

THE IMAGE ASSESSMENT OF VIET-NAM AMONG U. S. TOURISTS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

BY

HUNG-TUAN-TRAN

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF SCIENCE

06/ 2004

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dr. Leo H. McAvoy, former advisor, U o M/ MN/ U S A

Dr. Ingrid E. Schneider, current advisor, committee chief, U o M/ MN/ U S A

Dr. William C. Gartner, committee member, U o M/ MN/ U S A

Dr. Veronica H. Long, committee member (partial), U o M/ MN/ U S A

Dr. Daniel L. Erkkila, committee member (continuous), U o M/ MN/ U S A

All scholars in the reference list

Mr. Hoang-quang-Tin, tourist guide in Da-Nang/ Viet-Nam

Mr. Nguyen-van-Hung, tourist guide in Da-Nang/ Viet-Nam

Other tourist guides in Viet-Nam

Mr. Nguyen-quang-Tri and Mrs. Tran-thi-ai-Chuong, familial relatives in Viet-Nam

Mr. Lam-quang-Chan – Ms. Dinh-thi-thuy-Trang, & Mr. Chantra Ol, friends, MN/ U S A

And Business Reference staff in Wilson Library, U o M/ MN/ U S A

Who have certain assistance and support in the implementation of this thesis

THE IMAGE ASSESSMENT OF VIET-NAM AMONG U. S. TOURISTS.

Contact to author:

Hung-Tuan-Tran, 620 – Cedar Ave. S., Apt. 307, Minneapolis, MN, 55454, U S A

[tran0266@umn.edu](mailto:tran0266@umn.edu), or [tuanv61@hotmail.com](mailto:tuanv61@hotmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

Tourism to Viet-Nam has not reached its full potential. The feasibility of attracting more international tourists to Viet-Nam is quite high, particularly from the USA market. However, as of 2003, Vietnamese marketing and tourism studies are neither complete nor comprehensive in the USA market. Therefore, Vietnamese tourism image assessment is necessary and timely. Using an onsite survey, this research focused on understanding the image of Viet-Nam among U. S. tourists in Viet-Nam. Results from 100 tourists indicated that Viet-Nam's image is overall positive. Respondents were mainly seniors, highly educated, and had discrete income to travel. A four-factor solution of image variables revealed that the world heritage sites, atmosphere and attractions, service value, and tourism quality were highly evaluated by tourists. Also, the Vietnamese people, with its dynamic society, represented the holistic image and the world heritage sites were determined as unique attractions. Respondents felt that traveling to Viet-Nam was an exciting experience, and in combination with the friendliness of Vietnamese, reflected the psychological characteristic of Viet-Nam's image. Recommendations for Vietnamese development have been made for environmental issues, price inequality, and research so planners, managers, and marketers from various levels can apply for a more appealing Viet-Nam to the USA market.

Keywords: image; Vietnamese tourism; USA; assessment; continuum analysis.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION.....1

    Viet-Nam context.....1

    USA tourism.....5

    Research problem and significance.....9

    Research limitation.....10

    Term definition.....10

CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....11

    Conceptual definitions.....11

    Theoretical framework.....13

    Image structure.....16

    Measuring image.....19

    Potential influences on image.....21

CHAPTER III. METHODS.....24

    Study site.....24

    Questionnaire development.....26

    Sample.....27

    Data analysis.....28

CHAPTER IV. RESULTS.....30

    Profile of respondents.....30

    Factor analysis of Viet-Nam’s image attributes.....33

Three continuums of Viet-Nam’s destination image.....	35
CHAPTER V. CONCLUSIONS.....	38
REFERENCES.....	45
APPENDIX A – Other remarks from respondents.....	53
APPENDIX B – Cover letter and Questionnaire.....	55
APPENDIX C – Approval letter of the IRB/ University of Minnesota.....	58
APPENDIX D – Certification of cooperative guides.....	59

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

FIGURES

1 – Map of Viet-Nam.....	2
2 – International tourists arriving to Viet-Nam in years 1999 – 2002.....	4
3 – Map of United States of America.....	6
4 – Theory of destination image .....	13
5 – Measurement model of modified image.....	16
6 – The component model of destination image.....	18
7 – Map of some Viet-Nam’s main tourist cities.....	24
8 – Primary source of Viet-Nam’s information for this trip.....	33

TABLES

1 – Condensed statistics of USA tourism 2002.....	7
2 – The main tourist markets of Viet-Nam .....	8
3 – Profile of respondents.....	30
4 – Travel experience of respondents.....	31
5 – Factor analysis of Viet-Nam’s image attributes.....	34
6 – The attribute/holistic, functional/psychological, and unique/common images of Viet-Nam.....	36

## CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Global tourism, although affected by international events and disease, still performs an important economic and social function. In addition to 2002's 3.1% increase in international tourists, the world tourism barometer demonstrates that global tourism is expected to improve in the second half of 2003 (WTO, 2003). In global tourism, the Pacific Asia region has emerged as a new growth engine, as announced by the Pacific Asia Travel Association president and CEO Peter de Jong (Express Travel and Tourism, 2002). Mr. Jong added that, although the years of 2001 and 2002 were trying, tourism to the Pacific Asia region was adequate, especially in 2001, where international arrivals to Northeast Asia increased by 3% and, to Southeast Asia 5.2%. Currently, two key global tourism trends are that people take long-haul trips indirectly resulting in more short trips and the growth of low-cost airlines enables more travel abroad (London correspondents, 2003). In such a situation, Asian nations can and should take the potential of foreign tourists seriously. Viet-Nam's tourism is of particular interest and is presented below.

### Viet-Nam context

Viet-Nam is a nation located in Southeast Asia. Situated to the South of China, North of Malaysia-Singapore-Indonesia, West of Lao-Cambodia, and facing the Pacific Ocean, with a population of 78,685,800 in an area of 329,241 square kilometers (Figure 1). Viet-Nam's capital is Ha-Noi. Generally speaking, the northern part of Viet-Nam is considered the political capital with various mine resources and the southern part is the

trade center focused on agricultural products and industrial services. Meanwhile, the central part is the main source of maritime potential.

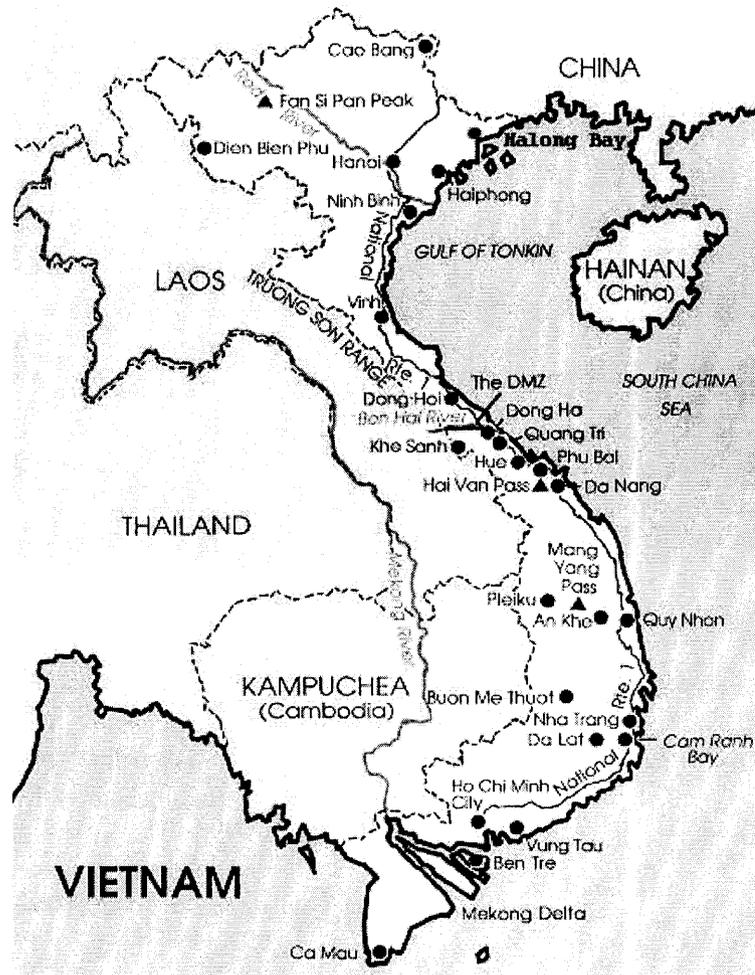


Figure 1. Map of Viet-Nam (Source: <http://www.asiatravel.com/vietmap.html>)

After enduring many historical upheavals and war periods, as well as a transition from monarchy to democracy, Viet-Nam claimed its entire territorial authority with a communist regime in 1975. With a GDP per capita of US\$420 and a GDP growth of

6.7% in 2002 (VVG, 2003), the Vietnamese economy is mainly and historically based on agricultural and maritime products. However, industrial production increased to 17.4% in 2002 (Vietnam Economy, 2003), along with other light and service industries. Although Viet-Nam needs more crucial years to reach a real take-off for national development, recent cultural and societal achievements prove the stability and serious orientation of Vietnamese development, including tourism.

Regarding Viet-Nam's tourism potential, several contextual factors create a rich tourism destination: the historical and cultural extent of around 4000 years, 3,260 km. of seashore, 246,931 square kilometers of territory covered with hills and mountainous forest, and a moderate climate. Thus Viet-Nam may satisfy the demands of fastidious national and international tourists. In addition to the tourist values of Viet-Nam's natural scenes, historic heritage, festivals and ecotourism, tourists can also witness the rapid changes of Viet-Nam as it adapts to regional and world tendencies.

Due to the political unrest, Vietnamese tourism was only officially identified in 1975. From 1975 to 1985, Vietnamese tourism was merely a faded shadow under many national-five year-plans that emphasized rice production, maritime products, and light industries. The tourism atmosphere at that time was subdued, and the majority of Viet-Nam's tourists were foreign specialists, especially Russian, Cuban, and Polish who came under reconstruction programs. Hence, tourist operations were merely activities of reception and arrangement for their stays such as booking hotels, finding cars, looking for interpreters, scheduling meetings, and guiding them in certain city tours, particularly in Ha-Noi, Da-Nang, and Ho-chi-Minh. In 1986, with the policies of *Doi Moi*

(innovation), a new edification and development plan for Viet-Nam emerged that promoted the Viet-Nam’s orientation, including tourism (Tu & Binh, 2001). From that time on, the government and private sectors have been investing in tourist projects and marketing.

From a target of 2,000,000 foreign tourists in 2000, Viet-Nam is evolving to an attractive destination for international tourists in the new millennium (Tan, no date). In turning tourism into a spearhead industry, the number of international tourists increased regularly until 2002 (Figure 2).

