the same way as it is in sustainable tourism.

## 2.2 Sustainable tourism and Cat Ba

The official tourism strategy of Vietnam’s government from the year 2011 is called a ‘Strategy on Vietnam’s Tourism Development until 2020, vision to 2030’. Sustainability is strongly represented in the strategy. There is a comment that the aim is to “develop sustainable tourism tied to the preservation and promotion of cultural values of the nation; to ensure landscape preservation and environmental protection; to maintain security, national defence, social order and safety”. There are also several mentions about developing eco-tourism around the country (Government Portal 2013.).

When planning how to make the tourism on Cat Ba Island more sustainable, the principles of sustainable tourism have to be taken into account. Jorma Hemmi says in his book 'Matkailu, ympäristö ja luonto' that sustainable tourism development is a continuing process that leads to treating all resources in a way that economic, socio-cultural, aesthetic and ethical needs are fulfilled at the same time as the cultural environment is maintained, life-supporting ecological functions and biological and landscape diversity are preserved (Hemmi 2005, 85.).

The WWF has published a ten-point list for the general principles of sustainable tourism: see Table 1.

Table 1. Principles of sustainable tourism according to the WWF

<b>According to the WWF, the general principles of sustainable tourism are the following:</b>	
1. The conservation of natural, social and cultural resources makes smart long-term livelihoods possible	2. Decreasing the over-consumption and the amount of waste helps to avoid long-term environmental damage and raises the quality of tourism.
3. Maintaining and fostering natural, cultural and social biodiversity is necessary for long-term sustainable tourism and it creates a strong basis for the tourism industry.	4. The tourism industry, which is integrated in that kind of national and local frame of strategic planning that notices the environmental effects of tourism, creates the long-term success of tourism.
5. Tourism that supports widely the local economy and takes environmental management and the expenses of maintaining environmental values into account, protects the local economy and avoids environmental damage.	6. Committing local communities to tourism does not only help them and the environment in general, but also improves the quality of the tourism experience.
7. The consultation between the tourism industry, local communities, organizations and institutions is necessary, so that they could work in mutual understanding and solve conflicts of interests.	8. The training of tourism companies personnel that is integrated in practical implementation of sustainable development, improves the quality of the tourism product.
9. Marketing that provides complete and reliable information, improves the respect of the natural, cultural and social environment of the destination, and also improves customer satisfaction.	10. Continuous research and monitoring by the travel industry that uses effective data collection and analysis is necessary to help solve problems and creates benefits for the destination, tourism industry and customers.

(Hemmi 2005, 85-86.)

The list gives detailed information about the reasons and the means to promote sustainable tourism.

The UNWTO has published a three-point list on the principles of sustainable tourism: see Table 2.

Table 2. Principles of sustainable tourism according to the UNWTO

<b>According to the UNWTO, sustainable tourism should:</b>		
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 built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.	3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-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.

(UNWTO 2013.)

The list identifies and specifies the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable tourism.

## 3 RESEARCH TASK AND PROCESS

### 3.1. Research task

Because increasing tourism has not decreased the poverty on Cat Ba Island, the assumption is that tourism on the island has not been operated sustainably. This study tries to find out the opinions of local people on the benefits of tourism. There are also many severe environmental problems in the Cat Ba Biosphere Reserve that generate problems for the development of sustainable tourism in the area. Increasing tourism has caused water pollution, an increasing amount of waste, loss of biodiversity, limitations of natural resources, deterioration of tourism services and infrastructure, loss of refreshment areas and temporary mitigation (Thanh & Bosch 2010, 10-11.).

The objective of this study is also to find out the opinions of local people on how tourism affects their lives and the environment, how they could benefit more from it, and to clarify, from the grassroots level perspective, how tourism should be managed in Cat Ba so that it would implement the ideals of sustainable development as well as possible.

This is done by interviewing local people in two villages in Cat Ba and asking them what kind of impact tourism has had on their lives, what kinds of changes would be needed so that they could benefit more from tourism in the future, and also, what kind of impact has tourism had on the environment on the island. Mr. Nguyen Van Hach, Deputy Director of the Center for Travel services, Ecotourism and Environmental Education of the Cat Ba National Park, was also interviewed on the social and environmental impacts of tourism on the island. The idea was to also interview the personnel of the Cat Ba Biosphere Reserve; however, they refused to be interviewed for the study.

