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## THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAI RANG FLOATING MARKET TOURISM IN CAN THO CITY, VIETNAM: FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE

Nguyen Thi Huynh Phuong

School of Social Sciences and Humanities, Can Tho University, Vietnam

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### ABSTRACT

*In recent years, floating market tourism has been regarded as a unique and attractive form of tourism in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. It combines eco-tourism together with cultural and community-based tourism to reach the ultimate goal of sustainable development. Floating markets can be looked upon as part of the river culture and eco-tourism of Vietnam rather than simply as a tourist attraction, as they play an important part in the river - based culture of Southeast Asia. There are approximately 11 floating markets in the Mekong Delta, of which Cai Rang attracts more visitors than those in the surrounding provinces. The reason might be due to its advantages: geographical location, size, infrastructure, services for tourism and connection with other tourist attractions. Therefore, Can Tho city has been received the interest from the government as seen through several documents for tourism development. This article is aimed to study, based on documentary, quantitative and qualitative research, the development of Cai Rang floating market tourism in Can Tho city. It is proposed that Vietnam's policy on tourism has enabled favorable factors for the development of floating market in the Mekong Delta such as economic development plans, strategic orientations and specific objectives. Nevertheless, there is still a gap between policy and practice, and this is a great concern for the development of Cai Rang floating market tourism.*

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### 1 INTRODUCTION

Floating markets were formed in the eighteenth century and have become one of the most interesting forms of tourism (Nhan, 2011). Recently, many studies have been carried out on floating market tourism which nowadays is recognized as a special branch of tourism bringing many benefits to the local communities. Two important examples include the Damnoen Saduak floating market (Piemputthakul, 1993) and the Talingchan floating market (Chotiwan, 2006). Additionally, this type of markets contributes significantly to sustainable development (Srivongcharoen, 2001), and this

tourism branch of tourism could become a tool for poverty alleviation (Tram, 2011). Floating markets play an important role as a wholesale center for agricultural products in the Mekong Delta as well as contribute remarkably to the development of tourism and employment in the region (Xe, 2009). Moreover, this form of travel is a valuable source, a form of commercialized civilization, a cultural characteristic and special form of tourism that are unavailable in other areas (Hung, 2009). Furthermore, with convergence of special culture and trade factors, many tourists have chosen floating markets as attractive destinations during their passage through the Mekong Delta. Recently, the

number of domestic and international tourists traveling to floating markets in the aforementioned area has increased.

Being a new city<sup>1</sup>, Can Tho is growing to be an attractive tourist destination in the Mekong Delta. It is noticeable that compared with surrounding provinces in the region, Can Tho has favorable conditions for tourism development, including its geographical location, infrastructure and services. Additionally, the network of rivers and canals is an ideal condition to develop floating markets. Cai Rang floating market in Can Tho city is known as the most famous floating market in the Mekong Delta. It has played a major role in tourism development, as well as in trading and preservation of traditional culture in the region. With the government's policies on tourism, socio-economic and political conditions, and tourism resources, Can Tho has more opportunities for the development of floating market tourism. Noticeably, according to the document titled "*Can Tho tourism development plan to 2020 and vision to 2030*" (Can Tho Department of Culture, Sport and Tourism, 2014a), the State has specific directions to develop Can Tho tourism.

Floating market tourism has become an essential demand for those who wish to visit Can Tho city; nevertheless, the development of this type of sojourn is still limited. It is said that the policies seem to be the key to gain the success or inhibit the development of tourism if it is not practical in the real context. It is said that no study has specifically been conducted on the reasons for such limitations or on the solutions to improve the situation. The aim of this study is to examine the development of Cai Rang floating market tourism and its limitations through documentary, quantitative and qualitative research.

## 2 RESEARCH METHODS

### 2.1 Sample structure and sample size

#### 2.1.1 Sample structure

The research location is Cai Rang floating market in Can Tho city. The samples for each study area were collected based on the data from 2008 to 2013. The percentage of international tourists to this market is about 20% of the total tourists; the remaining percentage was made of domestic tourists (80%). Thus, the ratio of the samples of foreign and domestic tourists was 2:8 respectively.

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<sup>1</sup>It was created in the beginning of 2004 by a split of the former Can Tho province into two new administrative units: Can Tho city and Hau Giang province.

#### 2.1.2 Sample size

There are twenty-two observed variables included in the factor analysis and which in turn are divided into eight factors such as accommodation services, infrastructure, means of transportation, tour guides, natural environment, other services, security, and the price of services. Normally, the number of observations must be higher than the number of variables in the factor analysis by at least five times (Trong and Ngoc, 2008). Thus, the requirement for the smallest sample size is about five times of twenty-two, resulting in 110 samples, so this study conducted 115 samples.

### 2.2 Data collection

#### 2.2.1 Secondary data

The study relied on documentary research, including articles, official documents, reliable reports, books, research works and websites about floating markets and floating market tourism. In addition, the information from General Department of Tourism, Mekong Delta Tourism Association, Can Tho Department of Culture - Sport and Tourism (DOCST), Can Tho Tourism Association, Can Tho Investment - Trade - Tourism Promotion Center (ITTPC), Tourism Promotion Center of Cai Rang district and other related organizations used in this study.

