Journal of Macromarketing
00(0) 1-17

DOI: 10.1177/0276146713507281
jmk.sagepub.com
SAGE

Tourism as Catalyst for Quality of Life in Transitioning Subsistence Marketplaces: Perspectives from Ha Long, Vietnam

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Abstract

Tourism is a potential catalyst for transforming subsistence marketplaces, and the quality of life (QOL) for people who live in them. The authors share findings from a study on tourism development in Ha Long, Vietnam, a community transitioning from central economic planning and a focus on heavy and extractive industries, to one that is increasingly dominated by tourism and the industries, goods and services that support it. The authors used multiple methods to gain insights into QOL in Ha Long; those methods included site observations, depth interviews and data collection via an instrument designed and developed by the authors that quantifies perceptions of the evolution of residents' well-being, including anticipated QOL. Findings indicate that a large majority of citizen-stakeholders in Ha Long generally feel life-quality has improved because of policy changes and subsequent tourism development. Concern is growing, however, that some environmental and societal degradation has accompanied positive economic outcomes. Marketing and policy implications, and opportunities for further research are discussed – not only for Ha Long, but for other actual or hopeful transitioning subsistence marketplaces whose leaders see tourism as a catalyst from economic hardship and subsistence-living toward enhanced QOL.

Keywords

Vietnam, Ha Long, quality of life, marketing, macromarketing, subsistence marketplaces, tourism

Introduction

Scholarship on subsistence marketplaces is gaining momentum in and making an impact on the marketing academy (e.g., Viswanathan, Rosa, and Ruth 2008). The topic not surprisingly is of keen interest to scholars committed to macromarketing research (e.g., Viswanathanet al. 2009), a discipline that has included development (e.g., Mittelstaedt and Shultz 2009; Slater 1968), marketing systems (e.g., Layton 2009), sustainability (e.g., Peterson 2012) and quality of life (QOL) (e.g., Sirgy and Lee 2006; Sirgy et al. 2012) among its core foci. Not well represented in the literature however are research findings on specific cases/policies that provide insights vis-à-vis tourism and development that could yield understanding on how certain marketing systems evolve and how they might be more optimally administered, thus helping consumers in them to be pulled from subsistence. Such studies have the potential to shed light on the dynamic interactions among policy, best practices (and unintended failures), and consumer well-being within a marketing system, over time.

The purpose of this article, therefore, is to report findings from a study on a subset of a large marketing system, Vietnam, which is developing socio-economically, is in transition from a planned economy, and which still includes communities that could be categorized as subsistence marketplaces. In particular, the authors focus on the impact of tourism on Ha Long City and Bay, a political and geographic region, and marketing system in Vietnam, with unique assets and challenges – and potentially a lesson-source for other subsistence marketplaces. More specifically, the authors report findings from a study on the impact of tourism on perceptions of QOL in Ha Long. The research makes a contribution to the literature by providing new perspectives on transitioning subsistence marketplaces via some time-honored analytical frameworks familiar to macromarketers – historical narratives, marketing system dynamics, and ultimately the QOL of people – better understanding of which could lead to more effective policies and better outcomes for local residents and other stakeholders affected by tourism development.

Tourism as Catalyst

Tourism has received considerable attention as a catalyst to economic growth and perceived increases in social well-

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being (Tyrrell, Paris, and Biaett 2013; UNWTO 2013). Indeed, policy makers in many emerging and transitioning economies – and the subsistence marketplaces/communities in them – have begun to embark on unprecedented tourism infrastructure projects in environs that had never been exposed to such rapid (if any) investments. While tourism can be a facilitator for development (Bac 2011; Briedenhann 2011), its impact also should be considered in broader context of societal and environmental well-being (Loulanski and Loulanski 2011), including QOL for local populations (Andereck et al. 2007; Bohdanowicz and Zientara 2009). This is consistent with the call for involving all stakeholders in tourism planning and development, including local populations (Landorf 2009). Governments accordingly are now beginning to think beyond economic terms, by considering social and environmental disruptions (Shunnaq, Schwab, and Reid 2008). Some are more proactive than are others. Vietnam is among the developing and transitioning economies that are investing heavily to develop tourism, and this sector is proving to be an economic driver for several regions throughout the country, including Ha Long (Vietnam National Ministry of Tourism 2013). Despite being a signatory of the UNWTO, Vietnamese policy makers – and citizens, tourists to Vietnam, and other stakeholders of its various assets – would be well served by more fully embracing some macromarketing tools and concepts (e.g., Bui and Perez 2010; see also O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy 2000; Shultz 2004). Some issues to consider toward that outcome are found below.

Vietnam in Transition

Vietnam has been recognized by some observers as a development model, reaching or exceeding measures for poverty reduction, ahead of most prognoses (e.g., World Bank 2010), though more recently, again according to the World Bank (2012), the country has suffered "macroeconomic turbulence" largely attributed to "weak institutions, distorted incentives and inadequate information." Vietnam thus is a tremendous socioeconomic success on some measures while simultaneously being an enigmatic work in progress on others. In fact, Vietnam is such a compelling study of a developing marketing system and transitioning political economy, it was recently the subject for a special issue of the *Journal of Macromarketing* (Shultz 2012). Though we will not reiterate the rich and descriptive text of Vietnam's history, transition and development that is discussed in considerable detail in that issue, we do of course draw readers' attention to Ha Long and greater Quang Ninh province.

Since *Doi Moi* began in 1986, policy changes affecting Vietnam and Ha Long have enabled many Vietnamese to pull themselves – or to be pulled – from subsistence-level living. These changes would seem to embody marketing as a provisioning technology (Fisk 1981) and constructive engagement (Shultz 2007), ideals fundamental to macromarketing. Data indicate policies and marketing practices have elevated the QOL for many Vietnamese, particularly in places such as Ha Long (Asian Development Bank 2012).

Measuring Complex Transformation

Building on a history of eclectic assessments of development, growth and consumer/societal well-being (Kumcu and Firat 1984), the current study is framed in the context of several factors that predict or at least affect citizen-consumer QOL. Those factors include geography, political institutions and macro/micro economic policy, culture, marketing and administrative systems (Shultz and Pecotich 1997); strategic collaborations among governments, NGOS and foreign direct investors (Grossbart and Rahtz 2004; Shultz and Rahtz 2004; Shultz et al. 2012), and with respect to unique Vietnamese contexts and experiences (Nguyen and Smith 2012). These approaches recognize multidimensional complexity (Balakrishnan, Duvall, and Primeaux 2003; Barclay and Smith 2003; Llamas and Belk 2011; Peterson 2006; Rahtz 2001; Sen 1999) and the interdependence of economic and social well-being (Ahuvia and Friedman 1998; Grossbart and Rahtz 2004).

