DEVELOPMENT OF FRAMEWORK FOR THE IMAGE OF VIETNAM AS A TOURISM DESINATION FOR MALAYSIAN TOURISTS

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ABSTRACT

Consider the importance of the tourism industry, this study investigates the image of Vietnam as a tourism destination for Malaysian tourists by analysing and identifying various Malaysian travel guidebooks and brochures as well as finding an importance of performance analysis based on a set of attributes. Field studies of survey design will be used, hence, the variables under investigation and interview questionnaire design will be observed under natural research setting. The sample of the study consists of all the present individual Malaysian tourists travel to Vietnam and haven't travel to Vietnam. Both descriptive and inferential statistic will be employed in analysing the data that to be collected by using open-ended questions and multiple choice questionnaires. The study contributes theoretically and practically by examining deeper understanding the Vietnam's image as a destination among Malaysian tourists.

Keywords: Tourism, destination, image, marketing, perception, Vietnam.

INTRODUCTION:

Tourism industry is the great generator of a vast amount of jobs across national and regional economies, approximately contributing 6-7% worldwide employment both direct and indirect jobs (UNWTO 2011).Tourism contributes enormous benefits to a country, therefore, many countries recently have place much more efforts to presenting and attractive, especially on tourism's image.

Tourism destination image is a very effective method to assert the country's reputation in the world and destination image is one of an important influence on tourists choose a destination (Gabriel and Venilton 2011). It has attracted and encouraged in a number of studies more than thirty years (Danijela and Alen 2012; Ana and Roxana 2011; Pike 2010; McCartney, Butler and Bennett 2008; Ortega and Gonsalez 2007), especially for tourism which is important to investigate in a country (Pike 2011; Saura and Garcia 2002). "Hunt (1975) was the first to demonstrate the importance of the destination image in tourism industry, in increasing the number of tourists visiting destinations" (Ana and Roxana 2011, p.5) and Papadopoulos (1993) also was the first noted the country images are relevant for any kind of development factor which including tourism industry, investment attraction as well as product exports.

According to, Statia and Nicolas (2012) that destination image "in parallel with tourism marketing" and its strategies used by the destination marketing country or organizations in an attempt to differentiate and position themselves in an increasingly competitive environment (Pike et al 2004; Echtner and Ritchie 1991). Many researcher stated that positive images or positive perceptions could help by the tourist will attract more travellers, it is because the common sense that positive images will have more power to convince consumption behaviour (McCartner, Butler and Bennett 2009). There are many factors which is influences in images of destination, a major objective of any destination positioning strategy should be to reinforce positive images already held by the target audience, correct negative images, or create a new image (Pike and Ryan 2004), therefore, "to understand why tourists select certain destinations, it is necessary to identify the influencing factors and examine how people perceive and create mental images" (Nevenka and Aneta 2006, p.57) in order to provides more effective and efficient future marketing planning of the destination (Ana and Roxana 2011).

Since Vietnam realizes the important role of this industry, the government has been concentrating in marketing tourism by funding various promotion campaigns to the world. On the other hand, Vietnam currently has some places have been listed in UNESCO World Heritage Sites as evidences of effort to boost the national tourism industry. During the last of 15 years, the number of tourists has increased rapidly and the forecast of Vietnam destination market will be triple size by the year 2030 (VNAT 2012).

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council and Oxford Economic Forecasting that Vietnam's tourism industry is expected to experience the sixth-highest growth rate of countries in the world during 2007 and 2016 (Vietnam's Tourism Grows 2006). However, although always in an increasing trend, Vietnam is still far compared to Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore in attracting foreign tourists (Le 2010; ASEAN Secretariat 2008). Due to Vietnam tourism destination marketing is still weak and only base on subjective experiences (Le 2010). According to Le (2010, p.3) that "Vietnam has not been study on any images of Vietnam as a tourism destination in foreigner markets"