The reason that interviewing was chosen as the research method for this study was because involving local communities matches the principles of sustainable development (see Table 1. paragraphs 5–7 and Table 2. paragraphs 2–3). The interviews were carried out with open questions because there was an expectation to gather new information on the subject (Routio 2005).

This research has focused on grassroots level development so the research questions were chosen in such a way that answering them might help the local communities of Cat Ba. This study did not focus on top-to-bottom planning or development, so the government or authorities were not interviewed. Nor does it focus on the global negative effects of tourism.

This study tries to answer the following questions:

- What kinds of social and environmental impacts do local people think tourism has on Cat Ba now and will have in the future?
- How could local people benefit more from tourism in Cat Ba in the future?

### 3.2 About the interviews

The village interviews were conducted in two different villages—Viet Hai and Phu Long—by interviewing 14 people in each village. The interviewees were chosen randomly, only ensuring that the gender distribution was equal and that there were people of all ages interviewed, excluding children. The reason for choosing these exact villages for the interviews was that their structure is very different from each other and they are located in different areas on opposite sides of the island.

The interview questions (Appendices 1 and 2) were about the social and environmental impacts of tourism now and in the future and the plans and potential for the future benefits from tourism.

The interviews were mainly conducted by walking around each village during the day and going into people's homes or workplaces to ask whether it would be possible to interview them for the study. Vietnamese interpreter, Mr. Son Vu Truong, was translating all the interviews on the spot. The interviews were also recorded and Mr. Son translated them afterwards from the recording to paper.

### 3.3. Presentation of the target areas

Phu Long village (Picture 4.) is located on the west coast of the island outside the National Park and approximately ten kilometres from Cat Ba Town, the centre of tourism on the island. According to Mr. Son, the population of the village is approximately 2,000 people. There is a port in Phu Long that some of the ferries use when transporting people between Haiphong and Cat Ba Island. There is also a road from Phu Long to the other parts of the island. There seems to be no real tourism activities in the village, and there seems to be very few visitors, except for traffic passing around the port. There is a big industrial shrimp farm located in the village. Phu Long was chosen for the interviews because it is isolated from the main tourist areas and the assumption was that the villagers do not benefit much from tourism.



Picture 4. Farmer's house in Phu Long Village (Photograph: Tatu Sundqvist 2013)

Viet Hai (Picture 5.) is located on the east coast of the island in the core area of the National Park. The village is hard to reach. The only way to get there by land is by trekking through the forest as there is no road connection to Cat Ba Town. The village can be reached from Cat Ba Town in 40 minutes by water using a slow motor boat.





Picture 5. A view from Viet Hai Village (Photograph: Tatu Sundqvist 2011)

There are only approximately 200 people living in the village. The potential for tourism is high as Viet Hai is located in a beautiful valley at the heart of the protected area and it has remained relatively old-fashioned. Trekking tours from the National Park headquarters to Viet Hai are arranged often for tourists, and trekking from the park to the village takes around five hours. Some tour operators arrange boat trips that include a visit to Viet Hai. The village was chosen for the interviews as it is very different from Phu Long village. There are quite a lot of tourism activities and the villagers seemed to benefit from the tourism. In turn, the assumption was that the negative effects of tourism might be clearly observable.

### 3.4 Construing the interviews

The interviews sought answers to the research questions. As the interviews were mainly conducted with open questions, they were construed using qualitative analysis methods, more specifically using the realistic analysis method. This includes quantification, thematising, content analysis and typification (Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006).

The idea was to find out the opinions of local people, the meanings and experiences of tourism, and to look for similarities and differences in the answers given by different people and groups, reflect on issues raised with earlier studies and theoretical facts, and find out what issues should be developed and by what means, so that tourism in Cat Ba would become more sustainable.

## 4 RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEWS

### 4.1. Impact of tourism on the island now and in the future

#### 4.1.1. Villagers' answers about impacts on life

When asked if they would like to have more tourists in their village, no one answered negatively, and most would want tourism to increase. Many of them would also want to work in the tourism sector in the future.

Table 3 shows what kind of impact the villagers felt tourism has had on their lives.