Around the world, including transitioning communities such as Ha Long, recognition is growing of the need to monitor how economic development in a community interacts with individual and community well-being. The construct validity of economic indicators, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for example, is being questioned vis-à-vis their long-term and short-term value for assessing community vitality, prosperity, and well-being (Fox 2012; Shultz et al. 2012; Thottam and Wolverson 2012). Several assessments, measures and models designed to incorporate subjective measures of wellness for individuals, communities, and societies as a whole are replacing or supplementing economic measures (Aspinall, Cukier, and Doberstein 2011; Matarrita-Cascante 2010), as institutions increasingly recognize that the well-being of societies is not solely based on economic factors (UNDP 2011, 2013). These instruments, perspectives and/or procedures are often considered to be under the rubric of QOL (see Sirgy 2011 for a summary of QOL indicators and their applications). Governments from almost every country now seek to apply multiple methods and tools to ascertain the efficacy of development projects (Lonska and Boronenko 2012). As the world economy climbs from recession, there clearly is a widespread call to use more diverse perspectives and a much broader-based tool kit to assess the overall health of a society (Constantinescu 2012).

In applying these tools it is crucial to employ appropriate mixes of both qualitative and quantitative tools to gain a rich understanding of how to effectively manage the complexities involved in transition (White, Gaines, and Jha 2012). This consideration becomes imperative in subsistence marketplaces, which in many instances are undergoing fundamental, systemic changes as they transition from agrarian and extraction economies to more modern service economies built with regard to the tourism sector. Each community and culture has unique aspects that need to be considered in managing the transition (Matarrita-Cascante 2010). Public policy officials, marketers

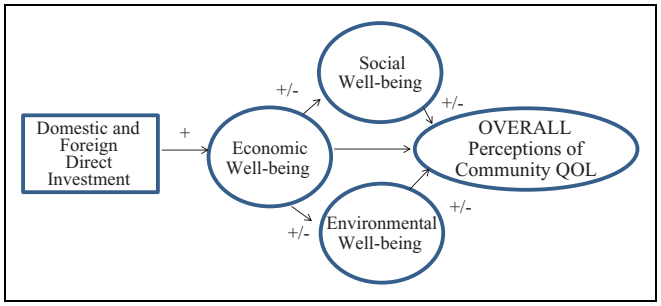

Figure 1. Dimensions of community quality of life.

and consumer-groups accordingly are seeking validated methods from the social sciences to assess both the economic and social aspects of this tourism driven development.

Data related to development and QOL have been collected by members of the research team for more than two decades in transitioning Southeast Asia. Our examination of Ha Long applies methods and measures developed over our long history of research in the area (Shultz, Pecotich, and Le 1994). This particular research focus is consistent with the examination of the Macro Factor and QOL/ Micro-Macro link elements laid-out by Shultz et al. (2012) in their "Framework of Transformative Research in Developing Markets" (p. 180). It is also consistent with the resident perception focused model used by Oviedo-Garcia, Castellanos-Verdugo, and Martin-Ruiz (2008) to track and monitor community resident perceptions of tourism development and planning. In that model, resident assessments fall into three perceptual constructs built around economic, socio-cultural, and environmental dimensions. Our interpretation and distillation of Ovideo-Garcia, Castellanos-Verdugo, and Martin-Ruiz (2008) is shown in Figure 1.

Our model draws from the variety of studies that have examined the impacts of tourism on communities (and their members). This simple, yet elegant construct has an eye toward the fundamentally macromarketing idea of the "triple bottom line" (Elkington 1997; see also *Economist* 2009), which ostensibly separates out, while simultaneously considering: (1) economic, (2) environmental, and (3) social elements of the community. Too often, the social and environmental aspects are relegated to assumptions regarding their strong positive correlation to the economic aspects of tourism investment as a driver for the community's QOL. These assumptions are rather dubious, at times. What can be seen from the studies is a preponderant consensus regarding positive economic impact on the community. The results are much more mixed when holistically assessing the other two dimensions. Questions regarding degradation of environment, sustainability of tourism experience and infrastructure, and protection of a positive social fabric arise. These questions again point to the need for the public and private sector decision-makers to recognize the multi-faceted nature of tourism as a tool for increasing the QOL of subsistence communities. Gaining insight into a community's views regarding QOL is even more crucial in today's world when governments and global foreign direct investment (FDI) can flood capital into a region, with an aim at reaping maximum economic benefits. Under such conditions, change can happen at a meteoric pace, which can make it all the more crucial for public policy decision-makers to map effectively community perceptions of that change. The current study examines how residents in Ha Long, Vietnam have been coping with a massive influx of investment and tourists, both of which were/are intended to transform the community from a subsistence marketplace.

The remainder of this paper is divided into four sections: (1) an overview of Ha Long and the region, (2) methods employed in the current study, (3) results, and (4) discussion and future research directions. We begin with a brief examination of Ha Long's transition over the last twenty years – the emergence of a marketing system – in the broader context of Vietnam and Quang Ninh Province. This examination serves as prelude to an overview of our methods used in exploring the evolution of Ha Long from a subsistence marketplace, and perceptions of the residents regarding tourism development and its impact on QOL.

Ha Long: Tourism as Economic Engine for Quang Ninh

Ha Long, situated on Vietnam's northern coast, is the capital city of Quang Ninh province. The city itself is divided into two sections. Official buildings and industry are concentrated on the eastern side; the more touristic section is located on the western side. New infrastructure now links these two sections, thanks greatly to the completion of Bai Chay Bridge, which has been in operation since 2007. Easy and efficient access to both sides is now possible.

Ha Long is part of the northern industrial triangle of Ha Noi – Hai Phong – Quang Ninh. Longstanding industries include coal mining, fishing and fish farming, shipbuilding, construction, and manufacturing. Ha Long also has a deep-water port and is blessed with natural treasures, including 3,000 islands, islets and limestone monoliths jutting from the sea. Vietnamese legend has it that these outcroppings are dragon's teeth, vestiges from Vietnam's origins. This unique geographical land, seascape and marketing system, coupled with national folklore and Vietnam's transition, has resulted in a shift from mining and heavy industry to tourism. Ha Long is now the largest tourism center in northern Vietnam; a melding of natural assets, industrious people, government policy, domestic and foreign investment, and domestic and foreign visitors (QuangNinh Government 2013a).

Ha Long's development required and still requires the coordination of national, provincial and community policies, including the aforementioned initiatives pertaining to domestic and foreign investment, the transformation of the economic structure towards more modern and competitive industries, and the national poverty reduction programs, among others. Tourism is considered vital to the socioeconomic development strategy of the country. Since 1987, in the Government's resolution 63 on promoting tourism development, Ha Long has been one of ten locations (as are Hanoi, Nha Trang, and HCMC, for example) targeted for investment, with the objective

Figure 2. Ha Long Bay area and inset of Vietnam (source: http://www.vietnamtoursmap.com/)

to make them more attractive, convenient and safe tourism destinations for domestic and international customers.

Vietnam has also emphasized the importance of marine economic strategy and development. The overall objective is for Vietnam to become a sea-based, rich and strong country by 2020. Investment in development of marine industries including sea tourism, therefore, has received much attention from policy makers at both national and local levels. For example, the "strategy on Vietnam's tourism development until 2020, vision to 2030," approved in Decision 2473/QĐ-TTg, indicates the direction of developing tourism as a key economic sector characterized by modernism and professionalism, and a driving force for socio-economic development (Socialist Republic of Vietnam 2011). By 2030, Vietnam strives to become a nation with a developed tourism sector. To achieve these objectives, marine tourism is identified as a priority, and Ha Long and Quang Ninh are mentioned as a location with strengths for that development orientation.

