

IJACT 23-9-7

## Identifying Factors Influencing the Image of Vietnam's Tourist Destinations in the Eyes of Global Tourists

Eun-Mi Lee\*

Professor, Department of Global Business Administration, Dongseo University emlee0322@gmail.com

Pham Thi Quynh Anh

Master Student, Department of Business Administration, Dongseo University quynhanhns@gmail.com

### Abstract

*The number of international tourists is noticeably recovering in many parts of the world, with the number of Vietnamese tourists growing significantly. Consequently, this study aims to identify the factors influencing the image of Vietnam's tourist destinations among international tourists interested in visiting the country. Additionally, the study examines whether the perception formed in this manner subsequently affects their intention to visit. The findings reveal that cultural attractions and eWOM (Electronic Word of Mouth) positively influence the development of a tourism destination image. However, film tourism did not have a significant effect on the destination image. Moreover, it was observed that the destination image indeed influences the intention to visit.*

**Keywords:** Destination Image, Film Tourism, Cultural Attraction, eWOM, Visit Intention

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Drawing on recent data from UNWTO in 2023, international travel experienced a significant rebound in 2022, with over 900 million tourists traveling internationally. This figure marked a twofold increase compared to 2021, signifying a robust recovery. However, despite this remarkable growth, the total number of tourists reached only 63% of pre-pandemic levels. It's important to highlight that all global regions witnessed substantial growth in international tourist numbers during this period [1]. Vietnamese tourism has witnessed a robust revival in both domestic and international tourist arrivals during the early months of 2023. According to reports from VIRAC in 2023, domestic tourist numbers are projected to reach 13 million, representing a 1.6-fold increase compared to the same period the previous year.

Furthermore, the influx of international tourists visiting Vietnam in January 2023 has reached nearly 872,000, showing a significant surge of 23.2% compared to December 2022 and an astonishing 44.2 times increase compared to January 2022. In terms of tourism revenue, January 2023 is estimated to reach 2,200 billion dong, indicating a remarkable growth of 113.4% compared to the same period last year [2]. During the 31st Southeast Asian Games (SEA Games) hosted by Vietnam, the tourism industry seized the opportunity to effectively promote itself as a secure, welcoming, and captivating destination to sports delegations and visitors from around the world [3]. Vietnam is focusing on promotion to improve international tourism but there is still a lack of research that focused on Vietnam market. The term "destination image" encompasses people's efforts to form an impression of a vacation spot, including their beliefs, feelings, perceptions, and knowledge about it, as well as information gathered directly or indirectly through various channels like tourism websites, social

Manuscript received: : August 7, 2023 / revised: August 20, 2023 / accepted: August 30, 2023

Corresponding Author: [emlee0322@gmail.com](mailto:emlee0322@gmail.com)

Tel: +82-51-320-4832

Professor, Dept. of Global Business Administration, International College, Dongseo Univ., Korea

Copyright©2023 by The International Promotion Agency of Culture Technology. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>)

media, and travel experiences [4]. Research has shown that destination images have a direct impact on behaviors and closely tied to the overall success of the tourist destinations [5] [6]. Additionally, studies have found that both cognitive and affective images have a positive influence on the intentions of prospective travelers to visit these destinations.

Consequently, it becomes imperative to enhance the tourism destination image to ensure sustainable development in the field. According to previous research, culture, tourism films, and social media marketing play an important role in influencing consumers' behavior and destination selection [7] and a positive destination image influenced tourists' motivation to travel and their intention to visit. While existing research has focused on the broader impact of the tourism destination image on overall tourism development, there is a noticeable dearth of studies that have investigated the specific factors contributing to the formation of this image. In conclusion, the primary objective of this study is twofold: to identify the factors influencing the image of Vietnam's tourist destinations for international travelers interested in visiting the country and to investigate whether the image formed in this manner subsequently influences their intention to visit.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES**