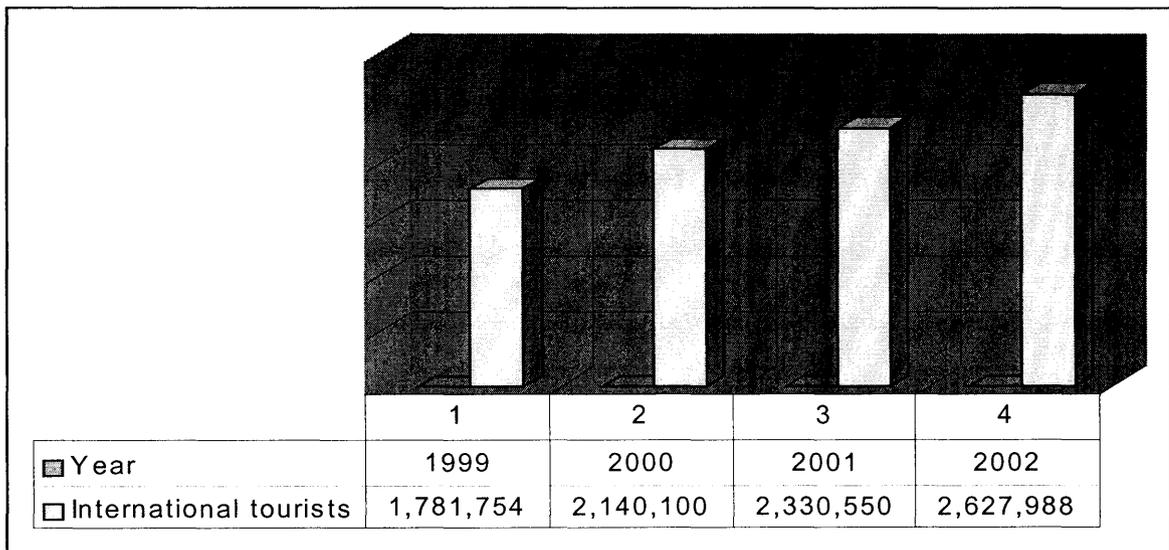


Figure 2. International tourists arriving to Viet-Nam in years 1999 – 2002

(Source: [www.vietnamtourism.gov.vn](http://www.vietnamtourism.gov.vn) 08/01/2003)

Although the numbers of foreign tourists to Viet-Nam are smaller than neighbors Thailand and Malaysia, they reflect a constant increase of 11.5% since 2000. The Secretariat General of the World Tourism Organization assessed this increase as the

highest increase rate of tourism in the world (VDC, 02/13/2003). Vietnamese tourism contributed US\$1.5 billion to the national GDP. Viet-Nam is externally recognized as a safe and friendly destination (VNA, 2003). However remaining issues include its environment, quality, cooperation, funding (VDC, 12/30/2002) and recent influences of terrorism, the Iraq war and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome disease. As of 2003, to recreate the image of Vietnamese tourism, the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism is cooperating with tourist companies and provincial tourist departments to organize tourist fairs (in Ha-Noi and Da-Nang), festivals (in Nha-Trang and Sapa), and South East Asian Games-related tourism. Also, Viet-Nam has invited many European, Australian, and Japanese correspondents and tourist companies to participate in a familiarization trip in addition to launching a publicity campaign to enhance the Vietnamese image (Vietnamtourism, 2003; VnExpress, 2003).

Nationally, 14,000,000 domestic tourists spent their holidays throughout Vietnam in 2002. However, although domestic tourists are an inseparable entity of the Vietnamese tourism, Viet-Nam still focuses on international tourists due to their greater revenue generation. Beyond revenue, the number of foreign visitors is an internal measurement of Viet-Nam's reliability, stability, and international integration. The following section describes the USA tourism and its tourists as a potential market for Viet-Nam.

#### USA tourism

The United States of America is situated to the South of Canada, North of Mexico, West of Pacific Ocean, and East of Atlantic Ocean, including Alaska state in

the West of Canada and the archipelago of Hawaii state in the Pacific Ocean. The capital is Washington, D. C., and this nation has a population of 291,722,222 (08/07/2003) in an area of 3,794,083 sq. miles (Figure 3).

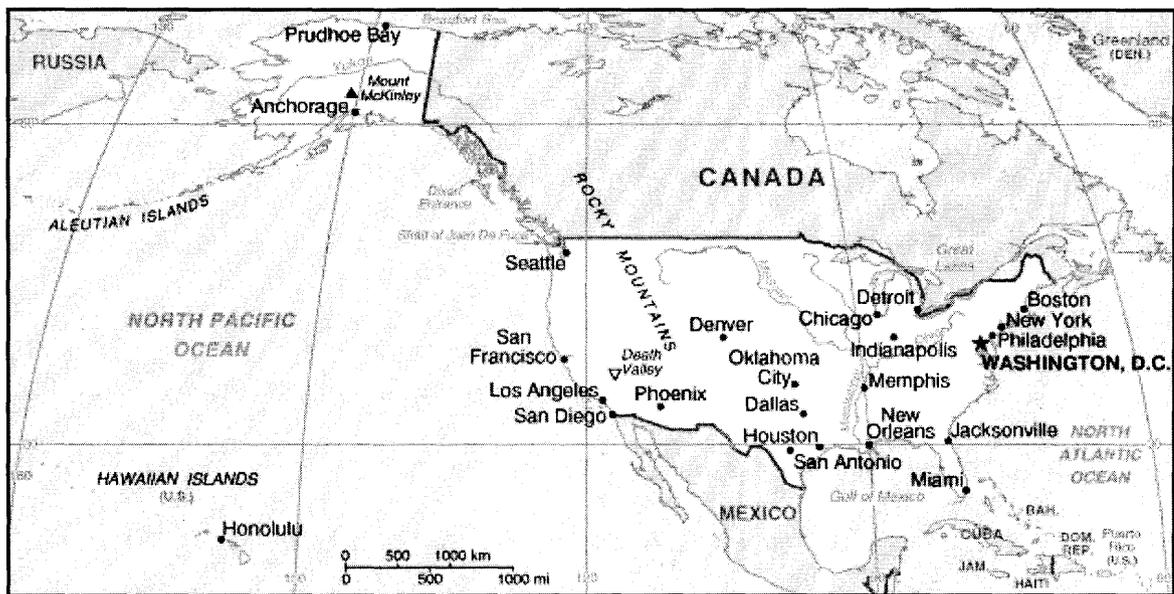


Figure 3. Map of United States of America

(Source: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/united\\_states.html](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/united_states.html))

In 2002, the USA market for travel services overall remained at a value of US\$157 billion. Although the rate of U. S. tourists travelling abroad around the world decreased 88% compared to 95% in 1999, the statistics below still represent a steady development of USA tourism in terms of global tourism (Euromonitor, 2003; Table 1).

Table 1

Condensed statistics of USA tourism 2002

(Source: US Department of Commerce, ITA, and Office of Travel and Tourism Industries, 2003, from <http://www.tinet.ita.doc.gov/> and links)

	Frequency/ Night/ US\$
US residents travel abroad	
Europe	10,131,000
Asia	4,492,000
Caribbean	4,258,000
Total overseas	23,397,388
Mexico	16,810,000
Canada	16,161,000
Grand total	56,368,000
US residents travel overseas for leisure/visit friends/relatives	
Total number	18,624,000
Average nights outside the US	16.2
Average income	103,900
Median income	92,000
Travel expenditures	
Total for domestic (2000)	490,263,000,000
Total for outbound	78,013,000,000
Outbound travel	58,044,000,000
Outbound passenger fares	19,969,000,000

In the vision of Vietnamese tourism, the USA is a desirable market. Only since 1995 has the relationship between Viet-Nam and USA been re-established and gradually promoted through the exchange of an ambassador in 1997 and a 2001 bilateral trade agreement (Vietnam embassy, n. d.).

In terms of U. S. tourists' behavior, with the foundation of pragmatism, U. S. tourists are concerned primarily with safety and security, cleanliness, and the contents

that a destination can offer. In itinerary completion, they prefer punctuality. Although the price-value equation is also a main key consideration for them to select destinations and buy tours, U. S. tourists still are considered as the highest spenders. In terms of enjoyment, U. S. tourists find satisfaction in well arranged tours, historic and cultural attractions, nightlife and culinary activities, and flights availability (Metaverse, n. d.; Karma Centre, 1998; London correspondents, 2003; Personal communication, 08/06/2003). Presently, Vietnamese tourism meets the described criteria of U. S. tourists, and is attracting them as indicated by the fair stability of USA market from 1999 until 2002 (Table 2).

Table 2

The main tourist markets of Viet-Nam (Source: [www.vietnamtourism.gov.vn](http://www.vietnamtourism.gov.vn), 08/2003)

Viet-Nam's top 5 international tourist markets	1999	2000	2001	2002
1	China 484,102	China 626,476	China 672,846	China 724,385
2	USA 210,377	Taiwan 212,370	USA 230,470	Japan 279,769
3	Taiwan 173,920	USA 208,642	Japan 204,860	USA 259,967
4	Japan 113,514	Japan 152,755	Taiwan 200,061	Taiwan 211,072
5	France 86,026	Cambodia 124,557	France 99,700	France 111,546

### Research problem and significance

The image of Vietnamese tourism is relatively unknown, especially among U. S. potential tourists. Vietnamese related tourism studies focus on one or just a few attributes of the Viet-Nam destination or analyze a small angle of Vietnamese services.

Existent Vietnamese tourism research is only peripherally related to its image. For instance, a method to measure the demand of American tourists visiting Viet-Nam was proposed by Blaine, Mohammed, Ruppel, and Var (1994). Although Blaine et al. proposed it, no specific image research exists. Given the critical nature of image as it relates to marketing and development, this is a serious void. Thus, this research will advance image research by extending existing work to Viet-Nam.

By replicating with slight modification the image assessment proposed by Choi, Chan, and Wu (1999) and Hui and Wan (2003), the purpose of this research is to assess the current image of Viet-Nam as a tourist destination obtained from the actual U. S. tourist view and, based on this information, make recommendations to enhance its appeal to the USA market. For Vietnamese tourism, the analysis sheds light on the strong and weak facets of tourism image, of which the Vietnamese tourism departments can detail appropriate policies and planning to enhance the image. At the micro level, Vietnamese marketers can develop Vietnamese tourism to the USA market.

The significance of this research is to enhance motivation of Vietnamese tourism authorities to reevaluate the current atmosphere and essence of Vietnamese tourism. As a result, the insight to Vietnamese tourism and reflections of U. S. tourists will be a

strong foundation to establish appropriate directions to effectively diversify tourism for the USA market and contribute to the development strategy of Vietnamese tourism.

#### Research limitation

The difficult access to specific literature about Vietnamese tourism and its image challenges this research. In addition, the study does not include pre and post-visitation experience and focuses on a convenience sample of 100 U. S. tourists.