Those strengths should be obvious to anyone who visits Ha Long. Its natural wonders clearly provide an extraordinary differential advantage in the form of inimitable, stunning beauty. Ha Long Bay in fact was recognized by UNESCO in 1994 as a natural world heritage site. The 1992 Academy Award-winning film *Indochine* may have played a part in bringing Ha Long to the world and vice-versa, as much of it was filmed on and around Ha Long Bay. Though the plot received mixed reviews, "The photography is the star of this movie... The beauty, the photography, the impact of the scenes shot on location in Vietnam, are all striking" (Ebert 1993). It should be reiterated that without Vietnam's decision to open to the world, to move toward participation in the global marketing system – and thus to permit the production, distribution and promotion of this film – there would have been no *Indochine* and no free publicity of Ha Long Bay in cinemas around the world. The area is inhabited by fishing communities, including the four communes of Cua Van, Cong Tau, Vong Vieng and Ba Hang. Over 1,600 people reside in these communes (UNESCO 2012). Figure 2 provides a rudimentary map of Vietnam, and more expansive imagery of Ha Long, its

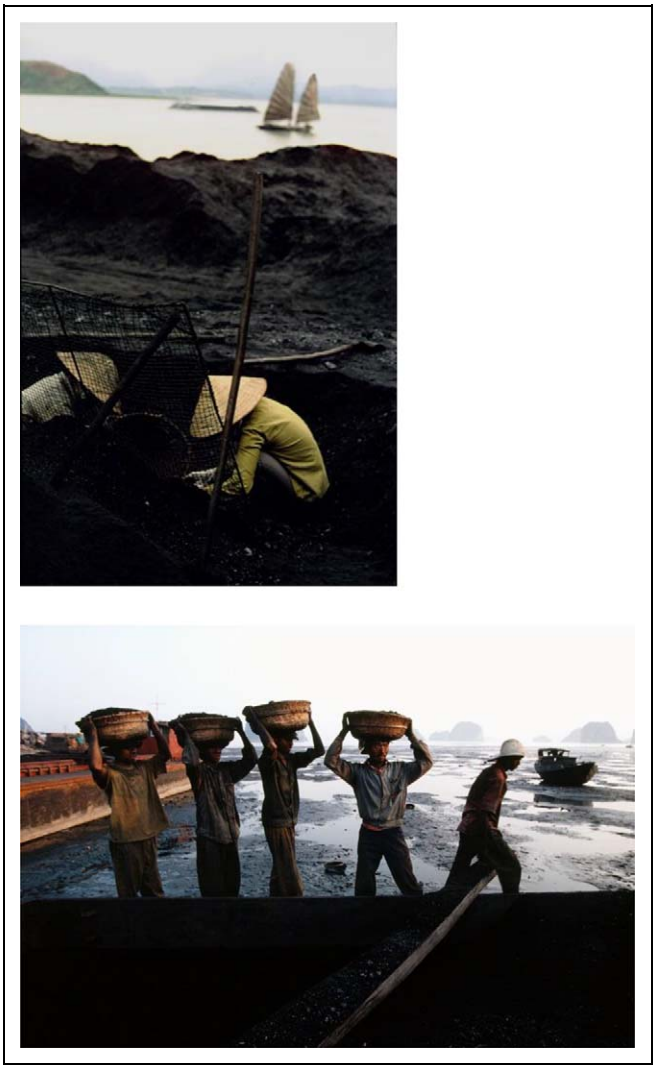

Figure 3. Coal gleaners (Langevin 1991) and haulers (Kazuyoshi 1994) at Ha Long.

bay, some of the larger islands and points of touristic interest, and some cruise-line and other shipping routes.

As reported elsewhere (Shultz, Pecotich, and Le 1994), and as lived by a co-author of this article, many parts of Vietnam prior to *Doi Moi*, and even a few years after that landmark policy was enacted, were in desperate conditions of scarcity. Despite the existence of natural resources that drew Vietnamese laborers to the coal-mining and fishing sectors, living conditions in Ha Long were difficult. No or few marketplaces existed and access to goods and services was limited. The region was bereft of the most rudimentary products, including basic foods, and no official or coordinated marketing system to produce, communicate, price, and deliver them. Deprivation in greater Quang Ninh was prevalent. Figure 3 offers a glimpse into that difficulty, as many people gleaned coal from beaches, and otherwise scavenged or worked in labor-intensive, inefficient and often unsafe agricultural and extractive industries.

During this period, the journey to Ha Long, located approximately 130 kilometers from the capital of Hanoi, was arduous

and lengthy on a road that was often barely passable and required disjointed transit via ramshackle ferries. On that journey, travelers would encounter many people attempting to survive in a rural environment clouded by a scarcity of goods and services. It was desperately poor, but with Vietnam's shift to the market and greater openness to the world, small numbers of tourists started to ply their way from Hanoi to Ha Long. Local Vietnamese began to see these tourists as markets for, well, anything they thought they could sell: small stashes of rice or tea and maybe a few pieces of fruit. Even empty plastic or thatched-bags would sit atop makeshift tables or stools in front of a would-be Vietnamese proprietor hoping to sell something – anything – to the growing numbers of passers-by.

Nearly twenty-five years later, that same journey today is traveled mostly on a modern highway, over a number of new bridges. The ramshackle ferries have long since disappeared. Fleets of air-conditioned tour buses, mini-vans, and private cars travel the route, daily. This infrastructure can largely be attributed to the rise of Ha Long as a tourist destination, and the investments to support it and other industries. Along the way, a traveler can stop at one of the many tourist-targeted venues that now dot the road to Ha Long. Tourists can dine in restaurants, peruse souvenir shops, buy works of art by famous and less-famous artists, visit Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that support disabled artisans, spend the night at any one of various hotels targeting increasingly diverse market segments, and visit other tourist destinations that are short trips off the main road. An even newer road, a super highway, is in the works that will reduce further the distance, stress and travel-time of the trip from Hanoi to Ha Long.

There can be little doubt that the economic tsunami of tourism unleashed on Ha Long and the region has brought money and even fame, and has transformed a subsistence marketplace. Nonetheless, the need for monitoring impact on residents' QOL, the impact on the environment, and the sustainability of both is crucial to answering questions related to maintaining positive contributions and minimizing adverse outcomes to the marketing system. The current research strives to answer some questions related to how the accelerating expansion in tourism affects residents' perceptions of QOL. In the following section, we articulate the combination of methods used to answer those questions.

Methods

The multiple research methods used for this study are consistent with and complement other research projects that have studied transitioning and developing markets (Shultz 1997; see also Almeyda et al. 2010; Chancellor, Yu, and Cole 2011; Hara and Naipaul 2008; Hwang, Stewart, and Ko 2012; Khizindar 2012). Given the complexity of interacting economic, environmental, and social contexts within the communities that are being developed (and sometimes exploited) for tourism, the authors again have drawn upon multiple methods. Data-collection was largely through an ethnographic approach (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry1988; Lincoln and Guba 1985; Spradley 1979).