#### 2.2.2 Primary data

The in-depth interviews were designed to gain a better understanding about the policies of the government on floating market tourism in Can Tho city, the limitations in the development of Cai Rang floating market, and propose some suggestions to improve this tourism type. In this study, the research includes semi-structured interviews with 28 informants as follows:

- Five local officers: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with one representative of Can Tho Tourism Association, one representative of Can Tho DOCST, one representative of Can Tho ITTPC, two representatives of Cai Rang Tourism Center.
- Two tourism companies: one representative of Can Tho Tourism Joint Stock Company and one from the Saigontourist Tourism Service Company, Can Tho Branch.
- One researcher of floating markets in Mekong Delta: Mr. Nham Hung, the author of the book "*Floating Markets in Mekong Delta*", Former Deputy Director of the Tây Đô Theater and Department of Culture in the Hau Giang province.
- Ten stall-holders who trade at the Cai Rang floating market

– Ten local people who live near the Cai Rang floating market

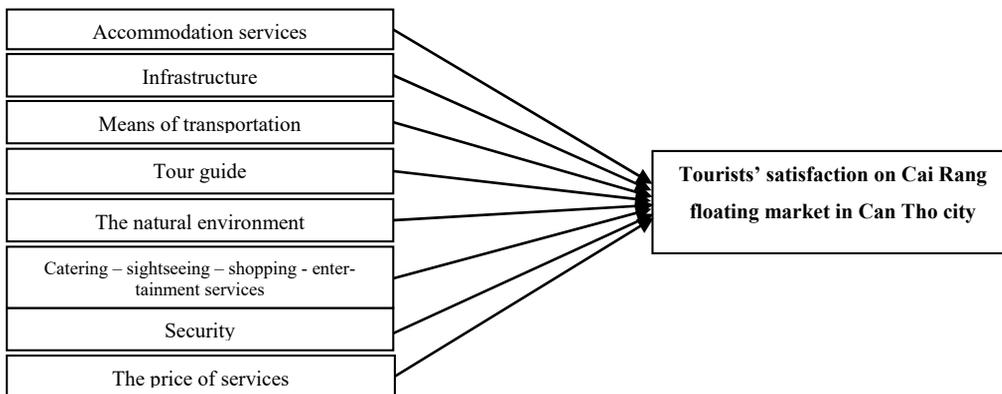
The period for interviewing was from mid-July to mid-September, 2014.

**2.3 Research model**

Recently, some studies about tourists’ satisfaction have been carried with various aspects. Tribe and Snaith (1988) applied and developed the model of SERVQUAL (service quality) of Parasuraman to assess holiday satisfaction (HOLSAT) of tourists in Varadero, Cuba. Valle (2006) and Coban (2012) studied about the linkage between tourists’ satisfaction and loyalty on particular destinations. According to Chen *et al.* (2012), an increasing number of scholars when considering competition between tourist destinations have targeted tourism resources, products and tourism industries; and one of the aspects to evaluate the tourist destination is precisely the satisfaction of tourists in Varadero, Cuba. Valle (2006) and Coban (2012) studied about the linkage between tourists’ satisfaction and loyalty on particular destinations. According to Chen *et al.* (2012), an increasing number of schol-

ars when considering competition between tourist destinations have targeted tourism resources, products and tourism industries; and one of the aspects to evaluate the tourist destination is precisely the satisfaction of tourists. Besides, many studies on tourists’ satisfaction were carried out in Vietnam such as in Da Nang province (Thi *et al.*, 2010), Quang Binh province (Phuc, 2010), Kien Giang province (Hai *et al.*, 2011), Can Tho city and surroundings (Nhan *et al.*, 2014), and Soc Trang province (Thanh *et al.*, 2011).

The study applied the five-level Likert scale (Harry and Deborah, 2012) to measure tourists’ satisfaction: 1\_Strongly disagree, 2\_Disagree, 3\_Neutral, 4\_Agree, 5\_Strongly agree. This research used eight criteria to measure tourists’ satisfaction: 1) Accommodation services; 2) Infrastructure; 3) Means of transportation; 4) Tour guides; 5) Natural environment; 6) Catering – sightseeing - shopping and entertainment services; 7) Security; and 8) The price of services. The aim of this method is to examine the tourists’ satisfaction on Cai Rang floating market.



**Fig. 1: Research model for evaluating tourists’ satisfaction**

(Source: Author, 2014)

**2.4 Data analysis**

This study referred to the book “Analyzing research data with SPSS, Part 1 and Part 2” (Trong and Ngoc, 2008) to evaluate the satisfaction of tourists on Cai Rang floating market from questionnaires. The surveyed data from the questionnaires was conducted and analyzed using SPSS software (16.0) to assess the satisfaction of tourists.

The data collected through semi-structured interviews were synthesized and analyzed with the objective of clarifying the conditions for the devel-

opment of floating market tourism and the limitations in the process.

After analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data, this study suggested, where possible, feasible solutions to improve Cai Rang floating market tourism.