#### Term definition

For the purpose of this research, *destination image* is defined as:

“Not only the perception of individual destination attributes but also the holistic impression made by the destination image. It consists of functional characteristics, concerning the more tangible aspects of the destination, and psychological characteristics, concerning the more intangible aspects. Furthermore, destination images can be arranged on a continuum ranging from traits which can be commonly used to compare all destinations to those which are unique to very few destinations” (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, p. 8).

*U. S. tourists* are identified as (for this research): any tourist whose nationality is USA and arrives to Viet-Nam (from not only the USA but also other nations), spends at least one week to visit to and participate in Vietnamese tourism activities.

A brief outline of this research consists of the introduction, the literature review to reveal the theories and concepts of image serving as research foundation, then the methods to describe the process of research investigation, and the results to report the obtained data before the conclusions to interpret the image in various perspectives.

## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

*Tourism image* is an academic subject that several researchers have continuously developed since the 1980s. Various scholars' viewpoints remain mixed due to their disciplines, goals, and research directions. One may assume that the subject of tourism image will remain a topic of interest for years to come. The common denominator of tourism image may be synthesized through five areas of conceptual definitions, theoretical framework, image structure, measuring image, and potential influences on image.

### Conceptual definitions

Based on various disciplines and objectives, many definitions of tourism image have converged. Amongst them, one focus is the *overall impression* of an object. An earliest definition can be found in 1971, when Hunt (1975) stated that the (state) tourism image is the "impression that a person or persons hold about a state in which they do not live in" (cited by Gartner & Hunt, 1987, p. 15). In fact, in social psychology and impression, many scholars from 1932-1967 referred to image as a reflection or representation of sense or abstract information (Stringer, 1984). Based on this foundation, Fridgen (1984) established the concept of tourism image as a spiritual representation of thing or place through instrumental investigations. Beyond that, because the image can describe not individual traits or qualities but the total impression of an entity, Dichter (1985) suggested scholars should specifically pay attention to the overall impression. Hence, although projected from the perception of the subject itself, image is an overall impression of the object. Similarly, Milman and Pizam (1995)

defined destination image as the visual or mental impression that people hold from a place or even an experience. Thus, tourism image is “influenced by individual’s perception of alternative possibilities and viability of such perception” (Kim, 1998, p. 341).

Image has another interpretation that consists of *cognition and affection*. In differentiating attitudinal tendencies with image construct, Mazursky and Jacoby (1986) define image as a set of cognitions and/or affects that are inferred from ongoing perceptions and/or memory inputs attaching to a phenomenon. Thus, image is a perceptive phenomenon formed through the subject’s interpretation, whether reasoned (cognitive) or emotional (affective; Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). Similarly, in the domain of behavioral geography, Jenkins (1999) also implied that the concept of image included all the associated impressions and knowledge (cognition), emotions (affection), values, and beliefs.

Another conceptual approach to tourism image is the emphasis on the *composite nature* of the image construct. A definition of image that many scholars referred to is Crompton (1979, p. 18), where image is defined as a “set or sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that people had of a place or object.” The tourism image becomes a collection or ensemble of various products of human spirit. Clearly, the image processes to a “mental construction (remembrances and imaginations) of events [or] objects that have [occurred] or might be encountered” (Woods, 1981, p. 196.) Compared to the focus on cognition and affection, and particularly on overall impression, this composite approach is more focused on the individual’s level of knowledge and experience.

Similar in concept “composite” but different in object to Crompton, Gartner (1993), and MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997) affirmed tourism image as a composite of various products (attractions) with their attributes woven into a total impression.

### Theoretical framework

Based on the literature of Gunn (1972) and Jenkins (1999), image theory provides a basis for this research (Figure 4). This *seven-stage theory* represents how image is built and modified, and is conceived as *organic*, *induced*, and *modified-induced* images.

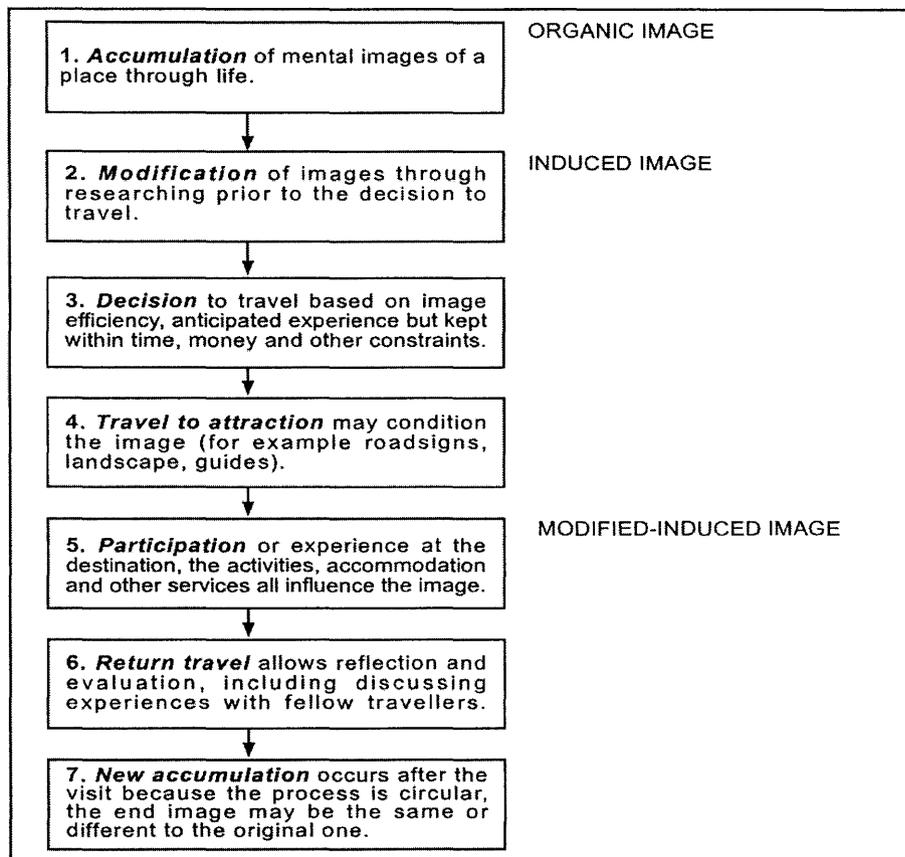


Figure 4. Theory of destination image (Jenkins 1999, p. 4)

Following Gunn and Jenkins, *accumulation* represents the organic image that a person has accumulated from past travel experiences. Fakeye and Crompton (1991) also advocate this opinion when stating that organic image is an awareness of place that emerged before the interference of destination promoters. From this initial image, the induced image is evolved through three next stages.

The stage of *modification* plays a leading role in the induced image, since it is the moment that many primary influences impact the person's idea of travel. These influences include reading books or other literature, hearing lectures, and discussing travel experiences. These influences may shape the image or may not have any effect on image if the accumulated image is not strong or strong enough respectively. Based on the previous image and anticipated experience for new travel, the *decision* stage is formed taking into consideration constraints of time, money, and other values. Even on the road to destination in the stage of *travel to attraction*, other factors such as road status and signs, additional services or even weather still have the possibility to condition the image and result in a confirmation or a change to travel plans. Fakeye and Crompton determine induced image is a modification of organic image, when a subject examines and assesses given promotions. Moreover, the organic and induced images are also categorized as *second nature* (images) that appeared from new or first time visitors who just understand the destination through available information (Phelps, 1986).

The last derivative of image is the modified-induced image, or defined by Fakeye and Crompton (1991) as *complex* image, that results from actual visitation and experience with the destination. By directly integrating and experiencing the destination

in the *participation* stage, the person now opens all senses to be affected by attractions, hotels, and meals that influence the image. Then in the *return travel* stage, the recall, evaluation, and discussion sharing will reconstruct the influenced image in certain dimensions based on synthesized experiences. Hence, the image may remain itself as similar or different from the first image at the time of leaving home, and is stored in the *new accumulation* stage that ends the image cycle for yet another image accumulation and further reference. In supporting similar explanations for modified image, Piaget and Inhelder in 1966 title this image as “*reproductive image*” (cited by Denis, 1991, p. 34), where Phelps (1986) names it as *primary nature*.

Many scholars focus their research on this modified destination image. Among them, Choi et al. (1999) and Hui and Wan (2003) reflect the fifth stage “participation.” While Choi et al. (1999) assessed Hong Kong, Singapore was the study site for Hui and Wan (2003). Having the same focus of assessing the modified image, both studies used a combined quantitative and qualitative approach. Onsite questionnaires included a list of destination attributes and three open-ended questions were directly adapted from Etchner and Ritchie (1993). Even in measuring image, factor analysis and continuum analysis were applied in these studies. Choi et al. initialized a continuum framework that Hui and Wan later adapted. A minor difference is that Hui and Wan utilized the additional statistical tools of ANOVAS, Kruskal-Wallis and *t* test to measure significant differences among groups of international visitors. Both studies evaluated the tourists’ perception through an attribute list and affection through open-ended questions to determine the modified image (Figure 5). Although the overall modified images of Hong

Kong and Singapore are positive, their main outcomes are quite contradictory. While Hong Kong is regarded as a good place for shopping and tourist information, Singapore is less favorable in shopping and good food. In contrast, while Singapore is determined as a stable, safe, and clean environment, Hong Kong is more crowded, busy, and stressful.

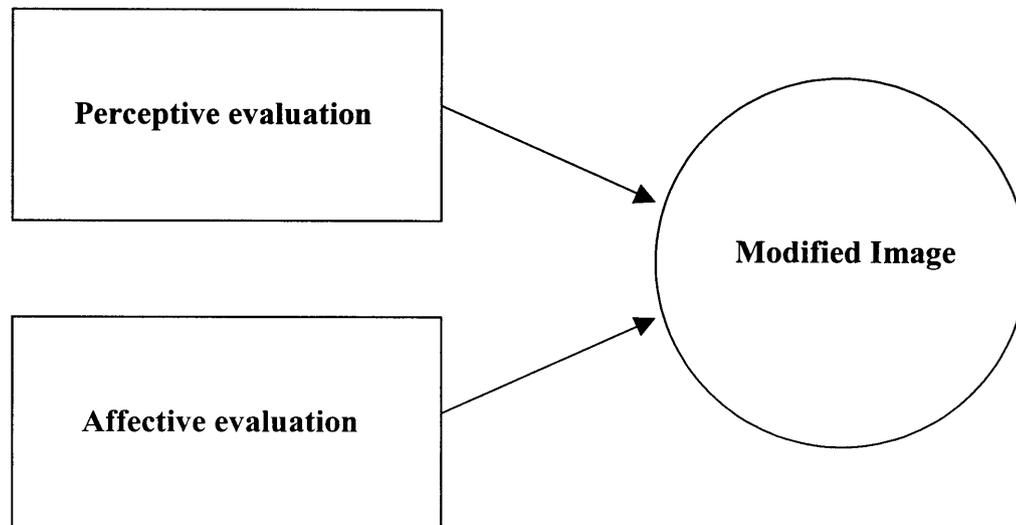


Figure 5. Measurement model of modified image

#### Image structure

Image structure includes the product (e. g. quality), the host's attitude (e. g. communication), and the environment (e. g. facilities; Milman & Pizam, 1995). As a result, both simple and complex image structure have evolved, from uni-dimensional to multi-dimensional. For instance, Russell and Pratt (1980) state that only affection as the *one-dimension* can offer a special meaning to destination image without perceptive dimension. However, the cognitive (perceptive) dimension can contain many important

principles to define image (Lord, 1980). Similarly, Gartner and Hunt (1987) justify that attribute of perception is a most grounded dimension to establish image structure.