The research team had unique and complementary skill-sets. For example, one member of the team is a Vietnamese citizen with proficiency in the Vietnamese language and has access to exclusive or privileged areas, people and extant data; some members have country-wide research experience throughout Vietnam and longitudinal engagement in assessment of the country's transition; some members have experience with scale development, ethnographic research, and studying myriad subsistence marketplaces. The multi-skilled team was similar to research teams assembled to study other transitioning marketing-systems, which, because of their collective skill-sets, were able to gain thorough and nuanced understanding of a marketing system (see Shultz et al. 2005 for a detailed discussion).

The particular interview method administered in this study has been developed and refined through more than two decades of studies by the authors while conducting field research in Southeast Asia. Of particular note during data collection is recognition of the contextual and temporal aspects of community QOL evaluations by residents. In other words, asking a respondent for a single static, cross-sectional assessment does not take into account an individual's past QOL experiences in the community and his/her expectations for the future. This problem can be exacerbated in the "hyper-change" environments of regions such as Ha Long. Over the years, the authors' debriefing of survey respondents from the region uncovered a number of responses that clearly called for considering a range of time for the assessments being offered. For example, the authors had heard comments such as: "compared to before, when we were living in fear of being killed," or "it was not too long ago that we had no food." As a consequence, the method attempts to capture QOL over a range of time, a range revealed over the course of data collection or set a priori. A method that fails to use what we will call *range capture* falls short in representing an accurate and trustworthy picture of that individual's feelings regarding his/her community.

Specifically, in the current research, a robust timeline-assessment of ten years was employed. Individuals were asked to provide their assessments of personal well-being and community QOL in a previous time (five years prior), well-being and QOL in the current time, and their *expectations* of well-being and community QOL in the future (five years hence). Recent research has demonstrated the positive impact of expectations for the future on the current state of well-being for community members in even the most tenuous environments (Trani, Bakhshi, and Rolland 2011). These findings from a study in Afghanistan were consistent with a number of past interviews conducted by the authors in Southeast Asia, as discussed above. Thus, we submit that a temporal range of assessments allows respondents to provide a more robust accounting of the community's QOL and its evolutionary aspects in regards to economic, social, and environmental dimensions

Culture also plays an important role in interpretation of well-being and it is important to note that the research team included Vietnam scholars with keen understanding of Vietnamese policy, language, and culture, as well as economic, market(ing), consumption and welfare nuances of the region

studied. Methods included a review of secondary data and extant trends, site observations, and personal interviews of people throughout the subsistence marketplace system that we studied. In this article we emphasize findings from site-observations and depth-interviews (McCracken 1988); the latter were conducted with citizen-consumers, policy makers and marketers in Ha Long. They reside mostly in Bai Chay, a historically subsistence marketplace where the changes in tourism development have been most evident. In 2011, Ha Long was home to 226, 239 inhabitants; Bai Chay precinct, where many of our interviews were conducted, was home to 21,472 residents (QuangNinh Government 2013a).

Interview Instrument

As noted above, the instrument was adapted from a template used by the authors in other emerging touristic regions of developing/transitioning/subsistence Southeast Asia to evaluate QOL (e.g., Rahtz and Shultz 2008). The instrument included both a quantitative global measure of overall QOL and a series of qualitative questions about aspects of QOL. The global measure and the qualitative measures were also given a temporal dimension to allow respondents to evaluate the community in the context of the past and the future. Respondents were asked to use a base 10 point global well-being scale to evaluate the community well-being in a past, current, and future comparative context. This particular scale is consistent with the instrument question and scaling used extensively in various cultures around the world and has exhibited internal and external validity (cf. Lau, Cummins, and McPherson 2005). In keeping with the intent to seek a greater depth and understanding of particular dimensions, the qualitative elements explored many of the issues laid-out in the Grossbart and Rahtz (2004) framework of sustainable development, and used in work by the authors in examining the transition of other subsistence marketplaces throughout Southeast Asia. Using the aforementioned instrument as a template, the Vietnam-Ha Long tool was developed and then translated from English into Vietnamese by a native Vietnamese speaker and back-translated to English by a different native Vietnamese speaker, to validate the initial translation. Discussions took place between research team members to consider any language anomalies that could occur in application. Care was taken to ensure that the translations were also consistent with the cultural interpretations of residents.

Sample

Data were collected in a two-stage process. Initially, the research team visited government and community leaders to explain the nature of the research and the proposed data collection in the region. As in many transitioning countries and communities, clearance from Vietnamese government authorities is a prerequisite for research activities. The research team explained the process thoroughly and received permission for the data collection. No demands regarding limits or questions that would have biased the sampling frame or actual process of data collection were placed on the research team by officials. The research team also decided to include some of the local community leaders in the sample to allow possible future analyses regarding differences among that group and other segments in the population. Fifty interviews were conducted with citizens in Ha Long, in November 2011, mostly in an area known as Bai Chay, where changes in tourism development have been especially evident. As noted above, the intent was to explore perceptions across a wide range of community members. The interviews were intentionally conducted with community leaders and community members representing a variety of demographic cohorts. The process involved in the interview was designed to elicit diverse opinions from a demographically heterogeneous sample of participants. While not designed as a quota sample, women and men each accounted for 50 percent of the sample. The sample ranged in age from 17 to 88 with 70 percent of respondents less than 50. Median age was 38. The interviewees included working people, a high school student, and some retirees. They also held different positions in society (e.g., mini-hotel and restaurant owner, office staff, tour guide, factory worker, sales staff, government officials, students, and retirees from these various roles).

Interview Process

The research team identified an administrator at the City's People Committee who would sanction the team's plan of selecting interviewees on the basis of the identified criteria. The groundwork laid at the City's People Committee provided key contacts with community leaders in Bai Chay Precinct and facilitated arranging certain desired interviews. The research team was then able to gain access to the desired interviewees to assure them of confidentiality regarding their participation in the research. The vast majority of people approached agreed to do the interview. Only a very small number of people refused to participate. Non-response bias or refusal to participate was minimal and certainly at a rate much lower than typically experienced with survey data. Of those who did refuse the reasons cited related to being "too busy" with their business or "not familiar with answering the interview questions."

The interviews were conducted in the respondents' homes, their hotels, offices, and/or at their shops. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes. All the interviews were conducted in Vietnamese by native Vietnamese speakers, transcribed and later translated into English.[1] Most of the interviews were audiotaped.

The interviewers had been briefed to use the survey as a basis for discussion and to probe various answers if they felt there were additional insights to be gained. Respondents were asked to evaluate community and personal QOL in the past and present and also were asked to share their expectations for the future. In the process of collecting data the interviewers were instructed to be particularly sensitive to comments regarding how residents view the QOL changes in the area as it

transitions from an economy based on mining and fishing to one that is increasingly oriented toward tourism.