Table 3. Villagers' opinions about how tourism impacts on their lives

Positive impacts on life	Negative impacts on life
Better income	Noise
Better quality of life	Increased food prices
Learning from tourists	
Infrastructure development	

As poverty has not been reduced despite the growth of tourism, the assumption was that local people do not benefit from tourism. However, almost all of the interviewed people in both villages said they had benefited from tourism. Also, only two people answered that tourism had negative effects on their lives. Most of the people said their income is better because of tourism and many also felt their general quality of life is better. Some people answered that they have

learnt a lot from tourists as their livelihood has become more central. Some also pointed out that tourism development has led to infrastructure development as there are now better roads and transportation between the island and Haiphong is more convenient.

There were not many complaints about negative issues. Only a few mentions that tourism makes the village noisy and that food prices, especially chicken, have increased.

#### 4.1.2. Villagers' answers about impacts on the environment

The villagers also felt that there are many more positive impacts on the environment than negative, as Figure 1 shows.

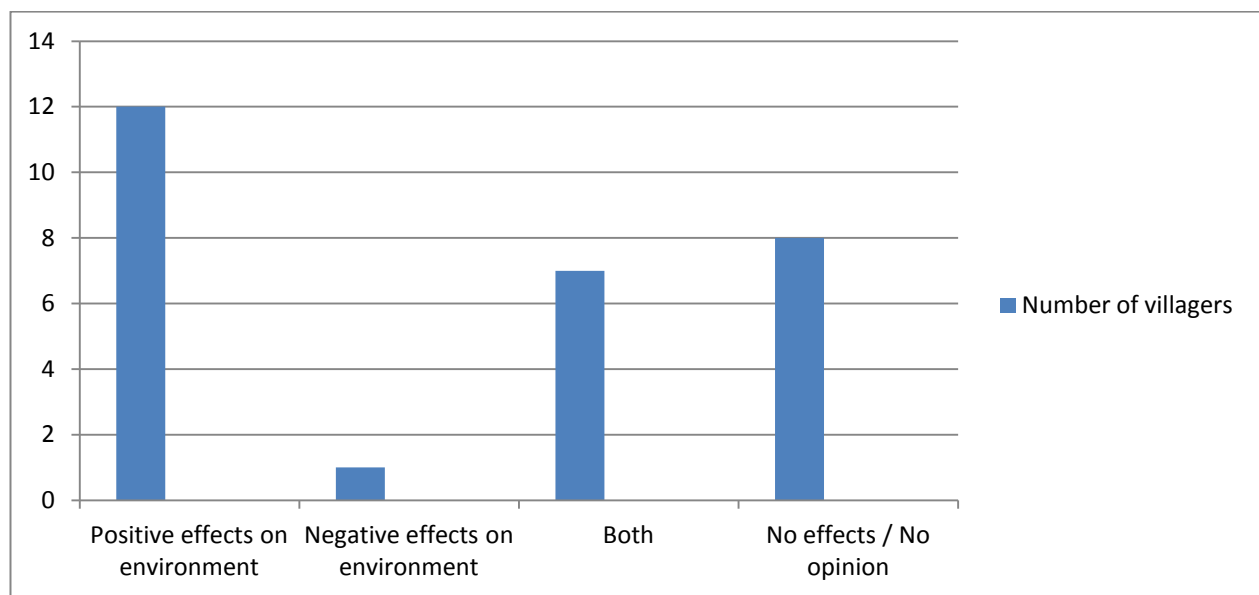


Figure 1. Villagers' opinions on the environmental effects of tourism

The villagers identified more negative environmental effects than negative effects on their lives, even though from those who had an opinion, and thought

there were effects on the environment, most answered that all of the effects are positive. Table 4 shows the identified environmental impacts.

Table 4. Villagers' opinions about how tourism impacts on the environment

Positive impacts on the environment	Negative impacts on the environment
Environment is cleaner	More trash in the environment
Environmental awareness is better	Water pollution
Environment is livelier	Air pollution
	Smell
	Diseases

The most common response was that the environment is cleaner because of tourism, as there are now trash cans in the villages and more of the trash is collected. The negative side, which only some of the villagers identified, was that the amount of trash has increased as there are more people visiting the villages. The villagers also said that because of tourism their environmental awareness is better, so they know there is a need to maintain a clean environment in order to keep the tourists coming to the villages. Some also pointed out that the environment is livelier because of tourism.

Some villagers identified that tourism has caused water pollution. It was also mentioned that tourists could possibly bring diseases to people and animals, and that waste makes the environment smell bad.