Film tourism defined as “all forms of travelling to destinations, which in general enable a connection with the world of film [8]. It is a subset of cultural tourism that refers to the growing interest in and demand for destinations that have become famous as a result of their appearance in movies and television shows. Films can act as motivators, though not always directly to a specific location [9]. They can contribute to or build upon existing destination images, spark an interest in seeking more information, and play a significant role in the formation of potential tourist images and decision-making. Film tourism is a crucial tool in destination development and the co-creation of tourists' experiences. Promoting a destination through films can attract more visitors, subsequently leading to the development of policies that favor that destination. This, in turn, aids in the conservation and promotion of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the place [10].

H1: Film tourism has a positive effect on tourism destination image.

Cultural values, despite being intangible, are the deepest and most important part of a cultural manifestation. Culture is a term that can be defined in many ways and it encompasses various aspects such as art, architecture, religion, history, intangible heritage and cuisine. In contemporary times, culinary experiences are particularly enticing to tourists due to the unique flavors of local dishes in each region. The relationship between food and tourism is intimate, influencing the overall image, positioning, and branding of a destination. This, in turn, enhances the perception of all available services in that area [11]. Cultural tourism provides an opportunity for travelers interested in exploring indigenous cultures and customs to fulfill their needs and wants. Prior research has demonstrated that quality of cultural experiences significantly influences tourists' image of the destination and their satisfaction with it.

H2: Cultural attraction has a positive effect on tourism destination image.

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) is a modern form of communication that encompasses both positive or negative statements conveyed by potential, current, or former customers about products, services, or companies via the Internet [12]. With the emergence of the Internet, the importance of word-of-mouth communication in purchasing decisions significantly expanded [13]. According to Dellarocas [14], eWOM can have significant ramifications for managers in terms of brand creation, product development, and quality assurance. Positive internet reviews can increase the perception of hotels among potential customers [15] and recent studies showed that eWOM has a positive impact on brand image [16]. The demand for evaluations and recommendations about a destination is increasing as travelers seek to explore more and discover new experiences. eWOM can effectively influence the evaluation of a destination's image. Positive reviews have the potential to attract a wide audience and enhance the tourism destination image.

H3: eWOM has a positive effect on tourism destination image.

Jalilvand et al. [17] conducted an extensive study that delved deep into the intricate dynamics of the relationship between a destination's image and the intention to revisit. Their research findings established a robust and positive connection between these two crucial elements within the domain of tourism. What their study revealed was that a positive destination image, as highlighted by their research, exerts a significant influence on shaping tourists' behavioral intentions to travel [18]. Importantly, this influence goes beyond mere intentions; the destination's tourism image, according to their study, emerges as a formidable predictor of various behavioral intentions, including visitation and destination selection [19]. The significance of these findings cannot be overstated, especially in today's travel landscape, where travelers increasingly seek unique and memorable experiences, and where a positive destination image not only captures interest but also significantly influences actual travel behaviors, highlighting the critical need to nurture a favorable image for tourist destinations due to the profound impact of perception and reputation on travel choices.

H4: Tourism destination image has a positive effect on visit intention.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To examine the conceptual models and test hypotheses, data was collected from foreigners in various countries, including South Korea, the USA, Australia, Canada, Uzbekistan, and others. Out of the 335 questionnaires distributed to the respondents, 313 usable responses were obtained. The sample consisted of 66.6% females and 33.1% males. The majority of respondents were in 20-29 age group (40.4%), with 22.8% in their 40s and 20.2 % in their 30s. In terms of education level, 40.8% were college/university graduates, while 34.3% held a graduate degree. Regarding income, the majority (54.6%) had an income below \$3,000, 25.5% had an income between \$3,000 and \$5,000, and 19.9% had an income over \$5,000.

All items were measured on five-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Most of the scales and items were based on existing sources, with some modification made for the study. Items related to film tourism were borrowed from Juskelyte [20], such as "I want to visit the film's location after watching them." Cultural attraction was based on Edi et al. [21] measurement items (e.g., "Vietnam has good local foods to try."). eWOM was measured using items from Jalilvand et al. [17] (e.g., "To make sure I will choose the best destination in Vietnam, I often read other tourists' online travel reviews."). Tourism destination image was based on Edi et al. [21] items (e.g., "Vietnam is fascinating destinations."). Finally, visit intention was measured using items from Shani et al. [22] (e.g., "I plan to visit Vietnam in the future.").

The results of the factor analysis conducted on the study's main components are presented in Table 2. Factor analysis yielded adequate loadings above .50, indicating that the extracted factors fulfilled the criteria for construct validity. The reliability test performed on each factor demonstrated internal consistency, with all constructs achieving Cronbach alphas greater than .80. To establish discriminant validity of the major constructs, a confirmatory factor analysis and correlation analysis were performed. The results, as shown in Table 3, indicated that all correlation coefficients were below .90, and none of the squared correlations exceeded the corresponding Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, confirming the discriminant validity.

**Table 1. Result of exploratory factor analysis**

Construct	Items	Factor Loadings	
		Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
Cultural Attraction	Culture1	.822	
	Culture2	.859	
	Culture3	.696	
	Culture4	.871	
	Culture5	.819	
eWOM	eWOM1		.509

	eWOM2		.744			
	eWOM3		.837			
	eWOM4		.914			
<b>Film Tourism</b>	Film1			.915		
	Film2			.933		
	Film3			.769		
<b>Destination Image</b>	Image1				.852	
	Image2				.794	
	Image3				.788	
<b>Visit Intention</b>	Intention1					.890
	Intention2					.918
	Intention3					.892
<b>Eigenvalue</b>		5.313	2.035	1.484	3.810	1.045
<b>% of Variance</b>		44.276	16.957	12.368	63.500	17.420
<b>KMO</b>			.804		0.825	
<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>		.881	.852	.891	.809	.935

Table 2. Result of correlation analysis

	Mean	Cultural attraction	eWOM	Film Tourism	Destination Image	Visit Intention
<b>Cultural Attraction</b>	4.08	1.00				
<b>eWOM</b>	3.79	.349**	1.00			
<b>Film Tourism</b>	2.29	.327**	.310**	1.00		
<b>Destination Image</b>	4.09	.659**	.319**	.343**	1.00	
<b>Visit Intention</b>	4.19	.487**	.320**	.280**	.568**	1.00

\* p< .05, \*\* p< .01, \*\*\* p< .001

## 4. RESULTS

Hypotheses were examined using structural equation modeling estimation. All hypotheses except H1 were supported (Table 3). H1 proposes the effect of film tourism on destination image, which was found to be statistically not significant ( $\beta = .03$ ,  $t = 0.74$ ). H2, which posit the impact of cultural attraction on image, was supported ( $\beta = .58$ ,  $t = 8.70$ ). As consumers perceive cultural attraction more positively, their destination image increases. This finding highlights the importance of Vietnam's cultural heritage, diversity, and experiences in shaping its overall image as an attractive place for tourists to visit. H3, which proposed the effect of eWOM on destination image, was also supported ( $\beta = .12$ ,  $t = 2.40$ ). Higher degrees of eWOM were found to increase destination image. Lastly, H4 posits the impact of destination image on visit intention ( $\beta = .99$ ,  $t = 10.08$ ). As consumers perceived destination image more positively, their visit intention increased.

Table 3. Result of model

Path	Estimate	t-value
<b>H1: Film tourism =&gt; Destination Image</b>	.03	.74
<b>H2: Cultural attraction =&gt; Destination Image</b>	.58	8.70**
<b>H3: eWOM =&gt; Destination Image</b>	.12	2.40*
<b>H4: Destination Image =&gt; Visit Intention</b>	.99	10.08**

Notes:  $X^2(df) = 310.34$  (128,  $p < 0.05$ ), CFI = 0.94, IFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.06 \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.001$

## 5. DISCUSSION

This study investigates the factors influencing the tourism destination image and explores the relationship between the destination image and visit intention. This study provides both theoretical and practical implications. Firstly, there is very little research identifying factors influencing the destination image, but this research sheds light on the factors influencing Vietnam's destinations image on a global scale. A positive destination image not only attracts more tourists to the region but also provides a competitive advantage in the highly competitive global tourism market.

Secondly, this study underscores the significant role played by cultural attractions in enhancing the destination image. Diverse and captivating cultural attractions in a country, including historical sites, traditional festivals, museums, art galleries, and local customs, it can enhance the overall appeal of the destination. Tourists are often drawn to places that provide unique cultural experiences and opportunities to immerse themselves in the local way of life. By showcasing its rich cultural heritage and experiences, Vietnam can enhance its image and attract more travelers seeking authentic and enriching experiences.

Thirdly, this research highlights the critical role of electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) in shaping Vietnam's destination image. Positive eWOM can amplify the country's appeal, attract more tourists, and bolster its reputation. Effective management of eWOM is essential for companies to maintain a positive brand image, engage with customers, gain a competitive edge, and build lasting customer relationships. Effective management of eWOM will benefit the tourism industry but also contribute to the local economy in Vietnam.

Lastly, the study found that film tourism did not significantly impact the destination image. While film tourism can attract some visitors to a destination due to its association with popular movies or TV shows, the overall impact on the destination's image might not be substantial. Film tourism often creates temporary spikes in tourist arrivals, primarily driven by fans of the specific media content. However, the destination's long-term image is influenced by various other factors, such as its cultural attractions, safety, eWOM, and overall travel experiences. Therefore, tourism professionals and government authorities should use the findings of this study to inform the creation of promotional and non-promotional materials aimed at attracting foreign tourists to Vietnam.

Despite these valuable implications, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The research focused solely on Vietnam, and future studies should include a more diverse range of countries to comprehensively examine the factors affecting destination image. Additionally, this study did not consider travel involvement, which may influence the formation of image or visit intention differently. Therefore, future studies should take into account moderating variables, such as travel involvement, to provide a more nuanced understanding of these dynamics.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

'This work was supported by Dongseo University, "Dongseo Frontier Project" Research Fund of 2022.'

## REFERENCES

- [1] Tourism Set to Return to Pre-pandemic Levels in Some Regions in 2023. <https://www.unwto.org/news/tourism-set-to-return-to-pre-pandemic-levels-in-some-regions-in-2023>.
- [2] Vietnam's Tourism Industry: Overcoming Bottlenecks in the Period "Go Ahead, but Slow Down". <https://viracresearch.com/tourism-industry-overcome-go-ahead-but-slow-down>.
- [3] Vietnam Tourism Industry Sees Huge Growth for 2023. <https://special.vietnamplus.vn/2023/03/06/vietnam-tourism-industry-sees-huge-growth-for-2023>.
- [4] A. Jebbouri, H. Zhang, Z. Imran, J. Iqbal and N. Bouchiba, "Impact of destination image formation on tourist trust: Mediating role of tourist satisfaction," *Frontiers in Psychology*, Vol. 13, pp. 1-17, 2022. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.845538

- [5] H. Qu, L.H. Kim, and H.H. Im, "A model of destination branding: Integrating the concepts of the branding and destination image," *Tourism Management*, Vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 465-476, 2011. DOI: 10.1016/j.tourman.2010.03.014
- [6] M.J. Khan, S. Chelliah, and S. Ahmed, "Factors influencing destination image and visit intention among young women travellers: Role of travel motivation, perceived risks, and travel constraints," *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, Vol. 22, No. 11, pp. 1139-1155, 2017. DOI: 10.1080/10941665.2017.1374985
- [7] M. Alghizzawi, "The role of digital marketing in consumer behavior: A survey," *Int. J. Inf. Technol. Lang. Stud*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 24-31, 2019.
- [8] S. Zimmermann, "Reisen in den Film"- Filmtourismus in Nordafrika," *Tourismus-Lösung oder Fluch*, pp. 75-83, 2003.
- [9] N. Macionis, and B. Sparks, "Film-induced tourism: an incidental experience," *Tourism Review International*, Vol.13, No. 2, pp. 93-102, 2009. DOI: 10.3727/154427209789604598
- [10] P. Mohanty, A. Thomas, H. Pudota, and M. Deka, "Film Tourism for Heritage Conservation and Promotion: The Case of Nrityagram, the First Indian Dance Village," *Atna Journal of Tourism Studies*, Vol.15, No. 2, pp. 49-66, 2020. DOI: 10.12727/ajts.24.3
- [11] C.M. Hall, "Boosting food and tourism-related regional economic development," *Food and the Tourism Experience: The OECD-Korea Workshop*, pp. 49-62, February, 2012.
- [12] T. Hennig-Thurau, K.P. Gwinner, G. Walsh, and D.D. Gremler, "Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: what motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the internet?," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, Vol.18, No. 1, pp. 38-52, 2004. DOI: 10.1002/dir.10073
- [13] C.M. Cheung, and M.K. Lee, "What drives consumers to spread electronic word of mouth in online consumer-opinion platforms," *Decision Support Systems*, Vol.53, No. 1, pp. 218-225, 2012. DOI: 10.1016/j.dss.2012.01.015
- [14] C. Dellarocas, "The digitization of word of mouth: Promise and challenges of online feedback mechanisms," *Management Science*, Vol. 49, No. 10, pp. 1407-1424, 2003. DOI: 10.1287/mnsc.49.10.1407.17308
- [15] I.E. Vermeulen, and D. Seegers, "Tried and tested: The impact of online hotel reviews on consumer consideration," *Tourism Management*, Vol. 30, No. 1, pp. 123-127, 2009. DOI: 10.1016/j.tourman.2008.04.008
- [16] M.R. Jalilvand, N. Samiei, B. Dini, and P.Y. Manzari, "Examining the structural relationships of electronic word of mouth, destination image, tourist attitude toward destination and travel intention: An integrated approach," *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, Vol. 1, No. 1-2, pp. 134-143, 2012. DOI: 10.1016/j.jdmm.2012.10.001
- [17] M. Jasin, "The role of social media marketing and electronic word of mouth on brand image and purchase intention of SMEs product," *Journal of Information Systems and Management (JISMA)*, Vol. 1, No. 4, pp. 54-62, 2022. DOI: 10.4444/jisma.v1i4.258
- [18] H. Zhang, X. Fu, L.A. Cai, and L. Lu, "Destination image and tourist loyalty: A meta-analysis," *Tourism Management*, Vol. 40, pp. 213-223, 2014. DOI: 10.1016/j.tourman.2013.06.006
- [19] K.S. Moon, Y.J. Ko, D.P. Connaughton, and J.H. Lee, "A mediating role of destination image in the relationship between event quality, perceived value, and behavioral intention," *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 49-66, 2013. DOI: 10.1080/14775085.2013.799960
- [20] D. Juškelytė, "Film induced tourism: destination image formation and development," *Regional Formation and Development Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 54-67, 2016.
- [21] R. Eid, and G. Agag, "Determinants of innovative behaviour in the hotel industry: a cross-cultural study," *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 91, pp. 1-12, 2020. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijhm.2020.102642
- [22] A. Shani, Y. Wang, S. Hudson, and S.M. Gil, "Impacts of a historical film on the destination image of South America," *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, Vol. 15, No. 3, pp. 229-242, 2009. DOI: 10.1177/1356766709104269