Visual Documentation and Measurements

The authors have collected visual documentation of the changes that have been occurring in the region. This ongoing process allows the authors to build visual support or to corroborate interpretations of data obtained from the personal interviews, and to catalog the actual changes that have occurred in the locale of interest. Others have long advocated the use of photography and videography in the examination of markets and consumer-related domains as a way to enrich data collections and support a deeper understanding of markets and communities (Belk 2011, 2013; Belk and Costa 1995; Belk, Devinney, and Eckhardt 2005; Belk and Krozinets 2005). The aforementioned visual documents are interspersed throughout the results section of this manuscript. They visually reveal the changes occurring in Ha Long.

Results

The results reported here follow the framework laid out by Ovideo-Garcia, Castellanos-Verdugo, and Martin-Ruiz (2008), Rahtz and Shultz (2008), and Shultz, Pecotich, and Le (1994) in providing helpful lenses through which to interpret site-observations and interview-responses. In reporting our findings, we intend to provide a more robust and insightful evaluation of the Ha Long transformation, which in turn will enable marketing scholars and practitioners and public policy officials to better understand the myriad community-related factors affecting that change, and potentially change elsewhere. To that end, the authors identify and classify themes that appeared in the qualitative responses to questions regarding the past, present, and future states of the perceived QOL dimensions in the community.

QOL: A Positive Economic Trend; Concerns about Society and the Environment

We find that there is general agreement that life has improved for the residents of Ha Long since tourism became a centerpiece of Ha Long's development strategy. Noteworthy is the observation that a smaller percentage of respondents rated the current community QOL to be lower, post *Doi Moi*, than did other Vietnamese samples from earlier studies (cf. Nguyen, Shultz, and Westbrook 2004; Shultz, Pecotich and Le 1994). In other words, a larger percentage of respondents in our sample believe QOL is improving. Table 1 shows the mean scores for QOL among Ha Long residents have risen when the residents compared present level of life-quality to past level. Further, the expectation for a continued increase in QOL is also evident. Older residents recounted, on several occasions, how difficult life was before tourism brought investment into the community. Our oldest woman respondent recalled her living conditions before the tourism-transition started (going back farther than the five-year range to a time before *Doi Moi*). Her recollection of the conditions prior to tourism-development is consistent with the nature of a subsistence marketplace.

Table 1. QOL Ratings for Ha Long, Ten-Year Capture.

Quality of Life Rating (n=48) *	Mean Score #	Std. Dev.	Percentage Change
Past (Five years ago)	6.38	1.346	—
Current (Present)	7.73	1.291	+ 21%
Future (Five years in future)	8.93	.947	+ 16%

*Two respondents of the sample of 50 did not give ratings on QOL measure; for the Future QOL rating n=42, as an additional six respondents thought they could not rate the future QOL for Ha Long.
Mean score for 10 point scale (10 highest to 1 lowest rating).

> At that time, things were very difficult, the life was tough. It was subsidized time, lacked food, had to queue for buying. The life before was very tough for all. It was difficult . . . to be satisfied. However, now the society has more developed. People have enough food and warm clothing. Very happy! (Female, 88 years)

When we move beyond the global assessment of QOL for Ha Long residents and focus on specific aspects of the community, we begin to see some wider variations regarding residents' evaluations. Cognizant of the model in Figure 1, we classified the comments pertaining to the three domains related to the transition: (1) Economic, (2) Social, and (3) Environmental. The authors then assessed respondents' comments to ascertain whether they were positive or negative vis-à-vis sub-facets of the three larger model-components. Table 2 reports the gross number of times respondents used words related to aspects of the Ha Long community and its tourism evolution in their descriptions of the transformation.

What becomes evident is that residents see a real economic contribution to the community. At the same time, they are concerned about the social and environmental costs that could be incurred if public policy officials do not attend to these aspects of market development and evolution.

Community Engagement and Comprehensive Planning

Infrastructure development has been and continues to be integral to Ha Long's renaissance, an issue that we mention here and in later text. The previously mentioned Bai Chay Bridge, seen in Figure 4, is a good illustration of this reality. Ha Long would remain divided and transportation to-and-from would be dependent upon ferries. The point, of course, is that without substantial investment in infrastructure – from roads to bridges to hotels, to water treatment, to power grids, etc. – tourism cannot grow, jobs cannot be created, and economic prosperity is not likely to occur.

Despite the ongoing importance of infrastructure, however, some respondents' comments reveal a perceived lack of comprehensive transformational planning by their leaders. Respondents mention unfinished projects and the need for more *focused*

Table 2. Terms Used to Describe Ha Long Transformation/

Economic	Frequency	Positive Trend Line	Negative Trend Line
Jobs	121	121	0
Services	34	28	6
Cost of Living	14	0	14
Shopping	17	17	0
Transportation	29	29	0
Food Availability	9	9	0
Income	26	26	0
Environmental			
Traffic	16	0	16
Crowdedness	11	0	11
Pollution	15	0	15
Social			
Corruption/Social Evil	29	0	29
Spiritual Life	14	0	14
Personal Stress	4	0	4
Socializing	21	15	6

n=50 Respondents used multiple terms and are reported as gross numbers for entire sample
Assignment to Negative or Positive Trend Lines pertains to respondent's answer of positive or negative change from previous time related to. Respondents could be counted for both assessments from five years to current and current to five years future.

Figure 4. Integral development: Bai Chay bridge links the two sections of Ha Long. Source: author photo.

Figure 5. New construction, vehicles, and parking throughout the city. Source: author photo.

infrastructure. There is concern that some community members will be ignored or simply left behind (and thus potentially regress toward subsistence living). Residents are also thinking ahead to long-term community well-being. This concern for the future is found in comments that request service and other tourism-related training programs to sustain the tourism sector. Some new commercial buildings and the rapid growth in number of automobiles, as seen in Figure 5 and which are vital to development, are also seen as insufficient and/or not well coordinated with a larger, sustainable plan.

More specifically, residents call for building schools and educating children. A number of their comments encourage leaders to consider more engagement across the entire community. They appeal to leaders to recognize community needs and do more to empower its residents. The comments from three women seem to encapsulate many of these types of feelings:

> We want that the leaders care more about the environment, the infrastructure and citizens' life. (Female, 49 years)
> The leaders should care and understand more (about) the citizens. (Female, 32 years)
> Leaders at different levels need to understand and care more about citizens' life, especially the poor households'. (Female, 63 years)

The call for more community engagement includes the development of both a short- and long-term comprehensive market-planning program for Ha Long. The residents refer to a number of specific transformational market themes that fall within our model's categorical structure: (1) Economic, (2) Social, and (3) Environmental. Narratives within each of these domains were classified on a continuum that ran from positive to negative feelings regarding the states of each vis-à-vis the past, present, and future.

These themes are developed more fully in the following passages, which are arranged to reveal an interpretation that is representative of the broad set of responses regarding how members of the local community view and relate to tourism development, their personal well-being, and the community's QOL. The following text is interspersed with photographs, resulting in a richer and more robust presentation of the thematic narrative. Respondents' comments may reflect overlap in dimensions, but comments were classified by what the authors interpreted to be most relevant to a particular dimension. Responses also often transcend specific moments in time, the discreet periods of past, current, and future that we earlier referred to as *range capture*. In other words, they reveal a

Figure 6. Hotels for domestic tourists and backpackers dot the streets of Bai Chay. Source: author photo.