As pointed out by Mr. Vu The Binh (2013) chairman of the Vietnam Tourism Association, that building Vietnam as a tourism image or brand was important to the Vietnam tourism industry. Moreover, there are many promotions, marketed destination and site as well as developed infrastructure have been introduce, but had not done yet consistently to present the tourism of Vietnam to international travellers. In the context, the problem seemed to be mostly with image and communication. Therefore, Vietnam needed to better develop its tourism products, especially on images of the tourism (Binh 2013). According to Nguyen Van Tuan head of Vietnam National Administration Tourism (VNAT) (Tuan 2013) said that, the tourism "Strategy on Vietnam's Tourism Development until 2020, vision to 2030" is aimed to strengthening the marketing and promotion campaigns as well as encouraging tourism business work together to promote Vietnam tourism image and concept.

Being one of the members among ASEAN countries, Vietnam is located in South-East Asia and north of Malaysia as well as neighbour. Vietnam occupies a good position from Malaysia to travel, not only geographically and in term of international relation as well, that will help Vietnam integrate rapidly

with Malaysia and the global tourism development movement.

In Vietnam, Malaysian tourists are regarded one of the target markets (Vietnam, 2001) and Vietnam's tourism industry has achieved initial success in attracting Malaysian travellers. According to the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, the number of Malaysian tourist to Vietnam gradually increasing from year 2000 to year 2013, hitting a peak of nearly 340,000 in year 2013 (VNAT 2014) and around 250,000 for the nine months of year 2014 (VNAT 2014). Therefore, it is crucial to identify the image of Vietnam' tourism according to customer behaviour in order to improve marketing tactics properly. The main objective of this study can be used as a base for establishing a marketing strategy of Vietnam destination for the Malaysia market, it most benefits for Vietnam country, Vietnam tourism and travel organization.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT:

There are many and no specific definitions that describes destination image, according to (Swarbrooke et al. 2007, p.164), tourism organizations attempt to identify their branding because a recognized brand adds tangible values to tourism services which are largely intangible. Since then, strong of branding name or image identity allows the organization to give the right type of message and quality implication to their target customers, therefore, the image of concept was found widely in marketing and practice application (Danijela and Alen 2012). Kotler (2002, p.299) have defines a place or destination's image as 'the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that people have of that place'. Echtner and Ritchie (2003, p.42) states that 'destination image could be considered in term of both an attributed-based component and a holistic component. In addition, some images of destinations could be based upon directly observable or measurable characteristics (scenery, attractions, accommodation facilities, price levels), while others could be based on more abstract, tangible characteristics (friendliness, safety, atmosphere).

Markin (1974 cited Gallarza et al. 2002, p.60) defined destination image as "our own personalized, internalised and conceptualizing understanding of what we know", however, image is not only what we already know but also it is a picture drawing in our mental of what we do not know. Thus, destination marketer has to identifying, analysing, creating, changing and altering the destination image. However, perceived images are depending on many different factors, which are including mental, experiences and environment in which perception occurs (Nevenka and Aneta 2006). Therefore, understanding the perception of destination image that visitors and non-visitors are holding have invaluable, contributed to the attributes of the naïve image and re-estimate it to be incorporated with tourism marketing strategy (Selby and Morgan, 1996).

DESTINATION IMAGE FORMATION:

Different of people have different unique image of a particular destination, which is comprising their own memories, associations and imaginations of a particular destination (Jenkins 1999; Jenkins and McArthur 1996). Reynolds (1965) has been described the formation of destination image as the development mental construct based on few impressions chosen from variety of information such as promotional literature (travel brochures, posters), the opinion from others (family/friends, travel agents) and general media (newspapers, magazines, television, books and movies). Destination marketers are constantly engaged in developing a positive image of destination through means of advertising and promotion (Iwasshita 2003; Day, Skidmore and Koller 2002; Mackay and Fesenmaier 2000; Young 1999; Court and Lupton 1997; Mackay and Fesenmaier 1997; Bramwell and Rawding 1996). Moreover, by experiences destination, its image will be affected and modified based upon first-hand information and actually visiting.