#### 4.1.3 Answers of different groups

There was some diversity in the answers between different occupations. Figure 2 shows the distribution in the occupations of the villagers interviewed.

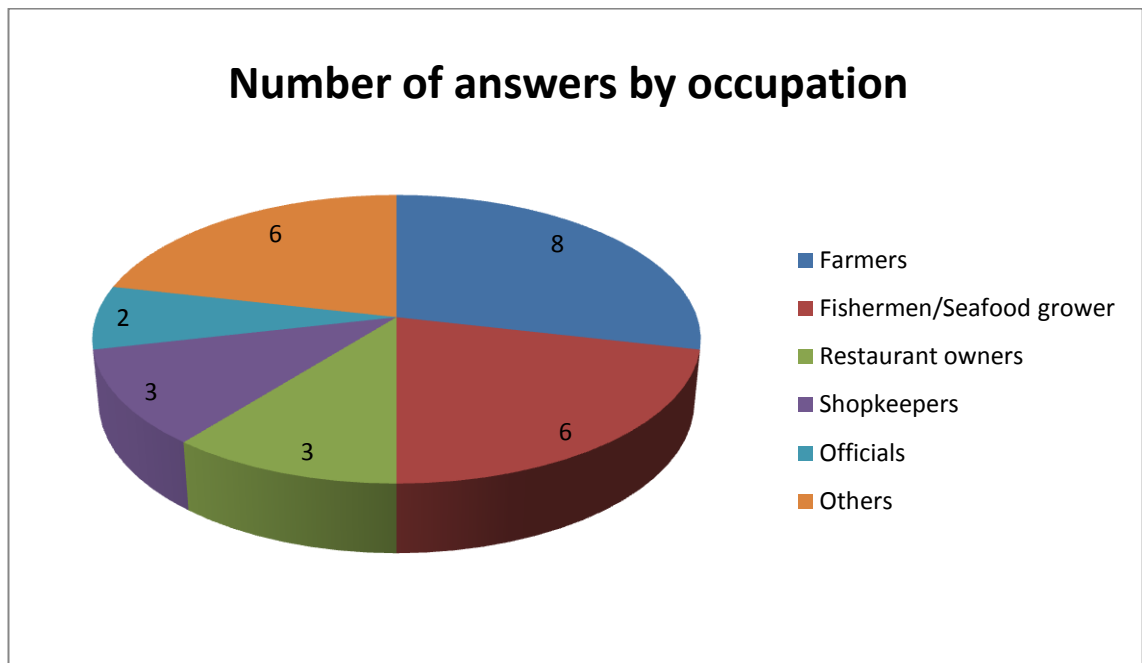


Figure 2. Occupation distribution of the interviewed villagers

The biggest single profession was farmers, and they could identify more negative environmental effects of tourism than any other group, even though they felt quite positive about the environmental effects in general, and they were the only group that identified any negative social effects, which were noise and increased prices.

Two of the six fishermen interviewed (Picture 6.) mentioned that tourism causes water pollution, but mainly fishermen also thought that the environment, including the marine environment, is cleaner now than before because of tourism.



Picture 6. Interviewing a fisherman in Viet Hai village. (Photograph: Tatu Sundqvist 2013)

The officials were the most positive group concerning both the social and environmental effects of tourism. There was not much diversity between the groups other than that mentioned before.

There was no significant diversity in the answers between different age groups interviewed. The only difference between genders was that most of the negative environmental effects were identified by males. There was not much diversity also in the answers between the two villages.

#### 4.1.4. The National Park's point of view about the impact on lives

According to the Cat Ba National Park, tourism has both positive and negative effects on people's lives. The most common effects are listed in Table 5.

Table 5. National Park's opinion about how tourism impacts on people's lives

Positive effects on lives	Negative effects on lives
More jobs and better income: tour guides, agricultural products, home-stay, tourism-related jobs, motorbike taxi	Land to agriculture decreased because of tourism development
	Increased food prices
	Negative cultural effects
	Lack of clean water
	Electricity cuts
	Drugs
	Prostitution

The positive effects identified are financial. Tourism has created jobs and has led to increased income for many people. The negative effects include the scarcity of natural resources such as land, water and electricity, because the tourism industry uses those resources a lot. Other negative effects are increased food prices, and negative cultural effects when young local people in particular try to imitate the lives of tourists. Increased tourism has also increased drug use and prostitution.