**3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**3.1 General information of Cai Rang floating market**

Cai Rang floating market is located in Cai Rang district, Can Tho city, which formed at the con-

fluence of four rivers (Can Tho, Dau Sau, Cai Son and Cai Rang Be) adjacent to the land-based An Binh market. Currently, the market is on Can Tho river, a strategic waterway axis on Hau river - Xa No canal where it is very convenient for trading with neighboring provinces and the whole Mekong Delta. For this reason, there has been an increase in the number of boats. The floating market's scale has constantly expanded, and purchasing activities have become increasingly busy. Tourists can visit Cai Rang floating market by both roadway and waterway; however, visiting the floating market by boat is more interesting. From Ninh Kieu quay and An Binh market, it takes tourists about 30 minutes, and five minutes respectively to Cai Rang floating market.

Cai Rang floating market is open all day, but it is busiest since the early morning until 8 o'clock. During festivals or near the time of Lunar New Year, the activities of the market start earlier and last longer than usual. The main products at Cai Rang floating market are farming products such as seasonal fruits, vegetables, handicraft products, household appliances, and so on. Currently, there are also new services at this market such as petrol stations, machine repair shops, and sewing machine stands. To meet the demands of customers, some kinds of ready-made food (noodles, sticky rice, porridge, bread), soft drinks, beer, miscellaneous goods, lottery tickets are sold on boats.

Like other floating markets in the Mekong Delta, in Cai Rang floating market, the stall-holders also use a unique advertising form "Cay beo"<sup>2</sup> to show what they want to sell. However, household handicrafts, ready-made food, and daily essential household appliances are not advertised this way. They are kept inside the boats or at the heads of boats. When customers see a boat's pole from where roof-making leaves are hanging, it means they want to sell the boat itself.

The daily life of traders in the floating market is also a factor that generates curiosity for tourists since the market is gathering place for large and small vessels from the neighboring provinces, as well as local residents. Most big boats act as a "mobile house" for stall-holders who do all their daily activities on board, and even keep pets. The floating market is a place for people from different areas with various life styles, careers such as farmers, traders, and gardeners to meet and trade with one another. Nevertheless, they have several similarities in characteristics of solidarity and willing-

ness to help each other; this is one of the precious characteristics of the Mekong Delta floating market traders - they treat each other as neighbors. Thus, the friendliness and hospitality of local traders also creates the beauty of the floating market culture (Hung, 2009).

Since Cai Rang floating market is located in the middle of two land-based markets (An Binh and Cai Rang or Le Binh), it attracts a large number of people buying and selling. It is said that many products in Cai Rang floating market are consumed by the land-based markets, and the two markets also provide essential services for people on the floating market. Therefore, many visitors want to visit the land-based markets after the floating market tour to have a comprehensive view of the life of the local residents.

After visiting the floating market, tourists can go sightseeing or enjoy food and drink at the Cai Rang Floating Market Rest Stop. Moreover, the floating market tours are also linked with other interesting places to meet tourists' demand. For example, people can visit Phong Dien floating market (a retail market, 6 km from Cai Rang floating market), the traditional craft villages of Con Au orchard, Ba Cong eco-tourist site or My Khanh tourist village, to enjoy fresh fruits, local food and partake in activities such as fishing, rowing, listening to "Don ca tai tu"<sup>3</sup>, etc. Nonetheless, if visitors are interested in other destinations in the city, they can drive themselves to the sites, namely Truc Lam Zen-Monastery of Southern, Binh Thuy Communal House, Binh Thuy Ancient House, Can Tho Museum and Pitu Khosa Rangsay Pagoda, Can Tho Ancient Market, and Ong Pagoda.

In short, when reminding of tourism in Can Tho, people often think of the Cai Rang floating market tour because it shows not only a typical cultural characteristic of the local residents, but also a unique river civilization of the Southern region. For a long time, Cai Rang floating market has become the brand of Can Tho tourism that attracted more and more tourists. Therefore, Mekong Delta Tourism Association selected Cai Rang floating market as the most typical tourist site of the region. The Asia Travel Journal also voted Cai Rang floating market as one of the five most beautiful and exciting floating markets in Asia (Youramazingplaces, 2014)<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> "Don ca tai tu" (traditional amateur music in Southern) is an ethnic music of Vietnam that has been recognized by UNESCO as cultural heritage intangible.

<sup>4</sup> The four remaining markets: Damnoen Saduak, Taling Chan (Thailand), the floating market on Dal-Srinagarlake (India), Pan Nam floating market (Myanmar).

<sup>2</sup> "Cay beo" is a long upright pole at boat's bow on which the stall-holders hang samples of their products.

### 3.2 The policies on floating market tourism in Can Tho city

With the advantages of geography, unique culture, ecological features and the hospitality of local residents in Can Tho city, four determined types of tourist attractions are traditional cultural tourism, garden tourism, MICE<sup>5</sup> tourism, river-based tourism and eco-tourism. According to the document titled "*Can Tho tourism development plan to 2020 and vision to 2030*", the State has specific directions to develop tourism in Can Tho city (Can Tho DOCST, 2014a).

As for floating market tourism, the State's management includes: The City People's Committee, Cai Rang District People's Committee, Department of Industry and Trade, and DOCST. However, they all give suggestions that to help floating market become more civilized, it is so necessary to preserve its unique culture. The local government has invested in construction of roads and bridges, boat stations, and other tourism services. Especially, DOCST has opened a special program to train and grant practicing certificates for boat owners. The content includes the law of waterway and road traffic, the knowledge base to serve and communicate with tourists, and the know-how to protect the environment and ensure tourists' safety.