Similarly (Young 1999; Court and Lupton 1997; Alhemoud and Armstrong 1996; Bramwell and Rawding 1996; Gartner 1993; Gunn 1972) stated it as a construction of a mental illustration on the basis of information delivered by the information agents and selected by a person. According to Mackay and Fesenmaier (1997, p.559), there are "composite of individual inputs and marketer inputs". Few research previous studies have explored the verbal and pictorial contents of promotional material

from the perspectives of the research subjects after exposure to the messages (Danijela, Alen 2012; Day, Skidmore, Koller 2002; MacKay, Fesenmaier 2000). Moreover, there an argument from O'Leary and Deegan (2005) that, the content analysis of information such as travel brochures or guidebooks had given great number of information about the images of destination. Gun (1972), proposed the influences of these various sources of information and their role in destination image formation divided into 7 phases of the travel experience as explained in Figure 1 below;
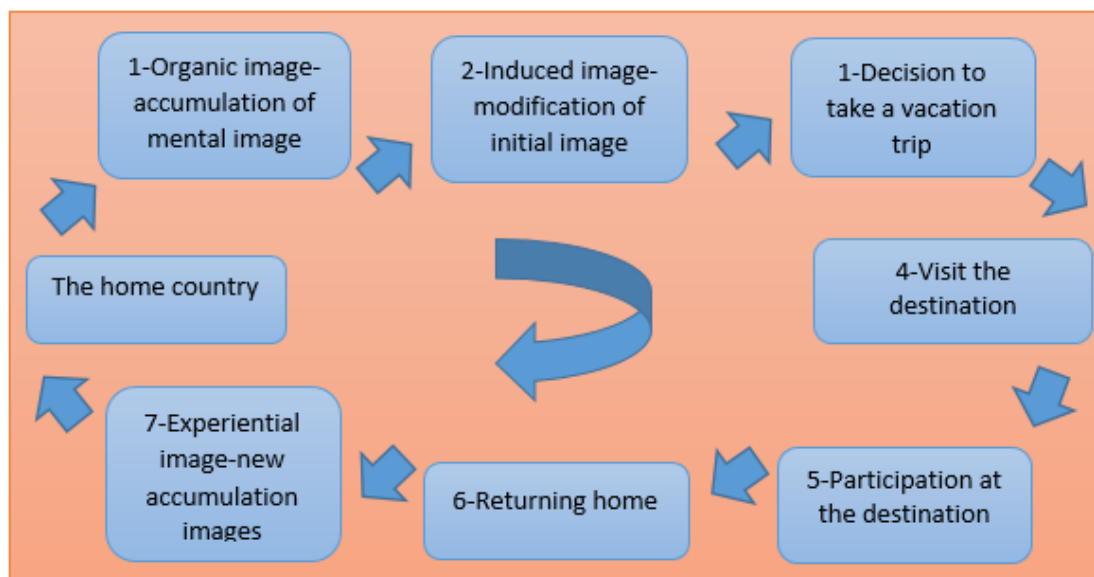

Figure 1. The Destination Image Formation Process
Source: Gunn (1972 p.120)

From this model, three stage of destination image formation was identified such as phases 1, 2 and 7. In Phases 1 and 2, that destination images are formed based upon secondary sources of information, whereas, the phases 7 actual experience is used to modified the destination image. Therefore, Gunn's theory gives a conceptual framework on image formation and modification, which is explained in terms of organic, induced and modified-induced.