Beyond uni-dimensional, some scholars referred to the two psychological areas of cognition and affection to identify the image structure. From the perceptual finding in environmental psychology of Russell and Pratt (1980), Assael (1981, p. 160) also designed the attitudinal area with two main components: belief (cognition) and evaluation (affection). Although agreeing perceptual component is essential in image research, Zimmer and Golden (1988) concluded that affective evaluation is an integral part of image perception. Those suggestions really solidified the implications of Russell, Lewicka and Niit (1989) and Hanyu (1993) to support the idea that destinations have both cognitive and affective images. Essentially, those described were the *two-dimensional* structure that underpinned image destination research.

Other opinions regard image structure as a *three-dimensional* structure. Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) suggest that the three dimensions include: 1) the place image (attribute versus holistic), 2) functional (tangible) and the psychological (abstract) characteristics, and 3) common or unique features of the place (Figure 6).

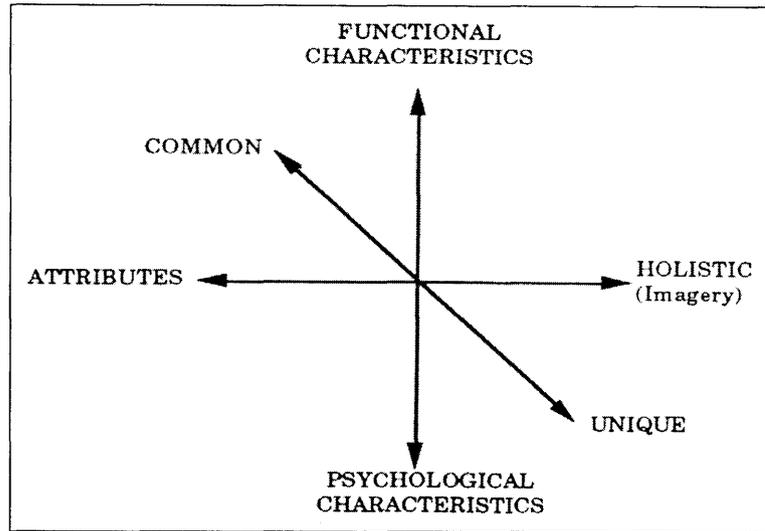


Figure 6. The component model of destination image (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, p. 6)

Like Jenkins' interpretations (1999), Echtner and Ritchie (1991) proposed the attribute-holistic as one of three dimensions described above. In this direction, all parts of image that can be broken down into attributes are captured, as are the total holistic impressions.

Hence, in the second dimension, the image at one end will consist of attributes that are functional and psychological, and holistic images that are functional and psychological at the other end. "Functional" here is understood as observable or measurable characteristics (e. g. price, climate); while "psychological" is less tangible characteristics (e. g. atmosphere, romance of setting).

More than that, the functional characteristics may be common (that is comparable to other destinations, e. g. type of hotels, climate) or unique (that is defined as icon and special events, e. g. pyramid, national music festival). Similarly, psychological characteristics may be common (are identified as abstract attributes e. g.

friendliness, notoriety or beautifulness of landscape), or unique (are determined as emotional attributes e. g. feelings associated with religious or historical places and destinations; Jenkins, 1999). Both interrelated categories and aspects form the third image dimension.

In short, this model should be envisioned in three dimensions of attribute/holistic, functional/psychological, and unique/common images. From this model Choi et al. (1999) interpreted the image of Hong Kong, and Hui and Wan (2003) sought to understand the image of Singapore. This model differs from Gartner's structural proposal (1993) because of three distinct but hierarchically related dimensions of affective, cognitive, and conative components.

A unique approach is that all images could be identified through the *holographic dimensions* of human sensations, notably five types of sight, smell, taste, hear, and touch (Synnott, 1993). MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997) are the sole researchers who have used the five senses to account for structural tourism image. In the interpretation of image marketing and factors of visuals, those two authors demonstrated that visual stimuli could play a critical role in the establishment of image.

#### Measuring image

Researchers have utilized various methods to assess destination image. The majority of researchers traditionally used the *attribute list* to measure the functional elements of a destination such as attraction, facilities, etc. (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991; 1993).

Quantitative approaches use standardized instruments and are easy to manage (Pizam & Mansfeld, 1999). Most of these statistical procedures involve bivariate methods of *t* test and correlation or multivariate methods of factor analysis, cluster analysis, ANOVAS, and MANOVAS. Such a structured methodology is appropriate for the psychological tradition of image assessment, from which many researchers developed the *scale system* for measuring the cognitive and affective image of destination. Gartner (1996), in relating scale techniques to factor analysis, also discussed that scale techniques hold a function of data-reduction and allow for image exploration. Meanwhile, Baloglu and Brinberg (1997) and Walmsley and Young (1998) discuss that the *semantic differential scaling* method is most preferable for measuring affective image.

Qualitative approaches allow for liberal description with data collected from focus groups, in-depth interviews, or open-ended questionnaires, and enable the capture of the holistic components of image (Pizam & Mansfeld, 1999). As a free-form description of image measurement, the success of this approach “depends upon the verbal and or writing skills of the individuals participating in the study, their knowledge of the product, and their willingness to provide multiple responses” (McDouglas & Fry, 1974, p. 215, cited by Pizam & Mansfeld, 1999). Another tool for this unstructured approach is the continuum analysis proposed by Echtner and Ritchie (1991) from which Choi et al. (1999) and Hui and Wan (2003) successfully used it as a convergent framework.

Another technique to measure image is *multidimensional scaling* that specifically compares the assessment among several destination images. Other structured techniques still hold a distinct value and application to assess image. For instance, *Kelly's repertory grid* explores the people's worlds as they see them (personal construct system) or the *free elicitation of descriptive adjectives* that based on the codified responses of similar categories (Pizam & Mansfeld, 1999).

A combined approach of structured and unstructured assessment that uses factor analysis and continuum analysis is deemed most useful in this research (Choi et al., 1999; Hui & Wan, 2003). Choi et al.'s image structure consisted of five factors with eigenvalues 1.7 to 6.7, whereas Hui and Wan's structure was eight factors with eigenvalues from 1.2 to 7.2. Choi et al.'s factored reliability extends from 0.55 to 0.87, while Hui and Wan varied from 0.50 to 0.83.

The use of a qualitative continuum analysis allows authors to incorporate functional-psychological attributes (perceptive) from the attribute list with functional-psychological holistic images, common and unique components from the three open-ended questions. The significance and apparent validity of these studies emerge and offer a three dimensional view of image that is more complete than either alone.

#### Potential influences on image

Many factors influence image formation. For example, the factor of distance from various destinations may partially determine different images (Hunt, 1975). Scott, Schewe, and Frederick (1978) concluded that people tend to have stronger and more realistic destination images of these close to home rather than remote. Meanwhile, Nolan

(1976) suggests sources of travel information, relationships between those sources and demography and behavior, and source credibility, all create destination image. Dobni and Zinkhan (1990) had similar opinions when stating that image was a largely subjective and perceptual phenomenon established through the consumer's reasoned and emotional interpretation from personal factors (e. g. age) and stimulus factors (e. g. information).

In addition, destination image may be differentiated between potential tourists, first-time tourists, and repeated tourists. For instance, destination images may fade out or return over time to the first held image, particularly when perception is confused by visiting similar places (Narayana, 1976; Phelps, 1986). In addition, Pearce (1982) and Chon (1990, 1992) indicate that images established from returned tourists are more realistic and complex. Typically, there is a significant difference between the dimensions of destination image and three sub-samples of non-visitor, first-time visitor, and repeated visitor in discovering the evolution of image stages (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). These image experience and positive image have been interpreted as the *familiarity effect* on decision making. As a result, familiar visitors who visited once had a more positive image and accurate perception about destination, and tended to re-visit the destination more than visitors who just understood the destination or is been visiting it the first time (Milman & Pizam, 1995).

Gartner (1993) determined an in-depth continuum of eight image components that impact image formation and are under the destination marketer's control. These eight image components are overt induced I (traditional advertising), overt induced II

(information of tourism business), covert induced I (advertising through second party), covert induced II (unbiased tourism report), autonomous (independent tourism documents), unsolicited organic (non-requested and coincidental information), solicited organic (requested and intentional information), and organic (actual visitation). These elements positively and negatively influence image, and a negative image of potential tourists is a challenge to attract tourists (Schneider & Sonmez, 1999).

### CHAPTER III. METHODS

The methods are presented in four sections: study site, questionnaire development, sample, and data analysis.

#### Study site

The general study site is *the nation of Viet-Nam*. Possessing historical, cultural, and natural resources, Vietnamese tourism offers various interests to U. S. tourists (Figure 7).

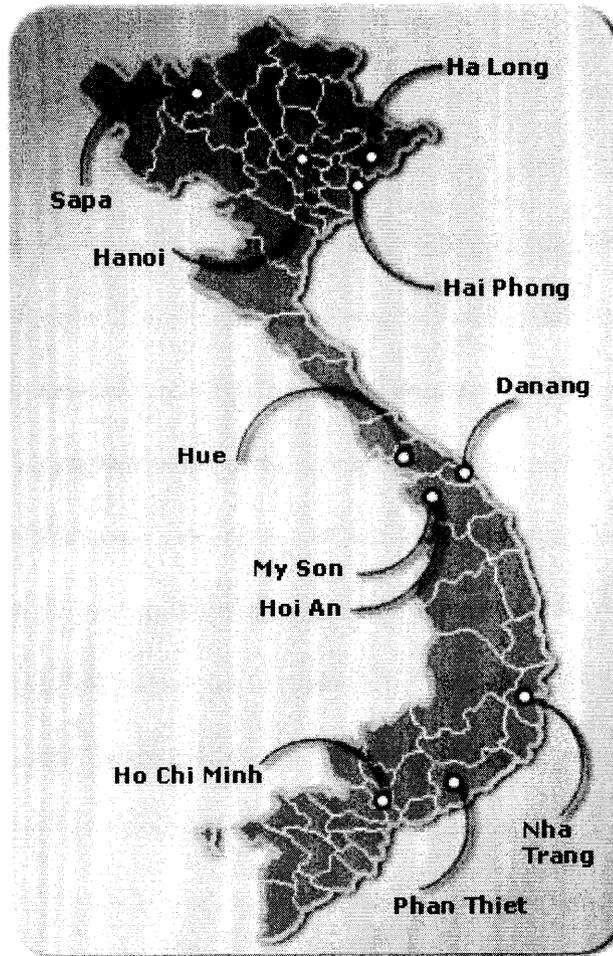


Figure 7. Map of some Viet-Nam's main tourist cities (Source: [www.viettravel-vn.com](http://www.viettravel-vn.com))

Historical attractions include the relics of ancient royal dynasties, Hue Imperial city (world heritage site), mythical one-pillar pagoda and the battlefield of Dien-Bien-Phu (relating to French), McNamara electronic fence, or Cu-Chi tunnels. Moreover, the current reconstruction of the historical Ho-Chi-Minh trail also promises more historic tours especially for U. S. veterans.