The duties of Can Tho ITTPC are to enhance and professionalize various forms of promotion. This will not only help to advertise the tourism image and brand of the city, but also speed up the involvement of investors for the tourism sector, said by Mr. Nguyen Khanh Tung, Director of ITTPC. Recently, the local government has upgraded and constructed some new cultural-historical-regional sites to create more attractions for tourists. Some potential districts have established a Tourism Promotion Center to develop the locality's leisure travel industry more effectively.

Remarkably, Can Tho People's Committee has launched the project "*Improving and upgrading Cai Rang floating market in the period of 2014-2016*" (total implementation budget is estimated at 26 billion VND). Mr. Nguyen Van Nhan, Deputy Director of the Tourism Center of Cai Rang district, mentioned that Can Tho city People's Committee has a plan to build the large agricultural produce market near Cai Rang floating market. Mr. Le Hung Dung, Chairman of Can Tho People's Committee noted: "We will absolutely not collect taxes on stall-holders living on the floating market.

In contrast, they should be considered to benefit from the policies on education, health and capital. When carrying out this project, we have to notice how to maintain the natural status and not to interfere too much in the floating market".

The strategy of the government refers the relevance of some departments in order to develop tourism in Can Tho comprehensively. Department of Planning and Investment coordinating with DOCST, Department of Finance, Department of Construction, Can Tho ITTPC, and other related organizations have advised the city People's Committee in the establishment of the mechanism of preferential policies to encourage investment and attract investors. Moreover, Department of Health, Department of Industry and Trade, Department of Transport, Department of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs, and other relevant agencies strengthen inspection and collaboration in order to promote the State's management on tourism. Additionally, Department of Public Security is responsible for directing operation forces together with the authorities to organize, inspect and remove social evils such as burglary, robbery, pickpocketing, and other actions that harm the lives, health and property of travelers, stated by Mrs. Nguyen Hoang Diem, Deputy Head of Can Tho DOCST and General Secretary of Can Tho Tourism Association.

In recent years, local governments have tried to introduce and promote the unique culture of Can Tho and the Mekong Delta to help attract more tourists. Mr. Nham Hung, Former Deputy Director of Tay Do Theater and Department of Culture in Hau Giang province, who is known as a general director for some important cultural events of Can Tho city, shared that he was the author and general director of the idea of bringing Cai Rang floating market to Ha Noi during the "unity of the ethnic groups - Vietnam Cultural Heritage" week, which was organized by the Vietnamese Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism in November 2013. He also directed "Can Tho Flower Street" in the Lunar New Year of 2014. Unlike "Nguyen Hue Flower Street" in Ho Chi Minh city, Can Tho Flower Street showed the unique features of Can Tho. In addition, the city also organized the "Food Festival" from January 23<sup>rd</sup> to January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2014 to promote special local food. Local authorities designed the website to introduce the tourist sites and other relevant information for travelers.

In general, Can Tho's policies have facilitated the development of floating market tourism. For example, with the transportation, many construction projects have been completely implemented to shorten the moving time from other regions, espe-

<sup>5</sup> MICE is the acronym of "Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions"

cially from Ho Chi Minh city to the Delta, making it easier for visitors to this region. It can be said that all State’s policies on tourism are generally to develop tourism, increase revenue for local people, and contribute to economic development of the country. However, there is a large gap between the policies and practice shown in some aspects.

### 3.3 Limitations of Cai Rang floating market tourism

In 2004, Can Tho became a Central level city marking the beginning of its noticeable development up to now. The total revenue from tourism and the number of arrivals are shown in detail in the following table:

**Table 1: Total tourist arrivals and revenue from tourism in Can Tho city from 2004 to 2013**

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total revenue (billion VND)	<b>189.143</b>	231.260	270.980	365.090	455.198	507.938	649.527	761.234	851.129	<b>975.987</b>
Total tourist arrivals (people)	<b>407,330</b>	462,141	543,650	693,055	817,250	723,528	880,252	972,450	1,174,823	<b>1,251,625</b>

(Source: Can Tho DOCST, July 2014)

Table 1 reveals a significant increase in both total revenue and tourist arrivals in Can Tho city. Over the 10-year period, the number of total revenue almost quadrupled from about 189 to 976 billion VND, meanwhile that of total tourist arrivals just over tripled from 407,330 to 1,251,625 tourists. In general, Vietnam’s policies on tourism have facilitated tourism development in Can Tho city.

Nonetheless, the development of Can Tho tourism is still limited in comparison to the total number of the whole Mekong Delta (Table 2). In 2013, the

number of international tourists travelling to Can Tho accounted for 14% of the total tourist of the whole region, and that of domestic tourists constituted 52% of the total tourists of the whole region. The number of tourists who visited Cai Rang floating market occupied about 80% of the total tourists travelling to Can Tho city (Can Tho DOCST, 2014b). The total revenue from tourism of Can Tho shared 19% of the total revenue of the whole region (Mekong Tourism Association, 2014).

