

# A Study of Taiwanese College Students' Perception about Vietnam and Motivation for Traveling to Vietnam

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**Abstract.** This paper aims to investigate the perception of Taiwanese potential tourists about Vietnam and their motivation for traveling to Vietnam.

The 39-items survey questionnaire was developed to conduct a survey on Taiwanese college students of the Southern Taiwan University during March 2010. A total valid questionnaire of 360 was used in data analysis for empirical test with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The results from the analysis showed that Taiwanese potential tourists did not get familiar with the general image of Vietnam; specifically 71.6 % of them didn't know or not be sure that Hanoi is the capital of Vietnam. Besides, the most important results revealed that perception and motivation of respondents have a positively impact on destination behavioral intention. Furthermore, gender and information can have influence on perception and motivation. These findings imply some considerate application for Vietnam tourism administrators in planning strategic campaigns to promote the image of the country to potential tourists.

**Keywords:** Tourist's perception, Tourist's motivation, Destination Image, Vietnam

## 1. Introduction

A growing number of countries with different levels of development in their advantages on infrastructure and opened policies have been generating tight competition for Vietnam. Compared with Asian countries or even with other Southeast Asian countries, the Vietnamese tourist sector is relatively young and small. In particular, in 2007, Vietnam recorded a total 4.2 million international tourist arrivals while Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore received 20.97 million, 14.16 million and 10.29 million international tourist visitors, respectively (Prema Cooray, 2007). Moreover, Vietnam is considered as the big country among the others with the more than 85 million people while Malaysia just has 27 million people, Thailand has 65 million people and Singapore seems to be the smallest one with 4 million people. Such reality raises a question of concern for the Vietnamese tourism sector that what happens to those tourists how come they don't want to visit Vietnam?

Based on the report of Vietnam General Statistics Office in 2008, Taiwan was in the Top 5 countries by visitor numbers in the country during 2007 to 2009 and there was the increasing of the number of Taiwanese visited Vietnam with 270000 people in 2007 and 280000 people in 2008, reported by Taiwanese Tourism Bureau. Therefore, Vietnam should pay more attention to this potential market.

## 2. Study background

### 2.1. Country Image

The growth of globalization has forced many companies to examine the impact of country image on their product positioning and manufacturing strategies. Country image is a consistent pattern that focuses on the consumer acquisition of information about a country on which the formation of perceptions about that country is based (Deslandes 2003). The concept of country image was long used as a tool to evaluate the product and destination marketing (Gartner, 1987).

## **2.2. The Role of Image in Tourists' Travel Decision Making Processes**

Travelers have an image of many destinations and this image affects their decision to travel to that particular place. Destination image is an important notion in evaluating how the tourists select their own destination, thus having a better understanding of tourist's behavior. The concept of a travel destination image according to Fakeye and Crompton (1991) is that "images are of paramount importance because they transpose representation of an area into the potential tourist's mind and give him or her pre-taste of the destination". This is true because a traveler will be more likely to choose a specific destination based on its image and on what he or she will be discovering.

Following Beerli & Martin (2004) there have been classified into nine dimensions such as natural resources, general infrastructure, tourism infrastructure, tourism leisure and recreation, culture, history and art, political and economic factors, natural environment, social environment, and the atmosphere of the place. The choice of the different attributes used in designing an instrument to measure perceived tourist destination image will depend on the attractions that a place has at its disposal, on its positioning as a tourist destination and on the objectives of the assessment of perceived image, which will also determine whether specific or more general attributes are selected.

## **2.3. Potential Tourists' Motivation**

The central element of the tourism system is the destination with its features and resources. It is therefore vital to empirically examine tourist motivation in order to try to identify markets in which tourist motivations match the destination (Kozak, 2002).

"Push" and "pull" factors and their importance in shaping tourist motivations were emphasized in Crompton's (1979) study. Most authors accept this model highlighted by Crompton. "Push" factors are intangible factors that pushes a tourist away from home, while "pull" factors are tangible characteristics pulling tourists towards the destination, referring to what makes a destination attractive for potential visitors' including historical and cultural resources, beaches, and accommodation (Andreu, Bigne', & Cooper, 2000). These factors are relevant in the current study, as they provide a framework for understanding tourist motivations.

## **3. Research Methods**

### **3.1. Sampling**

The sampling method was used to ensure that the purpose of the study is reached. The target population was those Taiwanese students who are currently studying Southern Taiwan of University from all departments and genders. According to School Profile, in the 2009 academic year, the total number of students is approximately 18000, so it was impossible to reach all units in a student population. Therefore, a sample was selected through convenience sampling. The sample size for the final test of this paper will follow the scale 20:1 subject to item ratio.

### **3.2. Instrument**

The questionnaire consisted of three main sections. Background Information is included in Part 1 with the purpose of finding some information before they are going to chose the destination, or about students' travel experience, friend or relatives in Vietnam and their general understanding about Vietnam. In Part 2, 18 attribute-based questions measured on 1 to 5 Likert scales to address the research question about Taiwanese students' perceptions of Vietnam. Part 3 asked respondents to rate 13 vacation motives for leisure travel on a five-point Likert scale.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. Descriptive Analysis for Sample Characteristics**

In this research there were only 2 people who had been to Vietnam and 99.5 % of participants have never visited Vietnam at all. Additionally, the majority of respondents don't have friends or relatives in Vietnam and just only 6.3 % said that they have friends or relatives in Vietnam.