Regarding the cultural base for tourism, the stamp of Viet-Nam civilization is manifested through a large collection of typical temples, the ancient town of Hoi-An, and My-Son sanctuary of Cham people (both are world heritage sites). Vietnamese tourism is focusing on traditional festivals as a comparative tourism advantage. Handicraft villages such as Bat-Trang porcelain, Duy-Xuyen silk, Ngu-Hanh-Son stone, or Dong-Nai artistic articles also attract U. S. tourists.

The natural product offers many beautiful scenes throughout the land of Viet-Nam such as Hai-Van pass, Ha-Long bay and Phong Nha – Ke Bang national park (both are world heritage sites). Beaches are abundant and easily accessible. With an interlacing system of rivers and canals in Mekong delta, U. S. tourists can take a sampan trip to watch scenes of Vietnamese activities, or eyewitness different flying species in many bird sanctuaries. Others destinations include Ba-Na resort where U. S. tourists can inspire themselves by the fresh air at an altitude of 500 meters, or Vam-Sat forest and Binh-Chau hot spring that the World Tourism Organization just certified as world sites of sustainable ecotourism.

### Questionnaire development

A combination of structured and unstructured questions is necessary to accurately measure destination image (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). From that principle, and with the consultation of Choi et al. (1999), Schneider and Sonmez (1999), Sonmez and Sirakaya (2002), and Hui and Wan (2003), an onsite questionnaire for U. S. tourists to Viet-Nam was developed. The onsite questionnaire allowed capture of current and immediate image of Viet-Nam. Moreover, as U. S. tourists were in actual visitation, they were not influenced by other sources in the post-visitation phase (complex image), resulting in ascertaining a potential authentic image. A pretest study with potential tourists in Minnesota resulted in several questions reworded. This questionnaire consists of four sections with 16 main questions (see Appendix B).

The first section contains six questions on general travel experiences. The questions focus on the number of trips abroad, number of trips to Asia and Viet-Nam, and year of the first trip to Viet-Nam. In addition to travel purpose, the primary information source prior to the current trip is queried.

The second section contains a quantitative subset of 24 items adapted from Choi et al. (1999) and Hui and Wan (2003). A seven point Likert scale, rating from 1 – strongly disagree to 7 – strongly agree, measured the functional and psychological attributes of image. For instance, respondents defined their levels of disagreement or agreement that “Cultural activities are available” or “Viet-Nam is not a good place for shopping.”

To capture the functional, psychological holistic, and unique components of Vietnamese tourism, the third section adapts three open-ended questions of Echtner and Ritchie (1993). These questions allow participants to list words freely about Viet-Nam's images or characteristics, atmosphere or mood, and distinctive or unique attractions.

The fourth section includes six socio-demographic questions: state of residence, sex, age, education, and annual income. In addition, respondents' likeliness to return to Viet-Nam is posed.

Questionnaires were distributed to a convenience sample of U. S. tourists in Viet-Nam 2003-2004, January - April. As the tourist season in Viet-Nam is from September to May, the timing of the questionnaires was optimal. Trained and cooperating tour guides in Da-Nang city (Central Viet-Nam) presented questionnaires to U. S. tourists in Viet-Nam on the last day of their guided tour. Ethical criteria such as courtesy, non-obligation, and co-operation appeal were recommended before inviting U. S. tourists to participate in the research. To enhance response rates, an incentive of US\$1 was included with the questionnaire.

#### Sample

The average number of U. S. tourist visits to Viet-Nam 1999 – 2002 was 227,364. This estimated population can be defined as the sum of all U. S. tourists who arrive in Viet-Nam from any nation, spend at least one week – from the traditional and conventional tour package that lasts 2 week – to visit and participate in Vietnamese tourist activities. The sample consisted of 100 actual U. S. tourists in Viet-Nam.

### Data analysis

Using SPSS software, data were entered, cleaned and analyzed. The *descriptive analysis* of mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage were used.

The 24 Likert image questions were factor analyzed with *principal component factor analysis* and *varimax rotation* to reduce the large number of variables to a smaller set of factors, allowing a better representation of the Vietnamese image dimensions underlying the initial variables. Following a rule of thumb, factor loadings that are  $> 0.30$  (absolute value) are considered significant, loadings of 0.40 are important, and loadings that are  $\geq 0.50$  are very significant (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1995). Even though, since this research emphasizes on the center of image as well as the independence of each image attribute, statements with factor loadings  $< 0.40$  and cross loadings were dropped from the list. The general meaning of all variables, particularly items that have high loadings, was used to name each factor. Only factors with eigenvalues  $\geq 1$  were selected. To measure the internal consistency of items within each factor, the Cronbach's alpha test was employed with factors that had alpha coefficient  $\geq 0.60$ .

Partial attributes from factors that best described the functional and psychological images and have highest mean were extracted and incorporated to result from the three open-ended questions.

The open-ended list of image, mood, and attractions was content analyzed. Specifically, these variables are categorized by holistic, functional/psychological and common/unique images, computed by percentage, and are shown on a framework

adapted from Choi et al. (1999), and Hui and Wan (2003). As the researcher developed codes that were agreed on by two other scholars, all attributes and categories of perception and affection were combined in a *continuum analysis* to present a three dimensional image of Vietnamese tourism (Jenkins, 1999).

CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

This chapter presents results of respondents' profile and their travel experience, image attribute factor analysis, and continuum analysis of Viet-Nam's three-dimensional image.

Profile of respondents

U. S. visitors were mature, affluent, and had graduate education experiences (Table 3). Over one half of respondents were female (53%). The majority of participants was 60 and over years of age (50%). U. S. visitors were overall highly educated with 24.5% holding a college degree, 22.4% completing some graduate school, and 42.9% holding graduate degree.

Table 3

Profile of respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Sex (n = 100)		
Female	53	53
Male	47	47
Age (n = 100)		
23 – 29	6	6
30 – 39	10	10
40 – 49	5	5
50 – 59	29	29
60 and over	50	50
Level of education		
Technical school	1	1
Some college	9	9.2
College degree	24	24.5
Graduate school	22	22.4
Graduate degree	42	42.9

Annual income (n = 90)		
Less than \$25,000	6	6.7
\$25,000 - \$49,999	5	5.6
\$50,000 - \$74,999	15	16.7
\$75,000 - \$99,999	10	11.1
\$100,000 - \$124,999	20	22.2
\$125,000 - \$149,999	14	15.6
\$150,000 and more	20	22.2

60% of visitors had an annual income between \$100,000 to more than \$150,000.

Respondents had considerable travel experience as indicated by their recent travel (Table 4). In the last three years, one half of U. S. tourists engaged in an average outbound travel from 1 – 4 times and 37% from 5 – 9 times. Among U. S. tourists who traveled to Asia, 53% traveled once and 36% 2 – 3 times. However, almost all visitors (97%) indicated that this was the first trip to Viet-Nam. 80% of visitors traveled to Viet-Nam to experience its history-culture. The majority of U. S. visitors indicated the likelihood of returning (62.7%).

Table 4

Travel experience of respondents (n = 100)

	Frequency	Percentage
Outside U. S. trips last three years (n = 100)		
1 – 4	50	50
5 – 9	37	37
10 – 14	7	7
15 – 19	5	5
20 and more	1	1
Asia trips last three years (n = 100)		
1	53	53
2 – 3	36	36
4 – 5	8	8
6 and over	3	3

Viet-Nam trips last three years (n = 100)		
1	97	97
2	1	1
3	0	0
4	1	1
5	1	1
Year of first trip to Viet-Nam (n = 91)		
1967	1	1.1
1968	1	1.1
1974	1	1.1
1989	1	1.1
1995	1	1.1
1996	1	1.1
1999	1	1.1
2000	2	2.2
2001	1	1.1
2002	1	1.1
2003	9	9.9
2004	71	78
Primary purpose of this trip (n = 100)*		
Experience nature	7	7
Excitement/Adventure	18	18
History-culture	80	80
Business	4	4
Visit friends/family	3	3
Other	2	2
Likeliness of return to Viet-Nam (n = 99)		
Unlikely	15	15.2
Unsure	22	22.2
Likely	37	37.4
Very likely	25	25.3

---

\* Total is greater than 100 due to multiple responses

The primary sources of information prior to this trip were books, and friends and relatives (Figure 8). Around one third of visitors, 36.36%, referred to books as the main

support in the information gathering process to Viet-Nam. While communication with friends and relatives had certain impacts on 20.20% of travelers, 16.16% sought Vietnamese information on the Internet, and 11.11% of visitors consulted with travel agents. Other sources of information include television, movies, and magazines.