#### 4.1.5. The National Park's point of view on the impacts on the environment

According to the Cat Ba National Park, tourism also has both positive and negative effects on the environment, as shown in Table 6.



Table 6. The National Park's opinion on how tourism impacts on the environment

Positive effects on the environment	Negative effects on the environment
People recognise the importance of the environment	More trash in the environment
Environmental awareness better	Tourism infrastructure development harms the environment and landscape
Trash collecting	Increased number of boats and floating homes has a negative effect on the marine environment
	Poaching
	Overfishing

The positive effects are that people protect the environment when they understand the need to maintain a good environment, environmental awareness is better and there is more trash collecting than without tourism. The negative effects are that the increasing number of tourists leads to an increasing amount of trash in the environment, especially as Vietnamese tourists litter. Developing infrastructure such as roads, hotels and building sand fields has negative effects on both animal species and the landscape. Increasing water traffic and the number of floating homes harms the marine environment, such as coral reefs. Poaching has led to reducing the number of species, as some Vietnamese tourists are willing to buy protected or illegally hunted species for food even if they know that it is illegal. Also, overfishing in the bay has reduced fish stocks.

## 4.2. How could local people benefit more from tourism in Cat Ba?

### 4.2.1. People's opinions in Viet Hai village

In Viet Hai most of the interviewees had plans to profit more from tourism in the near future. They were also positive about the future potential of tourism in the village. The plans and potentials are listed in Table 7.

Table 7. Viet Hai villagers' list of plans and potential to benefit more from tourism

<b>Plans</b>	<b>Potential</b>
Arrange more tours to the village	Home-stays, bungalows
More services: accommodation, home-stays, resorts, restaurants, shops, spa	Tours to forests
Tours to rice mill and old houses	Camping
Increase agricultural products for tourism	Increase agriculture
	Shops, restaurants

People mainly had plans to expand their businesses, open shops and restaurants or provide home-stays. The ideas for potential services to offer tourists included home-stays, forest trekking, camping and bungalows.

#### 4.2.2. People's opinions in Phu Long village

In Phu Long village, three of the interviewees revealed personal plans to profit more from tourism, but four others answered that there are those kinds of plans in the community.

Most of the interviewees were positive about tourism's potential and had some ideas for the services that could be offered to tourists. A list of the plans and potential is in Table 8.

Table 8. Phu Long villagers' list of plans and potential to benefit more from tourism

Plans	Potential
Teaching tourism services to other villagers	Moc Trang beach and Dau Voi beach
Tours to mangrove forest	Thien Long cave, Ba Luong cave, Hang Tong cave
Green tourism	Mangrove forests
Working as a tour guide	Fishing tours and seafood field tours
Open grocery shop	Eco-tours
Increasing seafood trade	Rock climbing
	Home-stays
	Boat services
	Ang Dai, Ang De and Ang Bong valleys
	Salt worker tour

Personal plans were to work as a tour guide and expand agriculture. One interviewee said he teaches other villagers to use the Internet and arranges cooking, tour guide, bed-making and home-stay service classes for them. One

interviewee said that the village has a project to start an eco-tour in the mangrove forest.

Potential services to offer in the village include tours to Thien Long cave, Hang Tong cave and Ba Luong cave, tours to three valleys, Ang Dai, Ang De and Ang Bong, opening Moc Trang beach and Dau Voi beach for tourists and start fishing tours or tours to see the life of salt workers or fish farmers.

#### 4.2.3. The National Park's opinion

About the potential and plans for developing tourism in the villages of Cat Ba, the Cat Ba National Park's opinion was that there have been, and are at present, those kinds of projects in the villages. In Viet Hai, the FFI had a project for community-based tourism around ten years ago but the authorities did not allow home-stays at the time because they thought it would be too dangerous in an isolated location like that. In the Phu Long community there are some projects at present and four or five groups are starting restaurants, home-stays and tours in the village with a local guide. In Phu Long there is also the potential to develop tourism because of the mangrove forests, seafood farms and beaches. The National Park's opinion is also that the on-going Amatina-project (Picture 7.) has negative effects on fauna and flora and that it has decreased the amount of land for agriculture from local people.