**Table 2: Total tourist arrivals and revenue from tourism in Mekong Delta from 2010 to 2013**

Year	Total revenue (billion VND)	Total tourist arrivals (people)	International tourists (people)	Domestic tourists (people)
2010	2,855	15,643,648	1,272,402	14,371,246
2011	3,531	17,438,881	1,439,517	15,999,364
2012	4,344	19,409,811	1,605,742	17,804,069
2013	5,141	20,731,493	1,668,852	19,062,641

(Source: Mekong Delta Tourism Association, 2014)

#### 3.3.1 Lack of synchronization in infrastructure and material bases development

According to the local officers’ group, the transportation system in Can Tho has become a big problem for tourism development. Tourists travelling by roadway normally start from Ho Chi Minh city, the low quality of the streets’ surface and heavy traffic cause tiredness for tourists after a long journey (around 3.5 hours). It is said that the quality of public transports, like buses, is not assured. Many tourists complained that Cai Rang floating market lacks of public toilets.

The city also lacks luxury restaurants and hotels, attractive entertainment sites and souvenir shops, so tourists may not prolong their length of stay. “Regarding of tourism companies, there are many

small-scale ones in Can Tho that only have two to three employees”, said Ms. Trieu Tu Nga.

#### 3.3.2 Lack of diversity and attraction in tourism products and services

According to Mr. Nguyen Vinh Nghia, Deputy Head of Department of Tourism, Saigontourist Tourism Service Company, Can Tho Branch, although floating market attracts a growing number of tourists, their length of sightseeing is just from one to two hours. Also, the tourism revenue from the floating market is not significant to the local economy.

It is said that the tourist products are now still monotonous. Visitors come to the floating market and mainly focus on sightseeing, enjoying some fruits or food. They do not have opportunities to join in activities with local residents. The products found

in Can Tho such as orchards, river based tours, traditional craft villages, etc. are not unique; they often duplicate those of the neighboring provinces. The local people tend to imitate the ways of making and offering the products and services from their neighbors; therefore, there is no unique difference found among the similar appearance and quality of products and services. In addition, the government has no idea for the issues of unique characteristics like the design of souvenirs bringing the imprint of Can Tho.

### 3.3.3 *Tourism development without the involvement of local community*

The majority of traders in the floating market were somewhat unsure of their answers when asked about the policies of the State on tourism development in Can Tho city. Most stall-holders do not seem to recognize that tourism is currently vital for their benefits, so they do not have any strategies to attract foreign tourists to buy their products. Moreover, some people lack awareness of ensuring the environmental hygiene, waterway-traffic safety, and price stability to make a good impression on visitors.

When discussing the participation of local people in the tourism sector, some local people said that they do not know anything about the tourism industry. Through the media and the meetings with local authorities in their areas, they know that Can Tho tourism is developing; however, they are not clear on what the government is doing or what their strategies are. They are often reminded of ensuring the public hygiene and showing their friendly attitude to tourists.

The study shows that local inhabitants and traders are too busy to pay attention to the State's policies. In addition, they do not have enough knowledge to participate in tourism development strategies. The locals seem not to have any input in tourism development strategies in Can Tho city; it is the government who designs and makes decisions without their consultation. Furthermore, some stall-holders stated that the officers do not have any specific strategy to exploit floating market tourism as a tool for poverty alleviation. Some officers even ask for extra money as a trading tax. The people living near the floating market added that Bank of Social Policies has considered some poorest households in the area for business loans, but in reality they do not want to borrow money from the Bank. They said it would be easier if they were self-employed with their existing capital. If they borrow the State's capital under their current income, they will not be able to pay the debt. As a result, the local authori-

ties only encourages local residents to provide some products and services for visitors to earn extra income. There seems to be a big gap between the State's policies and reality context.

Additionally, the tourist companies do not have a business relationship with the stall-holders on the floating market. They do not even have a budget to support poor people. Some traders explained: "The tourist companies only organize tours for travelers to visit the destinations. In other words, the tourism companies just exploit tourism resources for their benefits. They rarely help to reduce poverty at the tourist sites". It is clear that the benefits from tourism mainly belongs to tourist companies, hotels, restaurants and some souvenir shops; yet for the local people, the benefits they receive from tourism activities are insignificant.

Most stall-holders think that tourism does not bring any benefit for them; sometimes they are busy with the local customers, and they do not have time to serve foreign tourists who just buy small quantities. In the early morning, they prefer to trade with a wholesale who buys a lot of products because they believe that the first customer deciding the effectiveness of the whole day. If the first customer buys a large quantity, the stall-holder can sell a lot during the day, and vice versa. However, the Western tourists do not know about these Vietnamese beliefs which lead to a misunderstanding between the visitors and the traders. Consequently, some tourists probably feel unwelcome by the traders; this may cause the dissatisfaction with the trip. Thus, to solve this problem, it is necessary to provide more information to foreign visitors before the trip.

### 3.3.4 *The weakness in the management of related authorities*

According to Ms. Trieu Tu Nga, the organization and management towards trading and tourism activities are now limited. It can be said that some tourist companies tend to run sales without compromise on the quality of the service. Since there are many small companies in Can Tho, the price competition often occurs to attract more tourists. Also, some companies imitate each other's tourism programs leading to less attractive tours.