Figure 7. Stone carving artisan shop catering to tourists en route to Ha Long. Source: author photo.

temporal transition from subsistence-level living. Note too how age occasionally seems to influence a person's perceptions of what constitutes the framing for both personal well-being and community QOL in Ha Long, a theme introduced earlier.

Economic Themes

From an economic standpoint the populace recognizes that the transformation from subsistence in a planned economy to a more modern marketing system has been, in general, a boon to the community. Sub-themes that run throughout the mentions of economic benefits relate to how residents have come to interact with a variety of new market realities in their community. These sub-themes are: (1) Shopping, Goods and Services, (2) Employment Opportunities and Related Issues, (3) Transportation and Infrastructure, and (4) Cost of Living.

Shopping, Goods and Services. Policy that stimulates investment, infrastructure, and informed consumers and marketers begets shopping venues, goods and services. These public and private endeavors form an evolving, dynamic process that is both an outgrowth and driver of the rise of Ha Long tourism. Hotels, shops and other service-providers have mushroomed in and around Ha Long. We share images of some of them to make key points.

Most hotels, for example, are relatively inexpensive and typically target the domestic market and backpackers (see Figure 6), but we have also seen the emergence of expensive, up-market resorts, such as those found on Cat Ba Island. The increasingly broad spectrum of hotel offerings is indicative of the growing popularity of Ha Long among domestic and international tourists, and the increasing sophistication of local marketers and investors who wish to segment the market and to differentiate their products.

Figure 7 reveals a shop specializing in stone carvings, the Chan Thien My Center, which is about 65 kilometers outside of Hanoi and about 90 kilometers from Ha Long. Estimates from an employee, during a visit to the Center by one of the authors, put the percentage of customers directly related to visitor passages to Ha Long at over 80 percent. The existence and contribution of Chan Thien My to the well-being of the citizenry clearly is a direct result of Ha Long tourism. Furthermore, primarily disabled employees, including the artisans, staff the Center. The facility therefore not only provides jobs – as do similar facilities – it creates opportunities for work to a population that is frequently disenfranchised from the labor force. Note the English-language sign promoting that human resources feature to international tourists, most of whom will have functional understanding of English.

A popular practice at this shop is to photograph patrons with the specific artisan who made the purchased item and then post the photo in the customers' corner where names of both patron and artisan are entered for posterity. What has become clear, in addition to the remarkable growth in such retail operations, is the increasingly clever methods merchants implement to attract buyers. It should be re-emphasized that these shops – and the jobs created by them – exist to provide goods and services to tourists that generally are in transit to and from Hanoi and Ha Long. Thus, the socioeconomic impact extends well beyond Ha Long, per se.

Residents point to and appreciate a substantial increase in the availability and variety of consumer products, and facilitative mechanisms to purchase them. Figure 8 shows a typical row of well-stocked food and small-goods retailers, while Figure 9 shows a facilitative mechanism in the form of an automatic teller machine (ATM) provided by a Vietnamese bank. These are considered to be positives for the community; shopping choices and newer marketplaces provide a boost in community QOL. There is also an interesting hint of the adaptation to a better living condition in the new market realities. While people are satisfied with the current shopping choices, their expectations are rising about the marketplace in the future. Two comments substantiate these points.

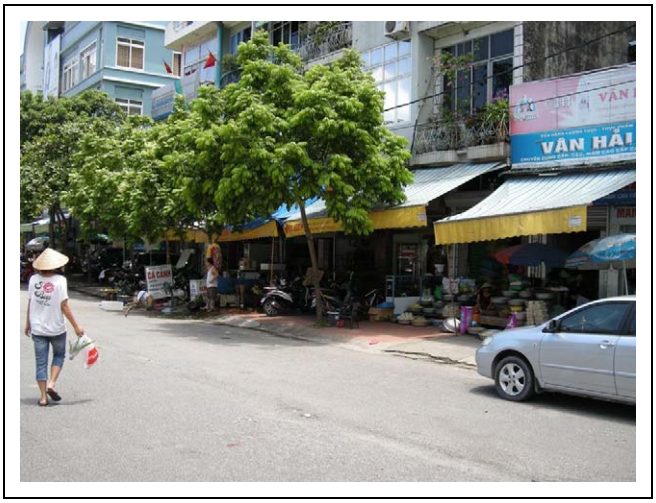

Figure 8. Markets and stores now are plentiful, and stocked with much greater assortment. Source: author photo.

Figure 9. Economic development has led to a proliferation of convenience products and facilitative services, including the rise of ATM and other banking services. Source: author photo.

> Now the material life is better, opportunities for shopping and entertainment are better. (Male, 33 years)
>
> Looking for a place to eat is easy but looking for a good place for entertaining and shopping, especially in the evening is not easy at all. (Female, 35 years)

Employment Opportunities and Related Issues. As noted in the text related to overall QOL in Ha Long, the economic driver of job creation and new opportunities for residents is very positive. Respondents stated how jobs had become more stable and a wider variety of jobs was available for people to choose from. These jobs were both directly and indirectly related to the tourism transformation. Our informants also suggested that job opportunities had acted as a magnet for immigration from

Figure 10. Tourist souvenirs provide this vendor a more secure revenue stream. Source: author photo.

greater Quang Ninh and other provinces. This, in turn, created higher demand for goods and services, which provided even stronger economic growth and stability. Two comments reveal these positive feelings regarding employment.

> Five years ago jobs were unstable. Now they are stable. Life is better. (Male, 37 years)
>
> Mainly people from other provinces came to Ha Long to look for jobs. People rarely (leave) Ha Long. Many jobs (are) available here. (Female, 44 years)

Many jobs in coal production and fishing have given way to, or have been supplanted or supplemented by, more lucrative (and frankly easier) jobs throughout the tourism sector. As just one example, Figure 10 shows a floating vendor, with souvenirs stacked on a boat, while 11 shows a tour boat operator. Note that the traditional attire – for example, the *Non La* or conical hat – has given way to the more global cap and adidas / Real Madrid replica (rip off / counterfeit?) soccer shirt. A trend toward more global attire is commonly seen throughout Ha Long. Exceptions are found in the hyper-real touristic venues – culture shows and the like – which are designed to feature "traditional" attire and behaviors.

That said, one still finds fishermen and their families mixed-in with the tour boats. These people still pursue their time-honored crafts, but now have a much greater and more stable demand for their catch, from the influx of tourists. Figure 12 captures a symbolic transition: fishing boat, with two occupants; one wearing traditional attire (e.g., *Non La*), the other wearing more global attire.

Transportation and Infrastructure. In general, residents strongly favor improvements in transportation and infrastructure. Housing and business property developments have grown dramatically in the wake of the tourism transformation. Bridges, roads, and reliable power have been a boon to commerce.

Figure 11. Tour boat operator. Source: author photo.

Figure 12. Non-touristic fishing vessel. Source: author photo.

> I think it's because since 2007, when Bai Chay Bridge came into operation, integrating two areas, this has facilitated the development of port business, transportation, and trading that leads to the more economic development, then tourism growth. (Female, 27 years)

As mentioned, this investment in infrastructure has been a real driver in the market evolution and has given rise to a variety of industries that support the commercial and private transportation sector, including new car dealerships, the vehicles they sell and ancillary services that support them, as seen in Figure 13.