The table 1 shows that 71.6 % of all students didn't know that Hanoi is the capital of Vietnam compared to 28.4 % of students that they knew the capital of Vietnam.

Table 1 Travel Experience, Friend or Relatives in Vietnam and Understanding of Capital of Vietnam

Items	Response	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Visiting Experience	Yes	2	.5
	No	378	99.5
Friends or Relatives in Vietnam	Yes	24	6.3
	No	356	93.7
Is Hanoi the Capital of Vietnam?	Yes	108	28.4
	No	272	71.6

#### 4.2. Factor Analysis and Reliability Test for Perception Construct

The 18 Likert statements were explored by principle component factor analysis and varimax rotation, which resulted in a six-factor solution. There are no items with factor loadings less than 0.4 were dropped from further analysis. The internal consistency of each factor was examined by Cronbach's alpha tests. All the alpha coefficients were above 0.5, which means that high correlation existed between the items.

Factor 1 was composed of 5 items relating to different kinds of cultural activities and language. "Ao dai is Vietnamese traditional costume", "language used in Vietnam is diacritical tones with roman script", "water puppet shows are available in Vietnam" and "85 % of Vietnamese identify with Buddhism" were examples of higher factor loading for this factor. Factor 2 was related to living standard. "Vietnam is lack of modern facilities and machines", "food and beverage would be cheap", "Vietnam is a developing country" and "there are more motorcycles than cars in Vietnam" were examples of higher factor loading for this factor. Factor 3 included items relating to weather. "The climate is tropical" and "the weather is sultry" are described with higher factor loading for this factor. Factor 4 consisted of items relating to food. "Vietnam has Pho", "Vietnamese usually uses fish sauce to cook and have a meal", "some Vietnamese food flavors are usually sour, spicy and sweet" are appeared with higher factor loading. Factor 5 included items relating safety such as "Vietnam is a safe place to visit", and "there is not a lot of political instability and turmoil in Vietnam". Finally, factor 6 included items relating friendliness, for example, "Vietnamese people are friendly" and "Vietnamese people usually show their warm welcome to visitors".

#### 4.3. Factor Analysis and Reliability Test for Motivation Construct

There are no items with factor loadings less than 0.4 were dropped from further analysis. All the alpha coefficients were above 0.5, which means that high correlation existed between the items. Specifically, factor 1 was composed of 8 items relating to different kinds of benefit sought. Some motives that will drive respondents to travel to Vietnam such as "for sightseeing tourist spots", "to attend cultural events", "for intellectual improvement", and "to enjoy a great variety of Vietnamese food (e.g. Pho, shrimp roll.....)" were examples of higher factor loading for this factor. Factor 2 was related to exploration. "To know new, different places", "to explore a different life style and customs", and "to seek adventure and pleasure" were examples of higher factor loading for the factor.

### 5. Implication for the Vietnam Tourism's Administer

The need to expand and strengthen its own image is a first and necessary step in building the brand and identity of the country as well as building the strong competitive position. Moreover, if the country is to expand its market base, it is obvious that they have to lure people who have never visited before. It causes a necessity to know the perceptions of prospective visitors so that misconceptions can be corrected and unique selling features can be exploited.

The broadcast system of the destination towards abroad need to be enhanced and the national administer need to make sure that the strategic marketing for the destination provided for the potential tourists meet their demand and expectation. It is necessary to enhance co-operation between the Vietnam tourism industry with other industries and ministries through specific programs. Additionally, cooperation with outsiders including non-government organization and other global institutions such as World Bank, IMF (International Monetary Fund's) and other global co operations need to be more encouraged and expanded. More importantly, cooperating with international travel and tourism agencies to reschedule Vietnam on its tours so that is name can be more noticeable for a broader range of international tourists is an urgent and meaningful issue. Finally, participating in regional and international fairs and exhibition to display Vietnam' diversified culture and exotic natural spots are good strategies to promote Vietnam to potential tourists.

Characteristics of country image including potential, natural landscapes and historical and cultural sites, cuisine, need to be emphasized; and safety and friendliness need to be more maintained to make them all will be advantage sources for tourism development. Besides, the campaign for promoting the country image should be set up for a long term strategy and require a consistent cooperation of Vietnamese people in the country as well as abroad to make a unique image of Vietnam.

According to Morgan and Pritchard (1998), placing a destination in a film is the ultimate in tourism product placement. Product placement is an emerging phenomenon, and has been defined as the planned entries of products into movies or television shows that may influence viewers' product beliefs and/or behaviors favorably (Balasubramanian, 1994). From this fact, the Vietnam tourism administrators can use films as springboards for marketing campaigns in increasing tourists' awareness and enhancing country's image if the films are seen as appropriate for the country.

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