Picture 7. A view from the Cat Ba Amatina construction site (Photograph: Tatu Sundqvist 2011)

## 5 DISCUSSION

### 5.1. Local opinions about the effects on lives

Generally, most villagers felt that tourism has had only positive effects on their lives because they have better income and a better quality of life because of tourism. It might be that because of the low level of education the villagers did not identify the negative effects of tourism. For example, they might not know that tourism is the main reason for increased food prices on the island. It might also be that the economic benefit is so important for the people that it overshadows any possible disadvantages.

Even though local people may not recognize all of the negative social and environmental effects of tourism, they see increasing tourism mainly as a very positive thing.

The assumption that local people do not benefit from tourism as poverty has not been reduced seems to be false. However, it might be that the poorest people were interviewed and so their opinions were not heard. Whether that is correct or not, it seems that even though the poor 8–9% do not benefit from tourism (Tuyen et al. 2010, 9), most of local people actually do. However, to make tourism on the island more sustainable, there should be actions to ensure also the poorest people benefit from tourism.

## 5.2 Local opinions about the effects on the environment

According to the interviews, there have been more positive effects on the environment than negative. According to most interviewees, tourism does not have any negative effects at all.

However, a lack of knowledge seems to affect again the results as it seems that the environmental consequences of tourism are not understood, as both the earlier research data and the interview with Cat Ba National Park show that tourism causes lots of environmental problems in Cat Ba (see 1.3 and 4.1.5).

Therefore, there should be actions to educate local people to improve their environmental awareness so that they could understand the causes and effects of tourism on the environment and so it would be easier for them to reduce and avoid the negative environmental effects of tourism in the future.

## 5.3 Answers by occupation

The reason that farmers identified more negative environmental changes than other groups did might be because agriculture in Cat Ba is old-fashioned, and so it might be that the environmental effects affect farmers directly, as their trade is closely related to environmental conditions. They were also the only group that identified any negative effects on their personal lives. For example, increased meat prices may have a disadvantage especially for farmers who farm mainly vegetables, as they have to pay more for the food they eat than before, although their income may not have increased.

## 5.4 Cat Ba National Park

### 5.4.1 About effects on lives and the environment

The interview at Cat Ba National Park shows both sides of tourism more clearly. Tourism has created jobs in the tourism sector but also reduced them in the agricultural sector as tourism infrastructure has required land from agricultural use. There is more income for local people but also food prices have increased. It seems likely that there are both winners and losers in that kind of development and it would be ideal to conduct research in the future that tries to find out which groups have been disadvantaged by tourism development on the island and how to help them benefit from it in the future; for example, by giving them education and helping them to find new occupations if they cannot continue in their former jobs.

Even though tourism has positive effects on the environment, such as better environmental awareness and trash collecting, there might be a need for those effects to be even stronger, as less than half of the waste on the island is collected and the environmental awareness of local people is still low (see 1.3) and that might prevent them from understanding some causes and effects of the environmental problems on the island.

The stated negative environmental effects are all serious and need attention. The increased amount of trash is worrying as the waste management on the island is undeveloped. The collected waste is transported to an open landfill (Picture 8.) in the centre of the island where it is burned. Local people also seem to burn often waste in their own yards. There is a certain need to develop waste management on the island.





Picture 8. Cat Ba landfill (Photograph: Tatu Sundqvist 2011)

As tourism infrastructure development has negative effects on the environment, there is a need to develop environmental protection policies in a way that the environment would be taken into account in all tourism development on the island.

As overfishing and an increased number of boats and floating homes cause problems to the marine environment, there is also a need for better protection of the marine environment.

The study 'Factors Influencing Environmental Law Enforcement Of The Cat Ba Biosphere Reserve In Vietnam' claims that poverty leads to poaching in Cat Ba as people who cannot otherwise fulfil their basic needs begin to do poaching as they do not really have a choice (Tuyen et al 2010, 13). Therefore, developing alternative sources of income and reducing poverty on the island would also help to reduce poaching.

All of the positive effects identified by the Cat Ba National Park were also well recognised by the villagers. Most of the negative effects identified by the National Park were not mentioned by the villagers, although they are recognised as effects of tourism in general (see 1.2) and in Cat Ba (see 1.3) in earlier studies. Besides the lack of environmental awareness in the villages, the other obvious reason for the lack of identifying those issues is simply that the issues do not directly affect those villages. Unlike in Cat Ba Town, there are no big hotels and other tourism infrastructure in Viet Hai or Phu Long that would make the negative effects easier to notice.