On the other hand, means of transportation and other services at the floating market such as food, drink and farm products are pushed with insistence and overcharge, especially during peak season. Along with this, there are no specific rules and penalties when it comes to environmental pollution. Self-awareness of stall-holders, local residents and visitors is low, and they litter and dispose of

waste into the river. Over the years, the water has been seriously polluted. There are also traffic accidents and congestion of the traffic during business time. Furthermore, most of the sellers in the floating market come from neighboring provinces. They come and go without temporary registration, so it causes difficulties in management, and increase social problems in the floating market like stealing at night, drunk-gambling on some traders' boats in their free time, etc.

It can be seen that one key reason why floating market tourism is still undeveloped, is the weak linkages between government and other stakeholders, especially with local communities. For instance, Can Tho DOCST works independently from Department of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs, Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Department of Planning and Investment, and so on. It is noted that each department has its own responsibilities and there is rare opportunity for them to meet and discuss how to better develop floating market tourism. The relationship between government organizations, tourism companies and the local community seems to be unclear.

Noticeably, "there are many organizations managing the floating market such as the Economic Chamber, the Cultural Chamber, the Tourism Center, and the District People's Committee, and the Waterway and Roadway Police, so it is difficult to reach an agreement. For example, the waterway police want to disperse the floating market, while the cultural and tourism agencies prefer to maintain and develop it", said Mr. Nguyen Van Nhan.

3.3.5 The weakness in tourism promotion

Mr. Nguyen Khanh Tung shared that the activities for tourism promotion are still limited. Many ideas to promote the tourism image of Can Tho have been given, but there were few projects implemented due to lack of budget from the Central government. Training classes for the staff working in the tourism companies are not really effective; most of small tourism companies lack tour guides who are professional and fluent in foreign languages; and the serving style of labors in tourism sites is neither professional nor enthusiastic. Moreover, the promotional activities for tourism products and destinations in conferences, exhibitions, international fairs or on websites are still neither attractive nor effective.

Furthermore, the city leaders do not have capital investment for conservation of the floating market

and doing research on tourism development. Although the Tourism Association has been formed, its activity is still limited. Besides, the statistics data might be different from the actual information because hotel and restaurant owners want to pay less tax. This makes it difficult to evaluate the current situation and to make specific plans to develop local tourism.

Currently, there are fewer traders because with the development of roadways and the birth of many land-based markets and shopping revenues people, except for wholesalers, no longer go to the floating market like in the old days. Hence, if there is no financial support for the local residents, the floating market might gradually disappear.

3.3.6 Not high general satisfaction of tourists on Cai Rang floating market tourism

As shown in Fig.3, the Cai Rang floating market tourism has not really attracted tourists. There are more than half the tourists satisfied (63%); however, 29.6% feel neutral, and 6.9% feel dissatisfied with floating market tourism. Specifically, tourists seem to be satisfied with accommodation services, roads to the floating market, means of transportation, tour guide, fresh air, linkage with close tourist sites, security at the floating market and accommodation prices. In contrast, they feel unsatisfied with the parking lots and boat stations, first-aid kits on board of the boats, trees along the river, river water, catering service and shopping prices. The remaining criteria (the staffs serving on means of transportation, diversity of shops and entertainment sites nearby the floating market, the prices of tours and food) are evaluated at an average level.

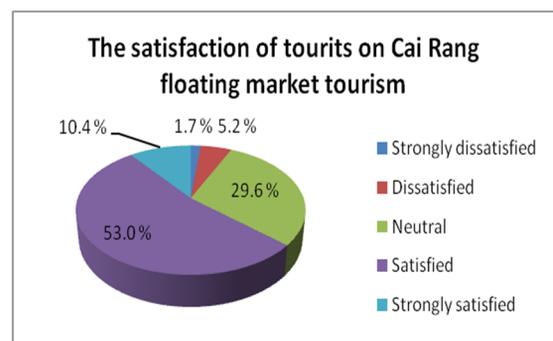
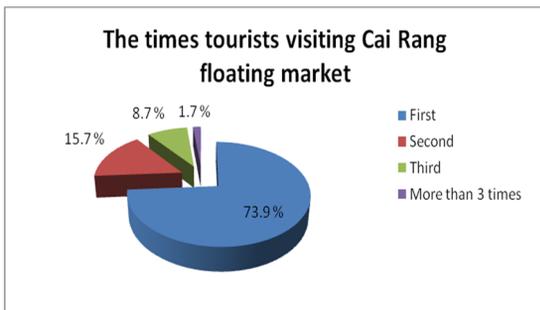


Fig. 2: The satisfaction on Cai Rang floating market tourism

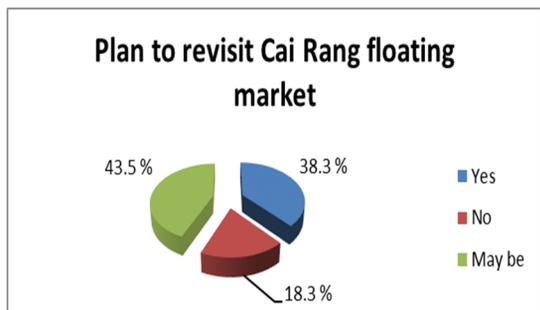
(Source: Processing result from 115 questionnaires, 2014)