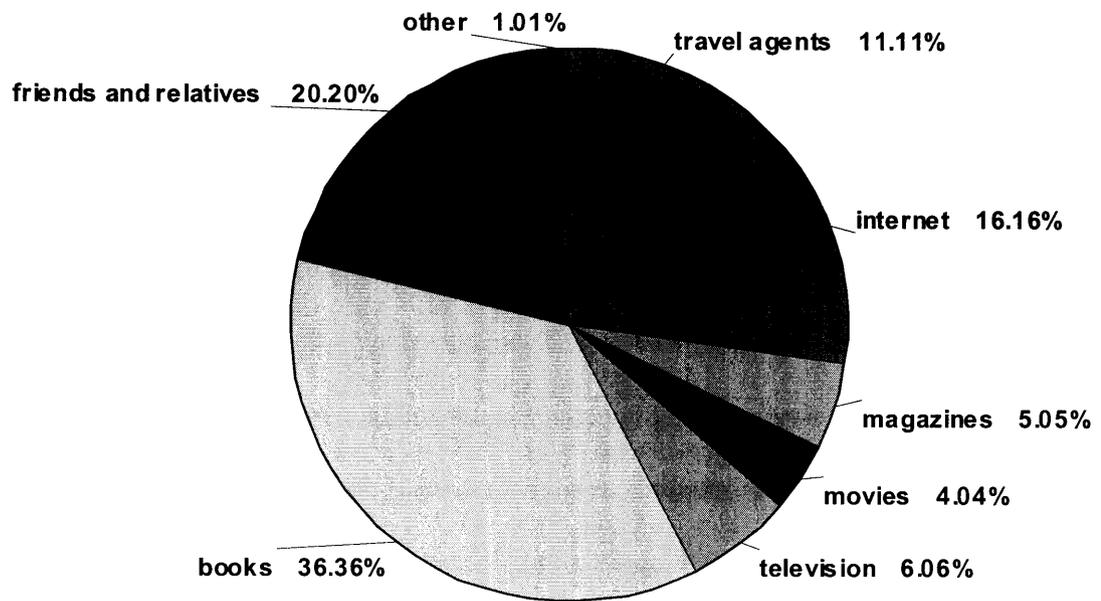


Figure 8. Primary source of Viet-Nam's information for this trip (n = 99)

#### Factor analysis of Viet-Nam's image attributes

Four factors emerged during the process of factor analysis (Table 5). They are factor 1: *World heritage sites*, factor 2: *Atmosphere and Attractions*, factor 3: *Service value*, and factor 4: *Quality*.

Table 5

## Factor analysis of Viet-Nam's image attributes

Factor name and attributes	Mean	SD	Factor loading	Alpha	Eigenvalue
<i>Factor 1: World heritage sites</i>	5.98			.77	3.91
World heritage sites are authentic	5.90	.99	.80		
World heritage sites are worth visiting	6.32	.90	.78		
World heritage sites are unique	5.76	1.25	.76		
<i>Factor 2: Atmosphere and attractions</i>	5.90			.60	1.70
Vietnamese are friendly	6.47	.85	.77		
Historical places are accessible	5.91	.97	.74		
Cultural activities are available	5.44	1.21	.72		
<i>Factor 3: Service value</i>	6.06			.74	1.44
Guides are competent	6.02	1.25	.85		
Prices are reasonable	6.06	1.13	.82		
<i>Factor 4: Quality</i>	5.50			.60	1.32
Tours are fair price-value	5.41	1.60	.83		
Hotel are good quality	5.55	1.31	.74		

Factor 1 was named as World heritage sites because it specifically consisted of three items of world heritage sites as eminent tourist spots of Vietnamese tourism. Among the list of “World heritage sites are authentic,” “World heritage sites are worth visiting,” and “World heritage sites are unique;” item “World heritage sites are worth visiting” had highest mean score for this factor. Factor 2 represented the Atmosphere and attractions of Vietnamese tourism with three items “Vietnamese are friendly,” “Historical places are accessible,” and “Cultural activities are available.” The friendliness of Vietnamese was appreciated by highest mean not only for this factor but also for the framework of factor analysis, and this item also have highest factor loading.

Items “Guides are competent” and “Prices are reasonable” were incorporated under the factor 3 of Service value, and both had quite similar means. Finally, Quality is named for factor 4 with two items “Tours are fair price-value” and “Hotels are good quality” of which the later item had higher mean.

The summed means of each factor was above 5.0, which indicates that U. S. tourists had a positive image of Viet-Nam. Nonetheless, it should be noticed that factor 4 Quality had the lowest summated mean of 5.50. This may be understood through similar tour prices that have been charged to different quality levels of attractions and services, resulting to partial inequality of price-value equation in a general view.

#### Three continuums of Viet-Nam’s destination image

Adapted from Choi et al’s (1999) framework on Hong-Kong’s image, applied later by Hui and Wan’s (2003) work on Singapore’s image, and based on Jenkins’ image definitions (1999), the upper portion of the table presents the functional and psychological attributes (Table 6). Notable ratings include “World heritage sites are worth visiting” (6.32), “Competent guides” (6.02), “Historical sites are accessible” (5.91), “Friendly Vietnamese” (6.47), “Prices are reasonable” (6.06), and “World heritages sites are authentic” (5.90). Among them, the interest of world heritage sites and friendliness of Vietnamese were evaluated most highly. As mean scores of all items were higher than 5.0, they reflect a positive image for Viet-Nam.

Table 6

The attribute/holistic, functional/psychological, and unique/common images of Viet-Nam

	<i>2/ Functional</i>	Mean/ %	<i>2/ Psychological</i>	Mean/ %
<i>1/ Attribute</i>				
World heritage sites are worth visiting		6.32	Friendly Vietnamese	6.47
Competent guides		6.02	Prices are reasonable	6.06
Historical places are accessible		5.91	World heritage sites are authentic	5.90
<i>1/ Holistic</i>				
Vietnamese people		34%	Dynamic society	36%
Panoramic nature		34%	Interesting destination	29%
Lengthy history		30%	Diverse culture	25%
<i>3/ Unique</i>				
Hoi-An ancient town		42%	Exciting experience	25%
Hue imperial city		40%	Positive emotion	16%
Ha-Long bay		27%	Development process	9%
<i>3/ Common</i>				
Popular spots		32%	Friendly attitude	70%
Vietnamese food		15%	Scenic beauty	36%
Tropical climate		13%	Pleasant feeling	12%

The functional and psychological holistic images with their percentages are identified in the second portion of the table. Generally, Viet-Nam is understood and affirmed as a tourism destination through the images of its Vietnamese people (34%) such as rice growers or schoolgirls, and scenic nature. Regarding the atmosphere or mood experienced in Viet-Nam, the dynamic society of Viet-Nam (36%) with its busy, crowded traffic features seemed to be the norm as Viet-Nam is a small nation with considerable population. Even though, U. S. visitors still felt interesting in touring Viet-Nam, of which cultural diversity appeared to play a main role in attracting them.

Finally, the functional/psychological and unique/common components of Viet-Nam's image are indicated in the last two portions of the table. Regarding "unique" for Viet-Nam, like in the factor analysis, the world heritage sites of Hoi-An ancient town (42%), Hue imperial city, and Ha-Long natural bay were highly rated and represent distinct attractions. U. S. tourists also felt that visiting Viet-Nam was exciting (25%) and had positive emotion, but some of them were nevertheless concerned about the ongoing development of Viet-Nam (9%). For the part of "common", besides popular spots (32%) such as temples, markets, or museums that were regularly included in itineraries, Vietnamese food has somehow met the taste of U. S. visitors. Also, while the majority of U. S. tourists perceived the friendship of Vietnamese (70%) and the beauty of Vietnamese nature, some respondents felt enthusiastically and joyously about their trip in Viet-Nam.

## CHAPTER V. CONCLUSIONS

Through a combination of closed and open-ended questions, the three-dimensional image of Viet-Nam as a tourism destination for U. S. visitors has been explored. Specifically, selected attributes provide Vietnamese tourism authorities the knowledge of Viet-Nam as a competitive tourism destination for the USA market, while certain tourism advantages can be extracted from holistic impressions and affections. Similarly, as functional and psychological characteristics weave with unique/common image dimensions, they reveal the pull factors that Vietnamese authorities can consider.

Past image research, especially of Choi et al.'s (1999) work on Hong-Kong's image and Hui and Wan's (2003) study on Singapore's image, is different than that of Viet-Nam's image. It should be mentioned that while Choi et al.'s factor analysis referred to seven-point scale attributes, Hui and Wan utilized five-point scale items. Regarding Choi et al.'s work, only one factor of "Activities and atmosphere" among three is comparable with Viet-Nam's factor "Atmosphere and attractions." The leading factors especially differ where the factor "Tourist information and shopping" has highest mean score (5.73) and represents the thematic image of Hong-Kong and, by comparison, "Service value" (6.06) is Viet-Nam's primary image. In contrast, factor analysis of Hui and Wan consists of eight factors and, among them, factor "Political stability" has highest mean score (4.50), followed by factor "Personal safety and convenience" (4.49), and decodes the core image of Singapore.

Regarding the continuum analysis of Viet-Nam's image, while "World heritage sites" (6.32) and "Friendly Vietnamese" (6.47) were considered as principal functional

and psychological characteristics of Viet-Nam's attributes, Choi et al. indicated a "Wide variety of products" and "Safe place to visit" for Hong-Kong while Hui and Wan's study had also a "Safe place to visit" besides the functional attribute of "Many modern buildings." Although the Viet-Nam's main holistic images of "Vietnamese people" (34%) and "Panoramic nature" (34%) are different to "Metropolis/skyscrapers" of Hong-Kong, the atmosphere "Dynamic society" (36%) of Viet-Nam is similar to "Busy/crowded/traffic" of Hong-Kong in terms of meanings and implications. Meanwhile, "Good shopping place" and "Safe place to visit" symbolize the holistic images of Singapore. As shown, world heritages sites of "Hoi-An, Hue, and Ha-Long" and "Exciting experience" are unique attractions by comparison to sites "Peak Tram and Star Ferry" with "Shopping and night markets," and "Busy/crowded/traffic" of Hong-Kong; and sites "Orchard Road, Sentosa, and Hawker Centres" and particular "Clean and green" of Singapore. Remaining "Popular spots" (32%) as pagodas, temples, or museums and "Friendly attitude" (70%) of Vietnamese that mainly represent the common images of Viet-Nam. Respectively, images Hong-Kong and Singapore share somehow similarity of "Good shopping places" and "Good transportation." Even though, Hong-Kong is close to Viet-Nam in terms of "Friendly and helpful people" while "Modern" is a central common aspect of Singapore.

Vietnamese managers and marketers can consider the attributes and image features to establish action programs to enhance Viet-Nam's image. For instance, the cultural activities (5.44) may be increased throughout the nation and the natural

resources can be promoted. Also, working to promote the friendly attitude (70%) can be a main factor to attract visitors.

Overall, the image of Viet-Nam – or Vietnamese tourism – is positive. One contributor to this image may be the image road show that the Vietnam National Administration Of Tourism conducted in August 2003 to the USA. Another primary reason may be the recent training and professional tour guides who leave insights and an impressive image in the U. S. tourists' mind. A third reason may be the strategic selection of yearly tourism themes (e. g. 2004 – The Central Viet-Nam Heritage Road) as specialized products that enhance awareness. Also, as more people visit, Viet-Nam's image is changed and advanced through word-of-mouth.

Nonetheless, challenges remain for Vietnamese tourism to distinguish itself from other destinations such as Hong-Kong, Singapore, or Thailand: the shopping excitement found in Hong-Kong, the cleanliness in Singapore, and various entertainment in Thailand. However, Viet-Nam has advantages in its six world heritages sites (factor 1, mean = 5.98).