It is interesting to note that for the majority of tourism products information sources is the most commercial part taken (Echtner and Ritchie 2003). On the other hand, that non-commercial like general media or school courses in formulating of destination images are very limited (Echtner and Ritchie 2003). However, most of formulating of destination images seems to be derived from widely information sources, due to a link between destination's tourist image and national image (WTO 1980; Kotler 1987; Echtner and Ritchie 2003). Non-commercial sources come from various such as historical, economic, political, education, stories and so on. Regarding about commercial sources concerning various tourist brochure, booklets, poster and more commercial sources of information. Therefore, the different between organic image and induce image as guide by Gunn is quite unique to applied for destination images (Echtner and Ritchie 2003)

In the final phase of destination image formation Phase 3, modified-induced image as actual experience modified particular destination image formed, and that images tent to be more realistic, complex and differentiated (Pearce 1982; Murphy and Hodel 1980; Phelps 1986; Chon 1987). However, there are have two main thing as identified by Echtner and Ritchie (2003) that, firstly, an individuals can have their own image of a destination even they have never visited that destination before or they're only exposed from commercial sources information. In this case, the designing of marketing strategies would be useful in term of measure these base images in order to addressed the accuracies of destination images in designing the promotional and marketing strategies. Secondly, the possibility of changes in destination image before and after visitation, therefore, the desirable to separate the images for those who had been or have not had been to that particular destination.

THE COMPONENTS OF DESTINATION IMAGE:

Imagery not only described as a mental picturing, but also can include any or all of the senses like smell, taste, sight, sound and touch. According to MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997, p.538) said that "a destination image is a composite of various products (attractions) and attributes woven into a total impression". Other general agreement that it has three main components such as affective, cognitive and conative. Affective is feeling and emotional toward the destination, cognitive is an evaluation of the attributes of the destination and conative is the purposed to visit the destination (Shani et al. 2009; Myers 1992 cited Pike and Ryan 2004; Dann 1996; Gartner 1993, 1996).

Despite of the affective and cognitive images are different, however, they are interrelated due to the formation of the affective depends on the cognitive (Baloglu and McCleary 1999; Gartner 1993; Stern and Krakover 1993; Anand, Holbrook and Stephens 1988). On the other hand, most of destination image studies investigated both cognitive and affective (Yilmaz et al 2009) and some studies only using the cognitive image or affective image (Alcaniz et al 2009; Um and Crompton 1990). Moreover, there are not many of researchers examined the cognative components of image destination or these three components together (Pike and Ryan 2004; Dann 1996; Gartner 1993, 1996)

In presenting, Echtner and Ritchie (2003) identified the components of destination image could be considered in terms of attribute-holistic, functional-psychological and comment-unique components as mentioned in the above concept can be illustrated in Figure 2 below. These component were adopted by many researchers in tourism research so far (such as Le and Cooper 2010; Salem 2009; Mao 2008; Stepchenkova and Morrison 2006, 2008; Govers et al. 2007; Tacsi and Gartner 2007; Prebensen 2007; Vaughan 2007; Baloglu and Mangaloglu 1999; Vaughan and Edwards 1999; Milman and Pizam 1995). There are a rising number of marketing challenges and one of the most significant is the need for an effective destination positioning in the strategy.

The central concept of tourism destination image in this research is consisting of not only the perceptions of individual destinations attributes but also the holistic impression made by the destination. It comprises functional characteristics, concerning the more intangible aspects of the destination and psychological characteristics, concerning the more intangible aspects. As suggested by (Martineau 1958), the concept of functional and psychological characteristics could also be applied to image. And the unique attributes can add to the competitive advantage of the destination in order to differentiated for products (Harahsheh 2002)

Moreover, the components of destination image can be arranged on a continuum ranging from traits which can be common to compare all destinations to those which are unique to every destination (Echtner and Ritchie 2003).
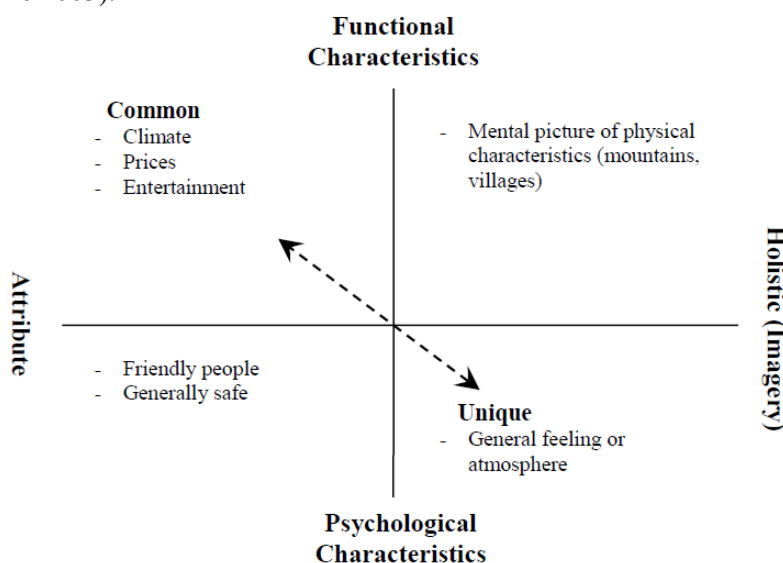

Figure 2. The Components of Destination Image
Source: Echtner and Ritchie (2003 p.43)

The Figure 2 depicts the perception given by Echtner and Ritchie (2003) starting that destination image consists of attribute, holistic, functional, psychological, common, and unique components. It captures separate attributes like climates, hotels and service also encompassing functional characteristics concerning price levels, transportation, infrastructure, accommodation and so on. The destination can also be rated on very commonly considered on psychological characteristics such as level of friendliness, safety, and quality of services. On the basis of the above, it can be concluded the uniqueness of that destination.

Once this task has been completed, destination marketers need to measure destination awareness and image. The measured images are used as a base for developing a destination brand, and then establishing destination positioning in key markets. In building a strong destination brand, importance is likely to be attached to image creation and destination differentiation. Therefore, image building image is a continuous market to the service and experience delivery at the destination. The conceptual framework of a Vietnam destination image building system is illustrated in Figure 3, shows the interactive relation between the image destination and the perception of Malaysian travellers.
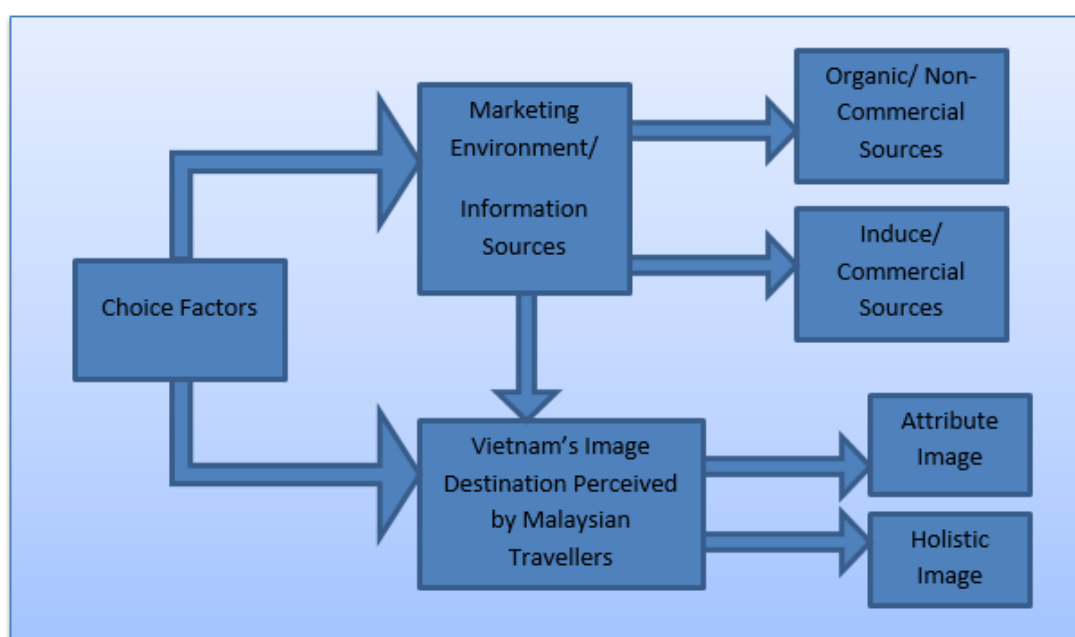

Figure 3 Research Framework of this Research
Source: Developed for this Research

METHODOLOGY:

In order to collect the data, the best fit methodological procedure must be selected. There are three types of tourism research approaches can be used to realise the research aim and objectives such as qualitative, quantitative and multi-method or mix method (Creswell 2009; Jennings 2001). In this case, the process of selecting the method and the type of research must be carefully thought out due to guarantee the consideration validity and reliability of the study.

The majority of this research is adopted quantitative methodology and just a few used of qualitative such as Reilly (1990); Dann (1996); Balogu and McCleary (1999); Salem (2011).Based on literature review that the research design for this thesis adopted to the system of measurement developed by Echtner and Ritchie (2003), that is a method of scale to measure the attribute-based components of that particular image (quantitative). Furthermore, used a number of open-ended questions to measure the holistic components of Vietnam's as a tourism destination for Malaysian travellers (qualitative). Ritchie and Crouch (2005, p.193) postulate that "although attribute measures and holistic measures frequently used by themselves, it is recommended that they be used in combination in order to gain the richness of understanding of a destination's image that is necessary for reliable planning and decision-making".

In consideration of the above, this study adopts the attributes based on the review of Echtner and Ritchie's model (1993) and Jenkins (1999) as well as Salem (2009), the pilot tested for the preliminary questionnaire and content analysis of some Malaysian tour operator's brochure images. There are two reasons behind for choosing questionnaire; firstly, using a questionnaire as a data collection method is a purposed to achieve a large of respondents and more representative sample than other methods were used like personal interviews or focus groups. Second reasons is the respondent for this research were choose to be potential and actual tourist to Vietnam, that why, a large sample was targeted (Salem 2009).

However, to make sure the result accurate the design incorporated open-end questions to capture the holistic images were employed, which would avoided some of the drawbacks inherent in the largely positivist approach (Salem 2009, p. 114). Therefore, incorporated this approach as a feature image destination study because its consider very helpful to identified the true image of destination.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE:

The total number of international tourists to Vietnam was 6,847,678 in 2012 (VNAT 2012), of which 299,041 were Malaysian tourists. The population of Malaysian was 27.5 billion in 2010 inhabitant, therefore, it was impractical to interview the whole population for the research. According to Gray (2004); Salem (2009) said that, it is impossible to interview the whole population of the study, it's simply because of the large number or due to limited resources of the researcher, and therefore, a sample might be selected from certain of population. Consequently, a sample was drawn to reach both potential and actual experiences Malaysian tourists. Jennings (2001); Bryman (2008), Salem (2009) examine that a simple random sample, if it is possible to be target, it is a best representation of the whole population, due to everyone in that population has an equal chance to be selected.

DATA ANALYSIS:

All the questionnaire were categorized and scaled after collection and entered into Statistic Package for the Social Sciences Software (SPSS) with version 20 in order to processing statistical. Questions were analysed using descriptive statistics (e.g. frequency and means), these descriptive were used to profile the characteristics of the respondents and compile the descriptive information of Malaysian tourists. According to Mao (2008, p.133) that "the measurement models of the major concepts in hypothesized model were validated by using exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis on spite sample". Followed by identified the latent variables in the major concepts. And the application of the structural equation modelling for assessment of hypothesized structural model were applied.

CONCLUSION:

The main purpose of this research is to explored destination image, therefore, it made based on the current finding on literature review so far. In long run, tourism image is one of the marketing performances in order to increasing number of visitors coming to Vietnam.

Destination image is one of the switching on the choices to the foreigner, especially for Malaysia which can be one of the factors for capturing the large market. Furthermore, the findings from this study will also be able to assist marketing implementation and marketing management to develop successful to build the Vietnam's image as destination competitive strategies in the tourism industry.

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