**Fig. 3: The times tourists visiting Cai Rang floating market**

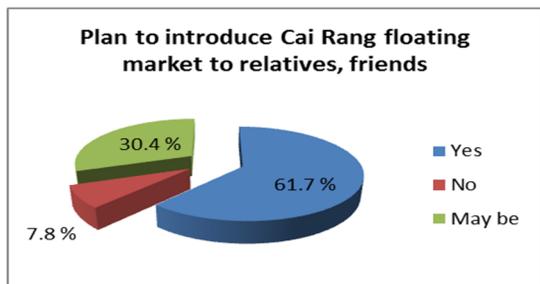
(Source: Processing result from 115 questionnaires, 2014)

Almost three fourths of tourists visited Cai Rang floating market for the first time (Fig. 3). Moreover, approximate 50% respondents said that they did not plan to come back to the floating market and introduce it to their friends and relatives. Since they probably visit the market to satisfy their curiosity, they tend to visit one time only due to bad impressions on overcharging, and poor products and services. It is so necessary to satisfy tourists because this will contribute to promoting floating market tourism’s positive image to potential visitors.



**Fig. 4: Plan to revisit Cai Rang floating market**

(Source: Processing result from 115 questionnaires, 2014)



**Fig. 5: Plan to introduce Cai Rang floating market to relatives, friends**

(Source: Processing result from 115 questionnaires, 2014)

3.3.7 Other remarks

At the moment, there are certain impediments to the development of tourism in Can Tho city. For example, the quality of the workforce does not really meet the demand of the market as well as the tourists. Besides, the floating market was spontaneously making it difficult for the local government to manage.

The local officers noticed that most of the people working in the government organizations are experienced staff. However, it is likely that they are outdated, unable to catch up with the current tourism trend as well as give creative ideas. Additionally, although remuneration has improved, it is still not enough to encourage the dedication of laborers. Some employees in the orchards, hotels and other destinations are not trained and lack language skills. Also, Tourism Promotion Centers in the districts are limited and inadequate in staff, facilities, equipment and operating funds.

It also acknowledged that “the limitation of Can Tho floating market is not systematically planned because the birth of these markets was spontaneous and done by local residents; most stall-holders are farmers, who only know how to sell products for regular customers, so their communication and serving skills towards tourists are limited. Noticeably, “the floating market also competes with roadside and town markets as more and more people are using road transport”, said by Mr. Nham Hung.

Ms. Nguyen Hoang Diem explained that, in recent years, a number of projects have been designed to improve and develop the floating market, but there were few projects done. The reason for this situation is that most projects were too commercial, and they may deeply intervene in the floating market dynamic, risking the loss of the markets’ natural and traditional beauty.

3.4 Proposals to improve Cai Rang floating market tourism

From the analysed results, it can be seen that Can Tho city has some favorable conditions to develop floating market tourism, yet its development is still limited because the management and implementation of policies seem not to be really effective. It leads to the tourists’ quite low satisfaction on this tourism. It is necessary to have cooperation of all stake-holders, including government, private companies, tourists and local people. To improve Cai Rang floating market, following suggestions are proposed as feasible solutions.

### 3.4.1 *Development of the infrastructure – material bases*

The local government should encourage private sectors in establishing high standard restaurants and hotels that meet the demand of high class tourists. Besides, it is necessary to invest in building recreation areas and shopping centers at the local level to prolong visitors' length of stay. In tourist destinations, the material facilities need more investment. Human resources have to be regularly trained. Besides, the price of services must be controlled, and the natural environment has to be protected to make a good impression on visitors.

The local authorities should invest to upgrade the road "Vong Cung" in order to facilitate the tour of Cai Rang floating market - Phong Dien floating market - Phong Dien orchards and cultural - historical - architectural sites in Binh Thuy district. The local government should focus more on the parking lots and boat stations. To prolong visitors' length of stay, the government should construct recreation and shopping complexes along the floating market.

### 3.4.2 *Development of tourism products - services and marketing*

It is necessary to create more excitement and prolong the length of sightseeing for visitors. For example, creating favorable conditions for tourists to talk and engage in daily activities with stallholders, taking photos, enjoying the food by the river, and so on. Especially, the local government should cooperate with tourist companies in designing more interesting activities, such as boat racing or the competition for tourists who have to row the boats and buy the products in the floating market in a limited budget. It is also necessary to build and upgrade the boat stations and parking lots near Cai Rang floating market. Moreover, Can Tho city should link with other destinations in surrounding provinces as well as neighboring countries like Cambodia, Thailand and Laos.

Additionally, Can Tho leaders should facilitate investors to build floating restaurants serving food and drinks for travelers. We need to build impressive souvenir shops near the floating market to sell unique and typical handmade products like the models of Cai Rang floating market, Can Tho ancient market, Ninh Kieu quay, Can Tho bridge, "Don ca tai tu" boat, etc. These souvenirs not only remind tourists of a destination they visited, but they are also a good way to promote Can Tho tourism.