#### 5.4.2 Plans and potential for villagers to benefit more from tourism

The villagers seemed quite optimistic about benefiting more from tourism in the future. In Viet Hai, most of the interviewees revealed personal plans to benefit more from tourism and in Phu Long people had lots of ideas about what kind of tourism potential there is in the village still to make use of. The interview with the National Park revealed that there are already projects to develop tourism in the villages. It might be good to find out more about those projects, find out how sustainability has been taken into account in them, and help villagers to develop tourism sustainably, if needed, so that tourism development would not be as uncontrollable as it seems to be at the moment. There would also be less damage done while developing tourism infrastructure. Villagers had lots of ideas how tourism could be developed in their villages, so there could be a need for a project to develop tourism in the villages in the way the villagers think it should be done.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this study was to find out the opinions of local people on how tourism affects their lives and the environment, how they could benefit more from it, and how to make tourism more sustainable in Cat Ba in the future.

The objectives were achieved quite well as the study was able to answer the research questions presented in Chapter 3.1. However, it would have been helpful to interview the poorest villagers also to get their opinions.

Reviewing the reliability of the study, the biggest challenges in the research were the language and cultural barriers, the limited time for field work at the destination and the very limited amount of information about Cat Ba Island and the earlier studies conducted on the island. It was also difficult to limit the subject as there was a need for many kinds of information.

There were also reliability issues concerning the interviews that need to be pointed out. The possibility that some of the people interviewed for the study might have lied or did not wish to reveal everything has to be mentioned. They might have been worried that they will be in trouble with the government if they criticised the way the things are, or they might have embellished things to give a better picture of their country to a foreign interviewer. They might have also exaggerated problems in the hope of profiting through possible new projects in the area. Cultural reasons may have also been a reason for giving false information or not revealing everything. However, those possibilities were identified before the interviews and were borne in mind while planning the interview questions and performing the interviews. There is also a possibility that because an interpreter was used there might be some misunderstandings in the interviews or translations.

This study was conducted for a Turku University of Applied Sciences project to develop sustainable tourism in Cat Ba. This is why it is trying to give opinions and ideas about the practical means the project could use to make tourism in

Cat Ba more sustainable, and also pinpoint issues raised that might need more research in the future.

Tourism in Vietnam is still increasing rapidly and, as stated in the official strategy on tourism development, the official intention is to make tourism a key economic sector by year 2020 (see Chapter 2.2). As pointed out, tourism creates social and environmental problems (see Chapter 1.2) and many of them are already a reality in Cat Ba (see Chapters 1.3; 4.1.2; 4.1.4 and 4.1.5).

A guide for 'Making Tourism More Sustainable' by the United Nations Environment Programme UNEP and the UNWTO points out that the need for sustainability includes the tourism sector as well as any other sector (UNEP & UNWTO 2005, 5). It states that the need for sustainable tourism is internationally recognised (UNEP & UNWTO 2005, 26) and that sustainable tourism should not only be an option, but all tourism should try to be as sustainable as possible (UNEP & UNWTO 2005, 23).

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## Interview questions in the villages

### Open questions:

1. Has tourism had negative effects on your life? What kind?
2. Has tourism had positive effects on your life? What kind?
3. Do you think that tourism will have negative effects on your life in the future? What kind?
4. Do you think that tourism will have positive effects on your life in the future? What kind?
5. Has tourism had negative effects on the environment? What kind?
6. Has tourism had positive effects on the environment? What kind?
7. Do you think that tourism will have negative effects on environment in the future? What kind?
8. Do you think that tourism will have positive effects on environment in the future? What kind?
9. Do you or does the village have plans for the future on how to benefit more from tourism? What kind?
10. Do you think that there would be more potential to increase tourism in your village? What kind of services could be offered to tourists in your village?

### Short yes/no – questions:

11. Would you like to have more tourists in your village?
12. Would you like to work in tourism in the future?

## **Interview questions in the Cat Ba National Park**

1. What kinds of positive and negative effects does tourism have on local people's lives in Cat Ba?
2. What kinds of positive and negative environmental effects has tourism had in Cat Ba?
3. Would there be potential to develop tourism in the villages of Cat Ba? Are there already these kinds of plans in progress?