Note however the recurring theme of also focusing on education, sustainability and aesthetics.

> Leaders need to pay more attention to education and training. Leaders care about developing infrastructure such as expanding roads, but need to build green, clean, and beautiful environment for tourism development. (Male, 52 years)

Figure 13. Newly surfaced road and new car-dealership to meet growing demand for automobiles. Source: author photo.

Cost of Living. Prices of goods and services are increasing. From transportation to food, some respondents expressed concern that life could become more difficult. Moreover, some recognized market-factor connections between rise in income generated by tourism-jobs and a more generalized rise in prices across the board for housing, consumer goods and food. Worries about what the future would bring as costs continue to rise in Ha Long and greater Vietnam. A typical comment:

> I think people will face more difficulties in 5 years such as money devaluation (inflation) problem, the increase in food and electricity prices that will make people's life harder. (Male, 40 years).

Environmental Themes

Environmental challenges are instantly apparent upon arrival in the Ha Long Bay area. Three sub-themes pertaining to the environment are: (1) traffic congestion, (2) touristic-site crowding, and (3) pollution. The three sub-themes are interrelated and greatly affect the sustainability of the tourism sector, and ironically the sustainability of the fragile eco-system that is Ha Long Bay, which in due course will have a profound impact on both the residents and the tourists. For individuals who have witnessed the twenty-years transformation, from subsistence to surplus, the impact is stunning.

Traffic Congestion. Residents report that (automobile and motorbike) traffic in the downtown areas is quite congested at times. They call for continued infrastructure development to alleviate the problem. Traffic is a problem on the bay, too, where tour boats large and small all seem to chart similar courses. One member of the research team witnessed a few near-collisions among larger boats and the accordant tourist-boat launches that ply their way to deliver passengers to islands, secluded grottoes,

Figure 14. Tourist ships vying for anchorage in one of the inlets on Ha Long Bay. Source: author photo.

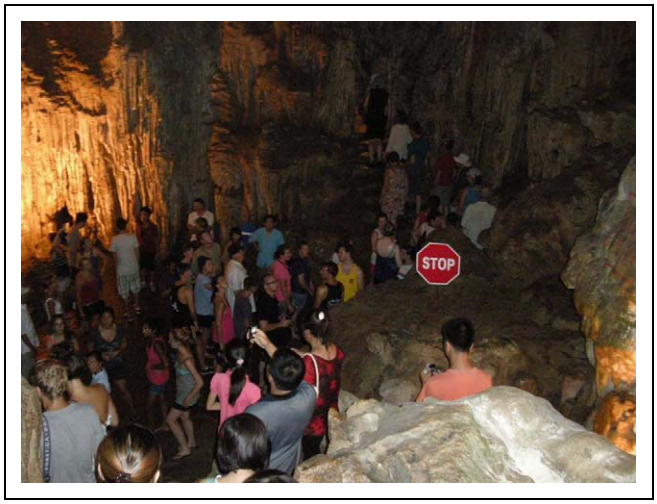

Figure 15. Site congestion: delicate ecosystem overrun by tourists. Source: author photo.

beaches, and the growing number of tourist shops and restaurants. Figure 14 provides a view of the boat traffic.

Tourist-site Crowding and Degradation. Besieged by tourists, even formerly "undiscovered" sites, such as caves on remote islets, have become over-crowded, evincing a commons dilemma whereby the financial gain from more and more tourists inevitably will degrade or perhaps even destroy what they come to see and experience (Shultz and Holbrook 1999). Figure 15 clearly reveals the situation. Note the English-language, American-style "STOP" sign, presumably intended to deter some tourists from some areas.

Local residents also recognize the accelerating trend and inevitable threats. Respondents feel their city and environs have become much more crowded than just a few years ago. While understanding the role of tourism to economic well-being, some of them acknowledge a negative relationship between overcrowding and community QOL. They also express concern that overcrowding will diminish the tourism experience for visitors and hence the long term sustainability of their tourism based economy.

> Perhaps, there will be more tourists, will be more crowded and exciting, but perhaps this may not be as good as now because it will be noisy when too many people come. (Female, 32 years)

> . . . more crowded. A year ago, there was no traffic jam like now. In 10 years, it's very difficult to imagine. (Female, 35 years)

Pollution. Residents are concerned about the increase in pollution. This is expressed in a number of ways pertaining to the community environment in general and in specific comments addressing health, community well-being, and long term tourism impacts. The three comments below reflect the range in which residents view the problem and a call for some sort of action.

> The environment should be cleaner, less rubbish. Many new people have not good attitude. They sit on the beautiful grass and throw rubbish after drinking. Very sad! Need to educate people's attitude. (Female, 40 years)

> The environment and pollution issues should be better cared (for). (They are) Getting very bad. (Male, 62 years)

> I'm very much concerned about the environment and waste issue. If tourists come they see the city is dirty. They will complain, and we feel very sad about it. (Male, 55 years).

Social Themes

The social dimension is comprised of four identified subthemes: (1) corruption, (2) spiritual life, (3) personal stress, and (4) socializing. These subthemes were mentioned in some way by all respondents. They clearly recognized that with the positive aspects of the tourism transformation of their community there would come some potentially unfavorable outcomes as well. Respondents feel community unity may be adversely affected as certain community members profit a great deal more from the transformation than will others. This concern has been expressed by Vietnamese for at least twenty years (Shultz, Pecotich, and Le 1994), and gets directly at the issue of corruption, which is viewed as a social ill or "social evil." They also generally believe that there has been, and will continue to be, a deterioration in the spirituality of community members. Some respondents also lament increased pace-of-life and the increased personal stress that accompanies it. Finally, while giving a nod to a number of increased entertainment options for socializing, some comments also reveal concerns about the nature of those social interactions. Overall, respondents hope for better community, but show a clear apprehension about the future.

We leave the reader with several comments that provide some representative insights regarding this apprehension.

> I think changes, some negative changes, will surely occur. This even could happen in developed countries, so it will inevitably in Vietnam. For instance, when personal interest is too big, it may make people forget the community's benefit. This leads to social evils such as corruption. There is a need for vision. I think leaders in the whole country need to work for the benefit of the people, need to pay attention and care more about the people. (Male, 70 years)

> (I hope for) restoration and reinforcement of the ethical values, sense of community, and humanities in life. (Female, 35 years)

> There have been many people coming to Ha Long from other places. I think the Quality of Life is different from it before. People here are not as friendly and close, as well as caring for each other as before. So I feel satisfied less than before. (Female, 27 years)

> The material life is better but the spiritual life is not as good as before. (Male, 54 years)

> Life is now better than five years ago . . . because the good side of economic development, tourism, mining, and marine fisheries development that lead to richer material life, at the same time has drawbacks like increased social evils, negative changes in moral values among some groups of young people, heavier pressure in life, environmental pollution, and increasing traffic accidents. (Female, 35 years)

> Before, life was simple. People did not have many demands. Since tourism has developed, people have become more knowledgeable and their demands have been increasing. (Female, 49 years)

> Now I think life is quite different from before. There are many problems: corruption, social evils, pollution, inflation, etc. Relationship among people is not as good as before. (Male, 54 years)

Analysis of the identified subthemes moreover does uncover some cohort effects for age or time in some categories. Older respondents couched many of their responses in the context of "compared to before," whereas younger respondents were much more "present–minded" in their responses.

Discussion and Implications for Policy and Further Research

The interpretation and analysis of the findings from our site-observations and interviews reveal, in general, that people have positive attitudes toward the current and future development of Ha Long on economic and material dimensions. Investment in the tourism sector has facilitated the transformation of a subsistence marketplace into one in which goods and services are readily available, jobs are plentiful, and QOL has improved for a large majority of Ha Long's residents. Most interviewees expect that in five to ten years Ha Long would develop into a modern, busy and beautiful city, somewhat similar to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, and the tourism industry would develop even faster in Ha Long. Some of the positive changes many interviewees expect in ten years include a variety of material and economic outcomes. Attributes such as a more modern and beautiful city, increases in income and living standards, better development of infrastructure and transportation, and opportunities for learning new and "better" cultures from foreignvisitors are mentioned. Age and employment (or at least a vision of future opportunity) in some instances seems to affect perceptions of QOL.

As a group, though, the interviewees noted some negative issues associated with the development process and all respondents expressed some concerns about possible negative changes. Several people mentioned their expected dissatisfaction with QOL in Ha Long, in five years; that is, they have concerns about negative issues that may occur in the future. Specifically, many interviewees were greatly concerned about environmental issues that may cause problems for health (e.g., waste and toxic effluents, polluted water, dirty beaches), and societal issues such as insecurity, inequality, and corruption associated with the increasing gap between the rich and the poor. Some of the respondents were quite concerned about how to protect and keep the relatively pristine natural resources, and were worried about traffic jams, unprofessional service, unsustainable development, and life becoming "too busy."

Figures 16 and 17 illustrate the stunning transformation in Ha Long, over the last twenty years. The former is from 1990 and the latter from the summer of 2012. Community members and the research team recognize that while this tourism transformation has brought wealth to Ha Long and greater Quang Ninh, it also must be managed effectively to sustain its positive impacts on the community.

To help Ha Long develop in ways that increase QOL, interviewees shared many suggestions and comments typically pertaining to areas for improvement and to the order of priority for development. Suggestions include the need to have a clear and shared vision, a strategic orientation, and a development plan from leaders of the city in which the strengths/advantages of Ha Long should be identified and developed. The desire by the wide majority of respondents was that public policy officials and the private sector should work to ensure a good environment and good social life for citizens. Another strong comment area specifically deals with the need to protect and to care for the environment. Indeed, the tremendous popularity of Ha Long Bay – approximately 750,000 visitors reportedly visited Ha Long Bay during a five-days period at the end of April and beginning of May, 2013 (QuangNinh Government 2013b) – now ironically threatens the very nature and culture of the area (World Monuments Fund 2012). A number of interviewees also suggested that, together with tourism development, Ha Long should develop support services that help the citizenry to move forward not only economically, but in sustainable community enhancements. Such initiatives/enhancements would include, for example, building play areas and shopping centers to better serve Ha Long's citizens. Many interviewees also expressed expectations for leaders in both the public and private sectors to recognize the impact on the short-term and long-term well-being of the community and all its stakeholders.

Environment protection while developing the tourism sector is apparent in a number of respondent's comments. Environmental impact assessments that include the views of citizens are being

Figure 16. Local fishing fleet hauls the day's catch to the beach. Source: Do (1990 [2000]).

Figure 17. Local tour-boat fleet hauls the day's catch to the beach. Source: author photo.

introduced in Vietnam (Hostovsky, MacLaren, and McGrath 2010). They are vital in tracking trends and should be continued, as should be residents' evolving perceptions of QOL. Hwang, Stewart, and Ko (2012) note that tourism development itself can be managed by community action that seeks to optimize the positives while controlling potential threats in a proactive manner. If tourism development is to lift transitioning communities' to an optimal QOL for its residents, then it is very important for public policy officials to embrace the concept of QOL as a metric for assessing the true impacts of tourism and communities, residents, and visitors (Moscardo 2009). Consistent with this thought, one of the respondents in Ha Long shared this overarching assessment regarding the critical role public policy officials must play to safeguard QOL:

> I feel good about the economic life in general. I am not happy about the living environment because it is increasingly crowded and polluted. Leaders need to pay attention to the environment, education, and health care. (Female, 37 years).

We encourage readers to note that the sample size and the methods hint at some limitations to the study. Future research should include larger and more representative samples, not only in Ha Long, Quang Ninh, or greater Vietnam, but in other transitioning subsistence marketplaces whose leaders or other concerned stakeholders are keen to understand better the dynamic interactions of tourism development and QOL. Further refinement or development of methods and instruments that can assess evolving perceptions – *range capture* – would be welcome, as would the establishment of databases to help track and better understand trends. National comparisons of policies and practices would be welcome. These in turn could help citizen-stakeholders, managers and policy makers to learn best practices for managing touristic assets. Similarly, new initiatives in Ha Long to replicate successful policies implemented in other subsistence marketplaces could be studied for their impact on QOL and the various forces that affect Ha Long (e.g., And Beyond Africa 2013).

In summary, this article offers a fresh assessment of the impact of tourism development – and sheds new light on the evolving and dynamic interactions among policy, investment, tourism, sustainability and QOL – in a transitioning subsistence marketplace. It offers an initial look at qualitative data collected in Ha Long, a community in northern Vietnam, which is transitioning from a subsistence-level marketplace dominated by state support/planning and agrarian and extraction activities, to a service-based economy and marketing system committed to growth and QOL enhancement via tourism development. Tourism has markedly changed the physical, economic and social landscapes of Ha Long. Most respondents believe QOL has improved; many respondents believe environmental degradation and some social evils (e.g., corruption and anti-social behavior) have accompanied these positive trends. Older people who experienced the darkest periods of subsistence-living, and have clear memories of privation in the early 1980s, are especially supportive of development policies that have stimulated tourism, and market(ing)-oriented policies more generally. A preponderance of respondents believes the future will be better on various QOL indicators, but also believes social and environmental threats may coincide with this trend. Ha Long residents increasingly expect policy makers and civic authorities to continue development projects that further enhance prosperity and QOL.

Acknowledgments

This paper builds on and extends working papers presented at the 2012 International Conference for Marketing and Development and the 4th Subsistence Marketplaces Conference, for which the *Journal of Macromarketing* served as a principal sponsor. The authors thank Editor Terrence H. Witkowski, who managed the entire review process of this article, and the anonymous reviewers for many helpful comments shared on earlier drafts; they also thank Nguyen Thi Thu Mai, Quang Ninh officials, and the good citizens of Ha Long who graciously allocated their time and effort, which enabled the authors to conduct and to complete this study.

Note

1. One of the principal researchers speaks fluent Vietnamese and English, having been born and raised in Vietnam and having earned

a doctorate in an English-language university in Singapore. Thus, translations and back-translations did not suffer from misinterpretations or distortions.

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