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Vietnam Cultural Standards

Photo and Graphic Images to Avoid

- ~ Showing public displays of affection with a member of the opposite sex should not be shown.
- ~ Do not show someone touching another's head.
- ~ Do not show pointing with finger - use entire hand.
- ~ Do not show palm of right hand facing oneself, forefinger crooked and moving back and forth.
- ~ Do not picture anyone standing with hands on hips or crossing their arms on their chest.
- ~ Show no one touching someone on the shoulder or touching a member of the opposite sex.
- ~ No photos of anyone in shorts. They are to be worn only at the beach.
- ~ Photographing groups of 3 people are considered unlucky.
- ~ Do not show anyone crossing the index and middle finger is a very offensive sign in Vietnamese custom. It does not mean hopefulness like it does to us.
- ~ Putting one's feet on a table or sitting on a desk while talking is considered rude.

Design Elements

- ~ Be careful if you intend to show the Vietnamese flag. The flag of present day Vietnam is a red background with a large gold star in the middle. The flag of the former South Vietnam is a gold background with 3 horizontal red stripes in the center. Some Vietnamese Americans do not recognize the present day flag. Since these brochures are intended for distribution in the unified Vietnam, please take this into consideration.
- ~ In Vietnamese, the family name is written first, the middle name second and the "first" name last.



Your message. Clearly delivered.

Content

- ~ In general, the Vietnamese are collectivists
- ~ The individual is seen as secondary to the group - whether the family, school, or company
- ~ As a result there are strict guidelines for social interaction that are designed to protect the group's face
- ~ Hierarchy is very much in play in Vietnam based upon age and status. This is from the influence of the teachings of Confucius which emphasizes social order.
- ~ The head of the family would be responsible for making decisions schooling would be one of them
- ~ Respect is the cornerstone of interpersonal relationships in Vietnamese society. Respect is conveyed by the use of special terms of address and certain stylistic devices, but respect is also expressed by nonverbal behavior. The proper respectful behavior is to avoid eye contact in talking with one who is not an equal or the same sex.
- ~ The smile is used as an expression of apology for a minor offense or as an expression of embarrassment when committing an innocent blunder
- ~ The Vietnamese wear Western-style clothes.
- ~ Buddhism is the most commonly practiced religion in Vietnam

Education

- ~ Vietnam is a country with over 86 million people and with more than 60% under the age of 35 (Source: General Department of Statistics of Vietnam, 2009), the education needs for this young population are huge. Only about 1.6 million (about 2%) actually are now at higher education institutions. Each year approximately 1.2 million students graduate from secondary education but the enrollment to higher education is only around 300 thousand (Source: Department of Higher Education, MOET).