Currently, the world heritages sites that consisted of Hue imperial city, Ha-Long natural bay, Hoi-An ancient town, My-Son sanctuary, and recent Phong-Nha caves and Royal music (intangible heritage) still are a focus of Vietnamese tourism and are never missed in any conventional itinerary. Nonetheless, the physical environment around these sites is challenged by littering and pollution (mean = 4.51, computed separately), whereas the tourism environment has chaotic services and over exploitation. Challenges include people who throw any rubbish to sites, animal manure and stinking

water around, disorganized shopping stalls, as well as illegal collection of tourist fees that negatively impact sites and create dissatisfied visitors (Loi, 2003).

Interdepartmental disagreements of rights and tasks, and divergent opinions over problems of tourism resources management exist leading to inaction, the long debates induce gradual site degradation that results in sites less attractive to visitors. As a long-term solution, human resource departments of Viet-Nam should be more dynamic in problem solving. This may be completed through sophisticated skills, experience sharing, and appropriate conservation (e. g. partial exploitation – conserve part and exploit new part – re-exploit previous part – re-conserve exploited part) as well as matched site designing to site contents (e. g. less concrete building in natural sites). Another approach to the environmental challenge includes the development and maintenance of “green campaigns” where environment values are developed in schools and community education programs. Furthermore, in a macro level, Viet-Nam should have a unified mechanism in terms of management organization model, management contents, and task demarcation among national, provincial, and local levels.

Pricing differences were also an issue for visitors. As consumption price among local areas are flexibly set by local authorities and private organizations, price inequality between visitors and host seems logical (mean = 3.30, computed separately). Higher prices exist for visitors because of the Vietnamese standard of living life, the Vietnamese government has reduced prices at some attractions and services to encourage Vietnamese to travel internally. Due to primary regional competitors such as Thailand, Singapore, or China; Viet-Nam should take visitors’ criticism seriously

because this is a strong disadvantage in with the USA market. Potential U. S. tourists may feel at a disadvantage in Viet-Nam knowing this price difference and may switch to another close destination. Pricing could be considered through cooperation and conciliation among financial departments and other entities to establish more logical prices and/or reduce the price gap between U. S. visitors and Vietnamese. Control over arbitrary price increases should be embedded in policies and should hold serious consequences. Still, exceptions for certain price differentials for U. S tourists should have explanations and be published.

Related to publishing, the dissemination of tourist information could be more abundant and relevant. The majority of U. S. residents merely knows Viet-Nam through the past war, and do not have information on its changes and modifications. The current establishment of the Vietnamese Tourism Promotion and Publicity Bureau in the USA is a considerable project, but much remains to be done. For example, tourism web sites could provide more tourism essays and up-to-date tourism news and events in addition the regular Viet-Nam's description, tours, and prices. As books were a primary source prior to travel to Viet-Nam, the Vietnamese could write tourism books, in English or translated to English, then export to the USA to assist marketing campaigns.

Besides, marketing will be more fruitful once it is filtrated from scientific research, a serious void that dots along the development of Vietnamese tourism. Vietnamese tourism entities should take a step forward to conduct the research. Only in understanding the USA market's taste, behavior, etc. and catering to it will U. S visitors be attracted to travel to, and furthermore, to possibly revisit Viet-Nam.

One more component of Viet-Nam's image with a lower mean score (mean = 4.20, computed separately) was the English communication capacity of Vietnamese. Although this limitation is uncontrollable within Vietnamese tourism, the language barrier did interfere with U. S. visitors' perceptions of and affections to Viet-Nam's image. In fact, English is widely taught in every school and is considered as main foreign language in all fields. Thus, the shortfall is from the lack of communication opportunity resulting in non-understanding or misunderstanding when contacting with U. S. visitors. Efficient English communication will be improved once more occasions are available in the future, whether in business or education exchange.

Giving the limited sample size of this research, similar research with larger samples should be carried out for a more concise analysis of Viet-Nam's image. In addition, as image is not objective (Stringer, 1984) and changeable from the emergence of unexpected factors (Tyagi, 1989, cited by Milman and Pizam, 1995), further research that repeats this assessment over time is suggested. Fakeye and Crompton (1991) argue that positive or negative images remain over a considerable amount of time, and Gartner (1993) suggests that image changeability may be dependent upon source credibility. A strategy for changing destination image by improving core clues or image contents is possible (Park & Ko, 2000). Whether a component is modified by the host (e. g. site degradation or product specialization), the visitors (e. g. new taste of emerging tourism trend), or by nature (e. g. flood or favorable climate change); that change of component can influence image. Hence, studies should be replicated to detect image as Vietnamese tourism works to enhance or modify its current image among U. S. tourists. Customer

service, management and marketing are development keys. Another direction is from international perspective, where research can be conducted with various foreign tourists to reveal perceptible and affective differences among them. As the trend of Vietnamese domestic travel increases, studies that focus on domestic tourists will discover the internal image. Most important, as image differs in the three travel phases of pre-visitation, onsite visitation, and post-visitation (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991), future research with certain valid model may be interested in simultaneously conducting all three phases for a more panoramic and authentic value assessment of Viet-Nam's image.

Above all, along with research of Hong-Kong' image (Choi et al., 1999) and Singapore's image (Hui & Wan, 2003), this research of Viet-Nam's image contributes to the tourism literature, particularly Asian tourism, and may work towards understanding a regional tourism image.

REFERENCES

- Assael, H. (1981). *Consumer behavior and marketing action*. Boston, MA: Kent Publishing.
- Baloglu, S., & Brinberg, D. (1997). Affective image of tourism destinations. *Journal of Travel Research* 35(4), 11-15.
- Blaine, T. W., Mohammed G, Ruppel, F., & Var, T. (1994). US demand for Vietnam tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research* 22(4), 934-936.
- Choi, W. M., Chan, A., & Wu, J. (1999, Research note). A qualitative and quantitative assessment of Hong Kong's image as a tourist destination. *Tourism Management* 20(3), 361-365.
- Chon, K. S. (1990). The role of destination image in tourism: A review and discussion. *Revue de Tourisme – The Tourist Review – Zeitschrift fur Fremdenverkehr* 2, 2-9.
- Chon, K. S. (1992). The role of destination image in tourism: An extension. *Revue de Tourisme – The Tourist Review – Zeitschrift fur Fremdenverkehr* 1, 2-8.
- Crompton, J. L. (1979). An assessment of the image of Mexico as a vacation destination and the influence of geographical location upon that image. *Journal of Travel Research* 17(4), 18-23.
- Denis, M. (1991). *Image and Cognition*. Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire (UK): Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Dichter, E. (1985). What's in an image. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 2(1), 75-81.
- Dobni, D., & Zinkhan, G. M. (1990). In search of brand image: A foundation analysis. *Advances in Consumer Research* 17(Session 2.5), 110-119.

Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. R. B. (1991). The meaning and measurement of destination image. *Journal of Tourism Studies* 2(2), 2-12.

Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. R. B. (1993). The measurement of destination image: An empirical assessment. *Journal of Travel Research* 31(4), 3-13.

*Euromonitor International – Travel and tourism in USA (2003)*. Source: Euromonitor. Retrieved August 05 2003 from [http://www.euromonitor.com/Travel and tourism in USA \(mmp\)](http://www.euromonitor.com/Travel_and_tourism_in_USA_(mmp)).

*Express Travel and Tourism story – PATA region: The new engine of global tourism growth (2002)*. Source: Express Travel and Tourism. Retrieved August 08 2003 from <http://www.expresstravelandtourism.com/20021215/macro4.shtml>.

Fakeye, P. C., & Crompton, J. L. (1991). Image differences between prospective, first-time, and repeat visitors to the lower Rio Grande valley. *Journal of Travel Research* 30(2), 10-16.

Fridgen, J. D. (1984). Environmental psychology and tourism. *Annals of Tourism research*, 11(1), 19-39.

Gartner, W. C. (1993). Image formation process. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing* 2(2/3), 191-215.

Gartner, W. C. (1996). *Tourism development – Principles, process, and policies*. New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Gartner, W. C., & Hunt, J. D. (1987). An analysis of state image change over a twelve-year period (1971-1983). *Journal of Travel Research*, 26(2), 15-19.

- Gunn, C. A. (1972). *Vacationscape – Designing tourist regions*. Austin, TX: University of Texas.
- Hair, J. F., Anderson, R. E., Tatham, R. L., & Black, W. C. (1995, 4<sup>th</sup> edition). *Multivariate data analysis with readings*. Englewoods, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Hanyu, K. (1993). The affective meaning of Tokyo: Verbal and non-verbal approaches. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 13(2), 161-172.
- Hui, K., & Wan, T. W. D. (2003). Singapore's image as a tourist destination. *International Journal of Tourism Research* 5(4), 305-313.
- Hunt, J. D. (1975). Image as a factor in tourism development. *Journal of Travel Research* 13(3), 1-7.
- Jenkins, O. H. (1999). Understanding and measuring tourist destination images. *International Journal of Tourism Research* 1(1), 1-15.
- Karma Centre – Latin American tourism survey* (1998). Source: Report from research of the Karma Centre for knowledge and research in marketing, McGill University, Montreal, Canada. Retrieved August 06 2003 from [http://www.oas.org/tourism/LA\\_summ.pdf](http://www.oas.org/tourism/LA_summ.pdf).
- Kim, H. B. (1998). Perceived attractiveness of Korean destinations. *Annals of Tourism Research* 25(2), 340-361.
- Loi, H. (2003). *Quan ly tai nguyen du lich – Bo ngo den bao gio? (Tourism resources management – To leave for how long?)*. Source: VOV (Voice of Vietnam). Retrieved May 10 2004 from [http://www.vov.org.vn/2003\\_11\\_26/vietnamese/xahoi1.htm#12](http://www.vov.org.vn/2003_11_26/vietnamese/xahoi1.htm#12).

London correspondents (2003). *Global tourism forecast to pick up*. Source: Herald Sun.

Retrieved August 05 2003 from  
[http://www.heraldsun.news.com.au/common/story\\_page/0,5478,6846073%5E1702,00.htm](http://www.heraldsun.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5478,6846073%5E1702,00.htm).

Lord, C. G. (1980). Schemas and images as memory aids: Two modes of processing social information. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 38(2), 257-269.

MacKay, K. J., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (1997). Pictorial element of destination in image formation. *Annals of Tourism Research* 24(3), 537-565.

Mazursky, D., & Jacoby, J. (1986). Exploring the development of store images. *Journal of Retailing* 62(2), 145-165.

*Metaverse – How to tell if you're American* (no date). Source: The Metaverse. Retrieved August 06 2003 from <http://www.zompist.com/mercult.html>.

Milman, A., & Pizam, A. (1995). The role of awareness and familiarity with a destination: the Central Florida case. *Journal of Travel Research* 33(3), 21-27.

Narayana, C. L. (1976). The stability of perceptions. *Journal of advertising research* 16(2), 45-49.

Nolan, S. D. Jr. (1976). Tourists' use and evaluation of travel sources: Summary and conclusions. *Journal of Travel Research* 14(3), 6-8.