To introduce widely floating market to potential customers, tourism sector has to provide the prod-

ucts and services with high quality because word-of-mouth marketing is the most powerful kind. Apart from diversifying tourism products, ensuring traffic safety, protecting environment and providing good services, it is essential to regularly use survey questionnaires to gather visitors' comments. The government should have more incentives for investors in tourism. Moreover, the Tourism Promotion Center should promote images of the floating market on mass media, tourism websites, conferences, exhibitions, international fairs, and so on.

The State should establish a fund for the promotion activities and research on tourism in each locality. To generate financial sources for investment in tourism development of Cai Rang floating market, Can Tho DOCST should raise funds from organizations and private tourism companies' contributions to improve the environment and develop the local community.

### 3.4.3 *Development of community - based tourism*

Currently, floating market tourism does not bring much economic benefits to the city as well as the local people. To improve this situation, the local community needs to be engaged in planning and development strategies for the city. The local residents play a significant role in the success of any tourist sites, as promoter. It is very important to create favorable conditions for them to be involved in tourism activities. This is a good way to promote the development of economy - society in the locality. When local people realize their benefits from tourism activities, they will volunteer to protect the natural environment and tourism resources like their assets.

The local government needs to have specific ways to attract more local people's participation in the tourism development such as providing means of transportation, food, drinks, souvenirs, products for tourists, etc.

The local community needs to be trained and widen their knowledge about natural environmental protection, the importance of ensuring food safety and reasonable prices, as well as the way to become local guides. Besides, the government should support the financial source for the community to maintain trading activities at the floating market. As a result, local residents can market themselves to tourists and take part in tourism development strategies.

### 3.4.4 *The implementation of the government policies on tourism*

It is said that the implementation of government policies is likely a key component in the develop-

ment process of tourism. It is necessary to have stricter regulations about establishing tourism companies, tourist sites, restaurants, and so on. Businessmen have to pay more attention on product quality and avoid discounting to compete fairly. In the tourism companies, it is necessary to consider copyright towards the tourism programs. Can Tho DOCST should coordinate with the Schools of Tourism in Can Tho and relevant agencies in order to continue the training courses for business owners, staff and employees in tourist attractions, means of transportation, hotels, restaurants, etc. These activities will create conditions for tourism businesses to improve service quality.

Besides, the local officers should establish the market-management team to regularly check and promptly deal with any violation, overcharging situations, and other social problems. In the future, it is very important to enhance the relationship among stakeholders to responsibly develop tourism, including the departments, tourism companies, local community and other service providers. To ensure traffic safety, the waterway managers need to control the means of transportation such as the operating license, quality of means, life jackets, the first aid kits, the staff, and so on. In addition, conducting the waterway traffic management will enhance inspection to ensure order in the operation of boats on the river, thereby preventing unfortunate incidents from occurring.

The local authority should have an observatory to help manage the floating market, and allow tourists to enjoy the panoramic view. The City People's Committee needs to have specific policies in order to support the working capital for poor traders and local people. All interview groups showed considerable attention to the natural environment. They agreed that tourism development must go hand in hand with the preservation of natural resources and protection of the natural environment.

To solve the problem of water pollution, the government has to have specific measures. For example, Can Tho DOCST and District People Committees should open classes to propagate or educate the local people and stall-holders on how to protect the natural environment. Besides, the local authority should verify the staff's to regularly check and promptly solve with any problem. Moreover, all government agencies in Can Tho city should enhance linkage and co-operation among stakeholders to develop tourism in a responsible way. It may be necessary to raise awareness of tourist companies in sharing the profits with the local community at destinations, contributing the funds for the con-

servation of natural resources and the protection of environment.

It is very important to establish a team who is responsible for sanitation of the market surroundings. The Tourism Promotion Center will propose to the City People's Committee setting up an area for garbage disposal. With means of transportation, vehicle and boat owners have to remind visitors of protecting the environment while sightseeing. All local residents and traders commented that the local government needs to build public toilets near Cai Rang floating market. Besides, the market management board should allocate more wastebaskets near the floating market.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

It might be concluded that the weakness in Cai Rang floating market development is the gap between the government's policies and their enforcement, as well as lack of understanding about tourism among stakeholders such as tourism companies, business owners and the local community. Because the tourism does not bring much benefits to the local residents, they do not care about what policies the government is trying to implement.

To help the policies and practice can work in the same direction, the local authorities need to have specific plans to call for more participation from the local people in the development of tourism. The government should listen to the voices of residents before launching any policy or development plan. Likewise, the benefits from tourism should be shared among service providers and the local community so that people can improve their livelihood. They should be encouraged to involve in the tourism sector and they have to be guided on how to join tourism activities. When the locals do not worry about poverty, they will have more time to understand how the tourism should be effectively operated in the city. As a result, the locals will be more willing to suggest new ideas for tourism development strategies, and to take part in natural environment and tourism resource protection. More tourists will be attracted to visit the floating markets and more income will be earned. Besides, ensuring the preservation of cultural identity of the floating markets, and enhancing the livelihood of the local people is vital.

Although the floating market has contributed to introduce the country, the people of Vietnam in general and Can Tho in particular to international friends, the government needs to urgently deal with the problems undermining the development of floating market tourism which is a typical culture

of the Delta. Also, the local government should take advantage of the available conditions to boost the floating market tours so they become the flagship product of the region; possibly contributing to economic growth and sustainable development of the society while preserving indigenous cultural activities.

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