- Park, S. H., & Ko, D. W. (2000). *A critical review of tourism image*. Retrieved July 20 2003 from <http://216.239.57.104/search?q=cache:oJWDD-gG714J:www.kyonggi.ac.kr/cgi-bin/tour/data/bk21t2/A%2520critical%2520review%2520of%2520tourism%2520image.doc+tourism+image&hl=en&ie=UTF-8>.
- Pearce, P. L. (1982). Perceived changes in holiday destinations. *Annals of tourism research* 9(2), 145-164.
- Phelps, A. (1986). Holiday destination image – The problem of assessment: An example developed in Menorca. *Tourism Management* 7(3), 168-180.
- Pizam, A., & Mansfeld, Y. (Eds.) (1999). *Consumer behavior in travel and tourism*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Hospital Press.
- Russell, J A., Lewicka, M., & Niit, T. (1989). A cross-cultural study of a circumplex model of affect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 57(5), 848-856.
- Russell, J. A., & Pratt, G. (1980). A description of affective quality attributed to environments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 38(2), 311-322.
- Schneider, I., & Sonmez, S. (1999). Exploring the touristic image of Jordan. *Tourism Management* 20(4), 539-542.
- Scott, D. R., Schewe, C. D., & Frederick, D. G. (1978). A multi-brand/multi-attribute model of tourist state choice. *Journal of Travel Research* 17(3), 23-29.
- Sonmez, S., & Sirakaya, E. (2002). A distorted destination image? The case of Turkey. *Journal of Travel Research* 41, 185-196.

Stringer, P. (1984). Studies in the socio-environmental psychology of tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 11(1), 147-166.

Synnott, A. (1993). *The body social - Symbolism, self and society*. London, UK; New York, USA; Canada: Routledge.

Tan, V. D. (n. d.). Following the tourists' steps. Source: Vietnam Review. Retrieved August 01 2003 from <http://vietnam.vnagency.com.vn/vnreview/english/2001%2D06/dukhach.htm>.

Tu, P., & Binh, V. T. (Eds, 2001). *Vietnam – Tourist guidebook*. Ha-Noi, Viet-Nam: Vietnam National Administration of Tourism.

VDC news: *Vietnam in close-up*. (12/30/2002). Source: VDC Media. Retrieved August 01 2003 from [http://vn-style.com/myhomeland/vietnaminclose-up/chitiet.cfm?ID\\_Tin=707&CM=tb\\_vn\\_closeup](http://vn-style.com/myhomeland/vietnaminclose-up/chitiet.cfm?ID_Tin=707&CM=tb_vn_closeup).

VDC news: *World tourism body pledges help for Vietnam*. (02/13/2003). Source: VDC Media. Retrieved August 01 2003 from [http://vn-style.com/news/business/chitiet.cfm?ID\\_Tin=7799&cm=TB\\_business](http://vn-style.com/news/business/chitiet.cfm?ID_Tin=7799&cm=TB_business).

*Vietnam Economy news: To carry out economic targets in six months of year end* (2003). Source: Vietnam Economy. Retrieved August 01 2003 from [http://www.vneconomy.com.vn/en\\_index.php?action=preview&id=030801151527](http://www.vneconomy.com.vn/en_index.php?action=preview&id=030801151527).

Vietnam embassy (no date). *Diplomacy – Vietnam-US relations*. Source: VN Embassy. Retrieved August 24 2003 from <http://www.vietnamembassy-usa.org/diplomacy/vn-us-key.php3>.

Vietnamtourism (2003). *A natural world of wonders*. Source: Vietnamtourism.

Retrieved August 24 2003 from [http://www.vietnam-tourism.com/vietnam\\_gov/e\\_pages/Dulich/DiemDLdep/4-dsvh/fr\\_dldep\\_phongnha.htm](http://www.vietnam-tourism.com/vietnam_gov/e_pages/Dulich/DiemDLdep/4-dsvh/fr_dldep_phongnha.htm).

*VNA news: Viet Nam optimistic about steadily fast growth* (2003). Source: VNA

(Vietnam Agency). Retrieved August 01 2003 from [http://www.vnagency.com.vn/newsa.asp?LANGUAGE\\_ID=2&CATEGORY\\_ID=31&NEWS\\_ID=2519](http://www.vnagency.com.vn/newsa.asp?LANGUAGE_ID=2&CATEGORY_ID=31&NEWS_ID=2519).

*VnExpress – Trang du lịch [VnExpress – Tourism page]* (2003). Vietnamese version.

With links, synthesized and retrieved from <http://vnexpress.net/Vietnam/Xa-hoi/Du-lich/>.

*VVG ~ Economic indicators – Current report of Vietnam’s economic indicators* (2003).

Source: VVG. Retrieved August 01 2003 from [http://www.vvg-vietnam.com/economics\\_cvr.htm](http://www.vvg-vietnam.com/economics_cvr.htm) and link to “GDP growth (%)”.

Walmsley, D. J., & Young, M. (1998). Evaluative images and tourism: The use of personal constructs to describe the structure of destination images. *Journal of Travel Research* 36(3), 65-69.

Woods, W. A. (1981). *Consumer behavior – Adapting and experiencing*. New York,

NY: Elsevier North Holland.

*WTO news releases - First WTO world tourism barometer shows steadily improving conditions for international tourism* (24 June 2003). Source: WTO. Retrieved August 07 2003 from <http://www.world-tourism.org/newsroom/Releases/2003/june/barometer.htm>.

Zimmer, M. R., & Golden, L. L. (1988). Impressions of retail stores: A content analysis of consumer images. *Journal of Retailing* 64(3), 265-293.

## APPENDIX A

### Other remarks from respondents

1. "When we discussed our trip with friends, choosing between China and Vietnam, they said go to Vietnam before it is spoilt. I hope that Vietnam learns from other countries and does not allow itself to be spoilt in the name of promoting mass tourism. Ha Long City is a warning".
2. "Not enough [tourist information] on internet". "Tremendous values [of tourism experience]". "I hope that when I return it will be as beautiful and authentic as it is today. I fear of tourists changing this beautiful country".
3. "Not to wheelchairs".
29. "Our guide was fantastic! And because of "Mien" we have an exciting tour and will request her when we return in April with a group and will continue coming with groups... But want "Mien" as guide please. She is great!! Made it fun!!".
30. "I am a travel agent".
51. "Good luck!".
52. "My wife is Vietnamese, so this had a strong influence on my visit to Vietnam, & being treated like visiting royalty by her friends!".
71. "Hotels & restaurants are potentially good quality (essential hotels) but the service is far too regimented. People are friendly but do not seem to be allowed to be nearly as helpful as they could be (or would like to be), they must follow the rules and many of the rules are silly and not conducive to good tourism".

94. "The only annoyance has been people selling things and their unwillingness to accept no".

APPENDIX B  
Cover letter and Questionnaire

WELCOME TO VIET-NAM!

Dear visitor,

You are among a small group of U. S. visitors that have been selected to participate in this project to understand the image of Viet-Nam. Your participation is very important and the information you provide will assist in improving future tourist experiences in Viet-Nam.

Your participation is voluntary and anonymous, but I am hoping that you will agree to spend just ten minutes filling out the form. Completion of this survey is consent for participation. After the data from questionnaires are compiled, individual forms will be destroyed.

Please feel free to contact me regarding any concerns about this research that you may have. In the meantime, please use the included US\$1 dollar as you like. I hope you had a great stay in Viet-Nam!

With my respectful appreciation,

Hung-tuan-Tran, Graduate student researcher  
University of Minnesota  
tran0266@umn.edu

**First, a few questions about your travel experiences**

1. How many trips have you taken outside the US in the last 3 years? _____
2. How many trips have you taken to Asia in the last 3 years? _____
3. How many trips have you taken to Viet-Nam in the last 3 years? _____
4. What was the year of your first trip to Viet-Nam? 19____ or 200_____
5. What was the primary purpose of this trip to Viet-Nam (check one)? <input type="checkbox"/> Experience nature <input type="checkbox"/> Excitement/adventure <input type="checkbox"/> Experience history-culture <input type="checkbox"/> Business <input type="checkbox"/> Visit friends/family <input type="checkbox"/> Other (explain) _____
6. What was your primary source of information about Viet-Nam prior to this trip (check one)? <input type="checkbox"/> Travel agents <input type="checkbox"/> Internet <input type="checkbox"/> Magazines <input type="checkbox"/> Movies <input type="checkbox"/> Television <input type="checkbox"/> Books <input type="checkbox"/> Friends and relatives <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

**7. Now, some questions about your experience in Viet-Nam. Please circle one number that best matches your agreement with the statements below.**

	Str. disagree---->Unsure----->Str. agree						
There are many interesting places to visit in Viet-Nam.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There are many restful places in Viet-Nam.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The scenery is not beautiful.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Cultural activities are available.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The image assessment of Viet-Nam among U. S. tourists 56

Historical sites are accessible.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Hotels are good quality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Restaurants are good quality.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Many tour packages are not available.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Tourist information is available.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Viet-Nam is not a good place for shopping.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Prices in Viet-Nam are reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Tour prices do reflect the value of the experience.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Prices vary significantly between towns.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Prices for foreigners and Vietnamese are not significantly different.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The world heritage sites in Viet-Nam are unique.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The world heritage sites in Viet-Nam are authentic.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The world heritage sites in Viet-Nam are worth visiting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Tourist sites do not offer opportunities for learning.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Tourist guides are competent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not many Vietnamese can speak English.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Vietnamese people are friendly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Viet-Nam is a safe place to visit.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The environment is clean.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Viet-Nam has pleasant weather.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please answer the following.

<p>8. What top 3 images or characteristics come to mind when you think of Viet-Nam as a vacation destination?</p> <p>1-</p> <p>2-</p> <p>3-</p>
<p>9. List 3 words that describe the atmosphere or mood that you experienced while visiting Viet-Nam.</p> <p>1-</p> <p>2-</p> <p>3-</p>
<p>10. List 3 distinctive or unique tourist attractions that you can think of in Viet-Nam.</p> <p>1-</p> <p>2-</p> <p>3-</p>

**Finally, a few questions about you.**

11. What is the state and zip code of your residence? _____ State _____ Zip code
12. Are you? _____ Female _____ Male
13. What year were you born?: 19_____
14. What is the highest level education you have attained? ___ Less than high school ___ High school degree ___ Technical school ___ Some college ___ College degree _____ Graduate school _____ Graduate degree
15. What is your annual household income? ___ Less than \$25,000 ___ \$25,000-\$49,999 ___ \$50,000-\$74,999 ___ \$75,000-\$99,999 ___ \$100,000-\$124,999 ___ \$125,000-\$149,999 _____ \$150,000 or more
16. How likely are you to return to Viet-Nam? ___ Unlikely ___ Like ___ Very likely ___ Unsure

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION!