Internal

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THE IMPACT OF TOURISM DESTINATION COMMUNICATION ON THE NATIONAL IMAGE OF VIETNAM IN THE CURRENT PERIOD

Major: Public Relations

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SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale for the study

In the context of deepening international integration and globalization, national image and national image promotion are regarded as an effective investment channel for attracting capital, developing tourism and enhancing a country's international standing. Among the fields that construct national image, tourism holds a special position: Anholt (2007) identifies tourism as one of the six pillars of nation brand, and Pike (2008) affirms that tourism contributes to building and consolidating national image. For many international publics, the first contact with a country is contact with that country as a destination. Tourism destination communication is therefore not merely a promotional activity of the tourism sector but a communication practice that participates directly in the construction of national image.

In Vietnam, this orientation is consistently established in Resolution No. 08-NQ/TW, Conclusion No. 57-KL/TW, Resolution No. 80-NQ/TW, the Cultural Diplomacy Strategy to 2030, the Vietnam Tourism Marketing Strategy to 2030 and the Tourism System Master Plan for 2021 – 2030, with a vision to 2045. In 2023, Vietnam received 12.6 million international arrivals, 3.4 times the 2022 figure. The question of how tourism destination communication affects national image is therefore both urgent for management practice and central to realizing these policy orientations.

Moreover, destination communication in Vietnam is carried out by multiple actors with varying degrees of coordination; user-generated content accounts for a growing share of information, making message consistency a challenge; and communication effectiveness is still often assessed through exposure and reach metrics rather than indicators of public cognition, affect and behavior. The gap between communication efforts and their actual effects on national image has therefore not been systematically quantified or explained. For these reasons, the doctoral candidate selected *"The Impact of Tourism Destination Communication on the National Image of Vietnam in the Current Period"* as the topic of a doctoral dissertation in Public Relations.

2. Research aim and objectives

2.1. Research aim

On the basis of clarifying the theoretical foundations and surveying and assessing the actual impact of tourism destination communication on Vietnam's national image, the dissertation proposes solutions to strengthen the positive impact of tourism destination communication on Vietnam's national image in the coming period.

2.2. Research objectives

First, to review the literature along three axes – destinations and tourism destination communication; national image; and the relationship between the two – and identify the gaps the dissertation addresses. Second, to clarify the theoretical basis, including core concepts, applied theories and models, the mechanism of impact,

and the political and legal basis. Third, to survey and assess the actual impact by testing hypotheses and analyzing qualitative data, identifying achievements, limitations and their causes. Fourth, to propose solutions to strengthen the positive impact of tourism destination communication on Vietnam's national image in the coming period.

3. Research object, subjects and scope

3.1. Research object

The research object of the dissertation is the impact of tourism destination communication on the national image of Vietnam.

3.2. Research subjects

The research subjects comprise: (1) international publics, i.e. foreign nationals, including those of Vietnamese origin, who have or have not visited Vietnam; (2) domestic publics, i.e. Vietnamese nationals, including those studying, working or living abroad; and (3) people directly involved in tourism and destination communication, including managers, experts, tour guides and tourism employees.

3.3. Research scope

Content: the dissertation examines the impact from the perspective of receiving publics, focusing on cognition, affect and behavioral tendency; national image is examined across political (including security), economic and socio-cultural dimensions. The study does not directly analyze campaigns, websites or communication publications; Party and State documents are reviewed to establish the national image orientation used as a frame of reference. Solutions focus on state tourism authorities, local tourism and promotion bodies, and tourism and travel businesses. *Geographical scope:* the dissertation approaches Vietnam as a destination at the national level; respondents are not restricted by place of residence or visit; the study neither examines individual localities separately nor draws locality-level conclusions. *Time scope:* from 2022 to the end of June 2026; policy documents cover 2017 – 2026. The questionnaire survey was conducted from March to September 2025; in-depth interviews took place in 2024 and 2025.

4. Research questions and hypotheses

4.1. Research questions

(1) Through what mechanisms does tourism destination communication affect Vietnam's national image? (2) What are the magnitude and structure of the impact of tourism destination communication on public cognition, affect and behavioral tendency toward Vietnam? (3) How do evaluations of tourism destination communication and Vietnam's image differ across public groups by background, age, on-site experience and information channel? (4) What solutions can strengthen the positive impact of tourism destination communication on Vietnam's national image?

4.2. Research hypotheses

- H1: Tourism destination communication has a positive (favorable) impact on public cognition of Vietnam's national image.

- H2: Tourism destination communication has a positive (favorable) impact on public affect toward Vietnam's national image.

- H3: Tourism destination communication has a positive (favorable) impact on public behavioral tendency toward Vietnam's national image.

- H4: Public cognition of Vietnam has a positive (favorable) impact on public affect toward Vietnam.

- H5: Public affect toward Vietnam has a positive (favorable) impact on public behavioral tendency.

"Positive" refers to the sign of the regression coefficient; "favorable" refers to the evaluative meaning of the impact. The five hypotheses draw on the C-A-C model and are tested with five separately estimated simple linear regressions. The dissertation does not assume that destination communication relates to affect only through cognition; H2 and H3 are retained because communication may relate directly to affect and behavioral tendency.

5. Theoretical basis and research methods

5.1. Theoretical and methodological basis

The dissertation is grounded in the methodology of dialectical and historical materialism; it adheres to Ho Chi Minh Thought on propaganda and external relations and to the viewpoints and guidelines of the Communist Party of Vietnam on tourism development, cultural development and external information. Its disciplinary foundations comprise Gartner's (1994) cognitive–affective–conative model; Cooper et al.'s (1993) 4A model; Liu's (2023) three-dimensional model of national image; together with nation-brand architecture, reciprocal spillover theory and Han's (1989) two models of country image.

5.2. Research methods

The dissertation uses a convergent mixed-methods design: quantitative and qualitative data are collected in parallel, analyzed independently and compared at the interpretation stage. Quantitative data allow the relationships to be tested and their magnitude estimated; qualitative data clarify the mechanisms behind them, particularly the transfer from the destination level to the national level. *Documentary research* is used to review scholarly works, Party and State documents and the destination communication experience of selected countries. *Statistical and comparative analysis* is used to compare public groups by background, age, on-site experience and information channel, and to compare the policy-oriented national image with the image perceived by publics.

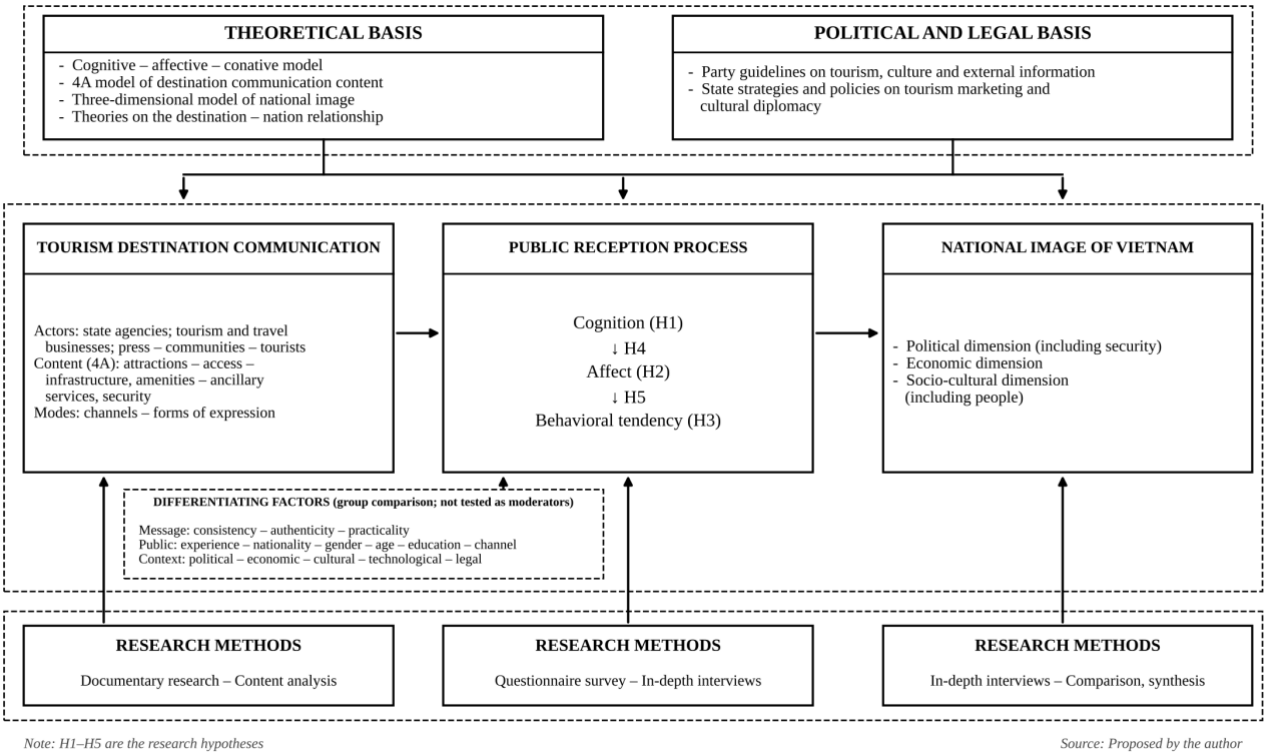
Questionnaire survey: a standardized bilingual Vietnamese–English questionnaire with five-point Likert scales, closed and open-ended questions; non-probability sampling combining convenience and purposive selection; online and in-person collection from March to September 2025, yielding 411 valid responses. Data were processed in SPSS; each hypothesis was tested with a separately estimated simple linear regression; independent-samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA were used for comparisons by gender, age and channel; the domestic–international comparison

is presented descriptively. Quantitative findings hold within the 411 respondents and are not statistically generalized to the population; statements about international publics rest mainly on in-depth interviews under analytical generalization; relationships are interpreted as associations, not as causal effects.

In-depth interviews: 32 participants, independent of the survey respondents, comprising 5 managers and experts (from the Vietnam National Authority of Tourism, the Tourism Information Center, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, and one international academic expert in place branding) and 27 members of the public: 23 foreign nationals (17 had visited and 6 had not; 5 from North America, 5 from Europe, 9 from Asia and 4 from Australia, including 4 of Vietnamese origin) and 4 Vietnamese nationals. This composition supports comparison of mechanisms across participants, not representative comparison between regions. *Qualitative analysis* comprises qualitative content analysis of 9 policy documents (the document as unit of analysis; propositions or paragraphs stating Vietnam's positioning as coding units; codes deduced from Liu's, 2023, three dimensions) and thematic analysis of the 32 interviews and the open-ended survey responses in NVivo (a statement expressing one complete idea as coding unit; theory-driven codes combined with open codes). Interviews with managers and experts provide context, not tests of the model. Participants were informed, took part voluntarily and had their personal data protected.

5.3. Analytical framework

The analytical framework has three layers: theoretical and political–legal foundations; the impact pathway from tourism destination communication, through reception (cognition – affect – behavioral tendency), to Vietnam's national image across three dimensions; and the corresponding research methods. Public characteristics are compared across groups, while message and contextual factors are examined qualitatively; none is tested as a moderator.



Note: H1–H5 are the research hypotheses *Source: Proposed by the author*

Diagram 1. Analytical framework of the dissertation

6. New contributions of the dissertation

a) New findings. First, the dissertation proposes an explanation of the relationship between tourism destination communication and national image through the three components of cognition, affect and behavioral tendency, rather than an assumed linear chain; it connects the two operating models of country image, multi-level brand architecture and reciprocal spillover theory to explain the transfer from the destination level to the national level. This is a contribution of theoretical synthesis; the transfer is clarified with qualitative data. *Second*, the dissertation finds, within its sample, that associations among the components are uneven: the affect–behavioral tendency relationship is weaker of the two sequential relationships (β = 0.481 compared with β = 0.719). This is a finding that requires further explanation and is not sufficient grounds for regarding it as a weakened causal link; interview data point to the role of service quality, assistance and the ease of the experience. *Third*, on interview data, the dissertation identifies two mechanisms of national image formation corresponding to two levels of experience, consistent with Han's (1989) halo and summary construct models; level of experience is used as a theoretically grounded group-comparison variable. *Fourth*, the dissertation identifies information sources beyond the control of domestic communicators – foreign government travel advisories, regional comparisons, experiences at on-site touchpoints, social media and international news – thereby defining the limits of destination communication's impact. *Fifth*, the dissertation compares the national image oriented in Party and State documents with the image perceived by publics on the same three-dimensional frame, providing a basis for adjusting communication content and strategy by dimension.

b) Theoretical verification in the Vietnamese context: the five relationships within the cognitive–affective–conative framework are all positively associated, consistent with Gartner (1994), Baloglu and McCleary (1999) and Agapito et al. (2013); the role of autonomous and organic image-formation agents is observed in the interview data. *c) Inherited foundations:* Gartner's (1994) three-component framework, Cooper et al.'s (1993) 4A model, Liu's (2023) three-dimensional model, the Shannon–Weaver model, two-step and multi-step flow theory, and Grunig and Hunt's two-way symmetrical model.

7. Theoretical and practical significance

7.1. Theoretical significance

The dissertation contributes to systematizing, inheriting and developing theory on image communication, national image and tourism destination communication; delineates the concepts of tourism destination communication, destination image, national image and nation brand; connects theoretical foundations to explain the transfer between the two levels of image; and builds an analytical framework for assessing impact from the receiving side, which may inform studies of national image communication reception in other fields.

7.2. Practical significance

The findings provide a scientific basis and reference for state tourism authorities, external information agencies and tourism and travel businesses: identifying relationships with weaker associations suggests stages to be considered as priorities; the gap between the oriented and perceived image provides grounds for adjusting messages by dimension; and differences in image-formation mechanisms across public groups provide grounds for designing messages suited to each group. The dissertation may also be used in research and teaching on public relations, international communication, image management and place branding.

8. Structure of the dissertation

In addition to the Introduction, Conclusion, References and Appendices, the dissertation comprises four chapters: Chapter 1. Literature review related to the dissertation topic; Chapter 2. Theoretical basis of the impact of tourism destination communication on national image; Chapter 3. The actual impact of tourism destination communication on Vietnam's national image; Chapter 4. Emerging issues and solutions to strengthen the positive impact of tourism destination communication on Vietnam's national image.

CHAPTER 1
LITERATURE REVIEW RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION TOPIC

1.1. Research on tourism destinations and tourism destination communication

1.1.1. Research on tourism destinations

1.1.1.1. Studies on the nature and classification of tourism destinations

Research on the nature of destinations has developed along three approaches: geographical (a space concentrating resources and services), economic–marketing (a composite product within supply, demand and competition) and integrated (connecting space, services, management and experience), drawing on Cooper et al., Kotler et al., Ritchie and Crouch, and Vietnamese textbooks. The dissertation draws on these approaches to treat Vietnam as a national-level destination, studied at the perceptual level.

1.1.1.2. Studies on the structure and measurement of destination image

Four groups of measurement methods can be identified: descriptive surveys, pioneered by Hunt (1975); multidimensional structures, with Echtner and Ritchie (1993), Gartner (1994), Baloglu and McCleary (1999), Beerli and Martín (2004) and Agapito et al. (2013); macro-level composite indices such as the World Economic Forum's tourism development index; and big and real-time data (Manosso and Ruiz, 2021; Liu et al., 2024). In Vietnam, Nguyen Quang Vinh et al. (2023) and the dissertations of Đoàn Tuấn Phong (2020), Phạm Thái Hà (2024) and Trần Thị Xuân Viên (2025) apply international measurement models at the local level. Wang et al.'s (2023) review of the 2012 – 2023 literature shows a shift toward multidimensional approaches that situate destination image within the national context. Two issues remain debated: the position of the conative component in image structure (Kock, Josiassen and Assaf, 2016) and the linearity of the cognition–affect–behavior sequence, traceable to Lavidge and Steiner's (1961) hierarchy-of-effects model.

1.1.2. Research on tourism destination communication

Studies have developed along three directions: destination management organizations as image builders (Pike, 2002, 2004; Morgan and Pritchard, 2004); publics and reception (Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan, 2008; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010; Munar and Jacobsen, 2014; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004); and destination communication in relation to national-level strategy (Govers and Go, 2009; Sevin, 2014; Avraham, 2020). In Vietnam, research builds on the communication theory of Tạ Ngọc Tấn (2001), Nguyễn Văn Dũng (2012), Nguyễn Văn Dũng and Đỗ Thị Thu Hằng (2018) and Đinh Thị Thúy Hằng (2008); specialized works include Phạm Thị Thanh Tịnh and Vi Thị Phương (2021), Trần Xuân Đạt (2021), Phạm Hương Trang (2022) and Nguyễn Thành Trung et al. (2026). Most domestic studies focus on destination image or brand; the contribution of destination image to national image has not been fully examined.

1.2. Research on national image

1.2.1. Research on the nature of and approaches to national image

There are three main approaches: psychological–cognitive, represented by Han (1989), who asked whether country image operates as a "halo" or a "summary construct", and Martin and Eroglu's (1993) multidimensional scale; branding–marketing, with Van Ham (2001), Anholt (2007), Dinnie (2008) and Fan (2006, 2010); and political–international relations, with Nye (2004), Xue-min (2010), Cull (2009), Pamment and Wilkins (2019), and Grunig and Hunt's (1984) four models of public relations practice. In Vietnam, national image has mainly been studied in connection with external information and cultural diplomacy (Đỗ Xuân Hà, 1997; Dương Văn Quảng, 2002; Phạm Minh Sơn, 2006; Hoàng Tuấn Anh, 2011; Lê Thanh Bình, 2012; Lưu Trần Toàn, 2018; Nguyễn Hoa, 2020; Lê Thị Thu Hằng, 2023). The diversity of approaches has led to inconsistent terminology and conceptual scope, which directly affects indicator selection.

1.2.2. Research on the structure of national image

Scholars agree that national image is multidimensional but propose different models: Wang's (2011) five domains; Anholt's (2007) nation brand hexagon and the Anholt-Ipsos index (2024); Buhmann and Ingenhoff's (2015) 4D model; Sršen (2018) and Steenkamp (2023); Liu's (2023) three-dimensional political, economic and cultural model; and, in Vietnam, Phan Tất Thứ's (2007) MECGRIS PR model. The dissertation adopts Liu's (2023) model, set against Anholt's hexagon and Wang's five domains, because it matches how publics perceive a country, facilitates operationalization and preserves the weight of the political dimension, which is pivotal in the Vietnamese context.

1.2.3. Research on the relationship between national image and nation brand

Three positions exist: nation brand encompasses national image (Steenkamp, 2023); national image is broader than nation brand (Fan, 2010); and a reconciling, overlapping position (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 1993; Buhmann and Ingenhoff, 2015). The dissertation adopts a partial-overlap position: nation brand provides a strategic framework that orients national image but does not fully encompass it, since image is also shaped by personal experience and communication beyond control.

1.3. Research on the relationship between tourism destination communication and national image

1.3.1. Research on the role of tourism in national image

Recent studies increasingly place destination communication within national image communication as a whole (Wang et al., 2023). Anholt (2007) identifies tourism as one of the six dimensions of nation brand and the first touchpoint shaping international impressions; Pike (2004) warns of fragmentation when destination messages are not linked to national identity and standing. In Vietnam, the work closest to this topic is Hoàng Thị Vân's (2024) dissertation on destination brand equity and international tourists' intention to return to Vietnam, whose outcome variables nevertheless remain within tourism.

1.3.2. Research on the transfer mechanism from the destination level to the national level

The theoretical foundations needed to explain this mechanism exist but are scattered. The first is Han's (1989) two models with opposite directions: in the halo model, country image shapes beliefs about unknown attributes; in the summary construct model, beliefs about specific attributes are condensed into country image. Movement from destination impressions to evaluations of the country corresponds to the summary construct rather than the halo effect – two directions often conflated in applied research. The second is Dinnie's (2008) three-tier nation-brand architecture, together with Herstein's (2012) argument on the links among country, region and city brands. The third is Balachander and Ghose's (2003) theory of reciprocal spillover from brand extensions to parent brands. Some recent studies have moved to testing (Chaulagain et al., 2019; Hanna, Rowley and Keegan, 2021; Zhou et al., 2025), but most still assume a bridging relationship without explicitly explaining the transfer mechanism.

1.3.3. Research on message alignment among destination communicators and national image

Kotler and Gertner (2002) place destination communication in relation to a country's overall image; Sevin (2014) argues that place image forms within a network of actors and meaning systems. In Vietnam, Phan Tất Thứ (2007) and Đinh Thị Thúy Hằng (2008) stress that an image must be both distinctive and consistent; Nguyễn Thị Thương Huyền (2021) points to difficulties in managing external press agencies. The Strategy for Communicating and Promoting Vietnam's Image Abroad for 2026 – 2030, with a vision to 2045, calls for a unified national message and visual identity.

1.4. Overall assessment and issues for further research on the impact of tourism destination communication on national image

1.4.1. Summary of review findings

The three research axes have achieved considerable progress but have developed largely in isolation: destination research is strong in measurement but remains at the destination level; national image research offers many structural models but rarely engages with tourism channels; and studies connecting the two have not explicitly explained the transfer mechanism. In Vietnam, dissertations on national image mainly take a source-side perspective through external press channels, whereas those on destination image or brand take a public-side perspective but limit outcome variables to tourism.

1.4.2. Research gaps

The dissertation identifies four gaps: *theoretical* – the transfer mechanism from destination image to national image remains unclear, and the cognition–affect–behavioral tendency relationship is often assumed to be linear; *conceptual* – the overlap among national image, nation brand and national identity, and the conflation of the "halo" and "summary construct" directions; *methodological* – a lack of quantitative studies on the impact of destination communication on national image,

the scarcity of mixed-methods designs, and the frequent equation of behavioral tendency with actual behavior; and *contextual* – within the literature reviewed, no study has systematically measured the impact of tourism destination communication on Vietnam's national image from the receiving side.

1.4.3. Issues to be addressed

The dissertation focuses on four issues: connecting theoretical foundations on the relationship between the two levels; delineating concepts for operationalization; developing and testing the relationships between destination communication and cognition, affect and behavioral tendency through a mixed-methods design; and proposing empirically grounded solutions.

Summary of Chapter 1

Chapter 1 has systematized and assessed the literature along three groups of issues and thereby established the dissertation's scholarly positions: studying destinations at the perceptual level and from the receiving side; inheriting Gartner's (1994) three-component framework and Kock, Josiassen and Assaf's argument that behavioral tendency is an image-related response to be tested as an outcome variable; treating the relationship among the three components as a structure to be tested rather than an assumed linear chain; and adopting Liu's (2023) three-dimensional model and a partial-overlap position between national image and nation brand. The theoretical foundations able to address the gap on the transfer mechanism exist but have not been connected in a unified explanatory framework. This provides the basis for Chapter 2 to establish the working concepts and research model.

CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE IMPACT OF TOURISM DESTINATION COMMUNICATION ON NATIONAL IMAGE

2.1. Core concepts related to the impact of tourism destination communication on Vietnam's national image in the current period

2.1.1. Communication

Drawing on Lasswell (1948), Schramm (1954), Barnlund (1968), Grunig and Hunt (1984), Wood (2004), Tạ Ngọc Tấn (2001), and Nguyễn Văn Dũng and Đỗ Thị Thu Hằng (2018), the dissertation defines *communication as an interactive social process in which information, ideas and emotions are transmitted, received and exchanged among actors through sign systems and media, in order to create shared understanding and bring about changes in the cognition, attitudes and behavior of recipients*. The message, the channel and the effect on the receiving side serve as analytical axes, corresponding to the variable structure of the research model.

2.1.2. Tourism destination

Based on the 2017 Law on Tourism, the approach of the World Tourism Organization, Vietnamese textbooks and the 4A model, the dissertation defines *a tourism destination as a specific geographical space that concentrates attractive tourism resources and is planned and managed to provide suitable services and amenities, thereby attracting, serving and interacting with tourists' experiential needs in a sustainable and effective manner*.

2.1.3. Tourism destination communication

Tourism destination communication is the process of creating, transmitting, sharing and interpreting information about a destination's resources, people, service conditions and tourism experiences through various sources, channels and forms of communication. Communication is a necessary condition for image formation but not a sufficient condition for determining the direction of that image. The activity involves multiple actors and sources – state agencies, promotion bodies, businesses, the press, content creators, communities and tourists – whose legal responsibilities are not equal; the dissertation distinguishes the source (the actor publics identify as the origin of information) from the channel (the medium of transmission). Content covers the four dimensions of the 4A framework: attractions, access, infrastructure and amenities, and ancillary services (including security and safety). Channels are classified along Gartner's (1994) axis of image formation agents: official communication (induced); YouTube, vlogs and documentaries (leaning autonomous); word-of-mouth and personal networks (organic); and social media and short videos – a group that may host content of all three other types.

2.1.4. National image

National image is the totality of cognitions, affective states and response tendencies that domestic and international publics form and retain about a country, as the cumulative result of receiving information, symbols and experiences related to that country. National image is located on the receiving side and is not equated with

the country's objective attributes or with what communicators transmit. Following Liu (2023), it comprises three dimensions: political (including security), economic and socio-cultural; the concept has four attributes (measurable from the receiving side; multidimensional; dynamic; distinct from national identity) and three operating characteristics: inertia, asymmetry between negative and positive information, and differentiation across public groups.

2.1.5. Destination image and its relationship with national image

Destination image and national image are both perceptual constructs but differ in the level of their object. The dissertation approaches image through cognition, affect and behavioral tendency, with behavioral tendency treated as an image-related response tested as an outcome variable. Three foundations explain the relationship between the two levels: reciprocal spillover, Han's (1989) halo and summary construct models, and the overlap among country, regional and city brands. Generalization from a destination to the country depends on the destination's representativeness, its link to the country and prior perceptions; it is not automatic.

2.1.6. Impact, and the impact of tourism destination communication on national image

According to the Vietnamese Dictionary, "impact" means causing an object to undergo certain changes. In empirical research, a causal relationship requires three conditions: the cause precedes the effect, is associated with it, and no plausible alternative explanation exists (Shadish, Cook and Campbell, 2002); a statistical association is therefore relevant evidence but not sufficient on its own to conclude a causal impact. Communication effects are commonly divided into three levels – awareness, attitude and behavior (Nguyễn Thành Lợi, 2021) – corresponding to the three components inherited from Gartner; Valkenburg, Peter and Walther (2016) define media effects as changes in individuals' cognition, emotion, attitudes and behavior resulting from media use. The dissertation defines *the impact of tourism destination communication on national image as changes in the cognition, affect and behavioral tendency of domestic and international publics toward a country, across political–security, economic and socio-cultural dimensions, associated with their exposure to, evaluation and interpretation of information about that country's tourism destinations*. Hypotheses are formulated in terms of impact; empirically, a cross-sectional survey allows the associations and their magnitude to be identified.

2.2. Applied theories, models and mechanism of impact

2.2.1. Foundational communication models and theories

The Shannon–Weaver model (1949) serves as a reference framework for locating the elements of the communication cycle and separating a message reaching its recipient from its being understood, trusted and accepted. The two-step flow theory of Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), extended into multi-step flow, illuminates the role of intermediaries and social networks in circulating and validating information. Grunig and Hunt's (1984) two-way symmetrical model places destination communication within relationship management, where public feedback is a constitutive component.

2.2.2. Gartner's cognitive–affective–conative model

Gartner (1994) conceptualizes image through cognitive, affective and conative components; this order denotes a conceptual hierarchy, not a mandatory sequence in each individual's reception. Agapito et al. (2013) found evidence of the mediating role of affect in a specific context; Vakratsas and Ambler's (1999) review shows insufficient evidence for assuming one hierarchy of effects across all contexts; and Kock, Josiassen and Assaf's (2016) model holds that the psychological components have independent effects on behavioral intention. The dissertation therefore does not assume that destination communication affects emotion only through cognition.

2.2.3. Cooper's 4A model in classifying destination communication content

Cooper et al.'s (1993) 4A model comprises attractions, access, amenities and ancillary services. The dissertation adapts it to structure communication content and develop independent-variable items covering both symbolic information and functional guidance. The 4A framework and Liu's three-dimensional model operationalize two different variables and are not assumed to correspond one-to-one.

2.2.4. Liu's (2023) three-dimensional model of national image structure

Liu (2023) reduces national image to three dimensions that follow how publics naturally perceive a country: political (stability, governance capacity, national standing, security and safety); economic (development level, modernity and dynamism, expressed through infrastructure, transport, amenities, service quality and technology use); and socio-cultural (heritage, identity, lifestyle and people). Compared with Anholt's (2007) "competitive identity" approach or Buhmann and Ingenhoff's (2015) 4D model, Liu's framework offers a unified frame of reference for analyzing both policy orientations and public evaluations.

2.3. Political and legal basis in the Vietnamese context

2.3.1. Party guidelines on tourism, tourism destination communication and national image

Resolution No. 08-NQ/TW sets the goal of developing tourism into a spearhead economic sector that brings multiple benefits in economic, cultural, social, political, external relations, security and defense terms; Conclusion No. 57-KL/TW places the introduction of Vietnam's country, people, history and culture within external information work as a whole; and Resolution No. 80-NQ/TW defines culture as the foundation, driving force and soft power of the nation.

2.3.2. State policies and strategies

The 2017 Law on Tourism provides the basis for actors' responsibilities; the Cultural Diplomacy Strategy to 2030 sets out the image of a civilized, safe, dynamically developing country with friendly and hospitable people; the Vietnam Tourism Marketing Strategy to 2030 places visitor experience at the center and requires consistency across brand levels; the Tourism System Master Plan for 2021 – 2030, with a vision to 2045, sets international positioning targets by milestone; and the Strategy for Communicating and Promoting Vietnam's Image Abroad for 2026 – 2030, with a vision to 2045, emphasizes international awareness, goodwill and trust.

These documents are the source from which the dissertation codes the oriented national image – a frame of reference for comparison, not a tested variable.

2.4. Proposed research model and hypotheses

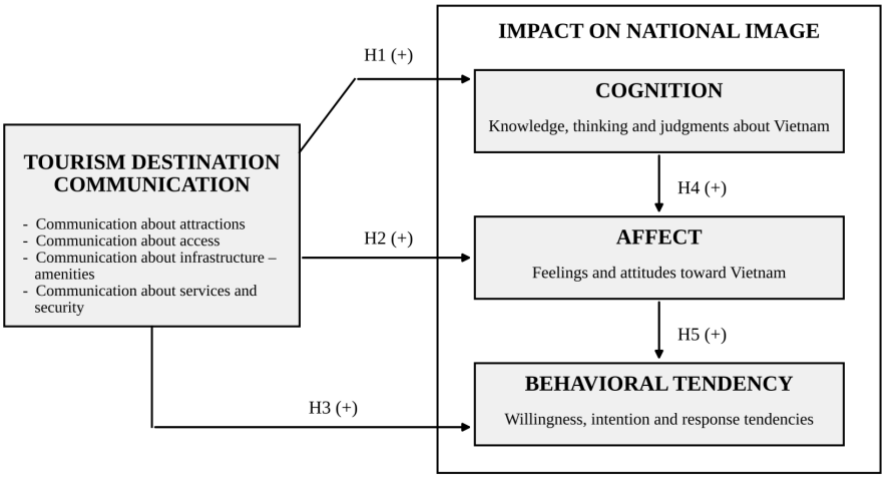


Figure 2.3. Proposed research model

The model comprises three groups of variables. The *independent variable* is tourism destination communication, defined through publics' evaluation of destination information along the four 4A dimensions, together with communication-process indicators based on the elements of the Shannon–Weaver model. The *dependent variable* is Vietnam's national image, examined through cognitive image, affective image and behavioral tendency; indicators are defined on two axes – the psychological components following Gartner and the content dimensions following Liu (2023); behavioral tendency is measured as intention and readiness, not as completed behavior. *Group-comparison variables* – demographics, nationality, on-site experience and information channel – are used to compare means across groups and are not tested as moderators. The five hypotheses are tested with five simple linear regressions in three clusters: destination communication with cognition, affect and behavioral tendency (H1 – H3); cognition – affect (H4); and affect – behavioral tendency (H5). Each model indicates whether a pair of variables is positively associated and to what degree; the mechanisms and operating conditions of each relationship are clarified with in-depth interview data.

Summary of Chapter 2

Chapter 2 has established the dissertation's conceptual system, from communication, tourism destination, tourism destination communication, national image and destination image to the working concept of "impact". The theoretical foundations are connected by function: communication theories explain transmission, intermediation and feedback; Gartner's model provides the psychological structure of reception; the 4A model operationalizes the independent variable; Liu's (2023) model defines the content dimensions of the dependent variable; and reciprocal spillover, the summary construct – halo effect and the overlap between place levels explain the transfer from destination image to national image. Party and State documents for 2017 – 2026 are the source for coding the oriented national image. On this basis, the

research model with five hypotheses H1 – H5 underpins the empirical investigation in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3
THE ACTUAL IMPACT OF TOURISM DESTINATION COMMUNICATION ON VIETNAM'S NATIONAL IMAGE

3.1. Context of Vietnam's tourism destination communication and current national image orientation

3.1.1. Actors and sources of information about Vietnamese destinations

Three groups can be distinguished: actors who orient and organize communication (the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and the Vietnam National Authority of Tourism; provincial people's committees, specialized agencies and local promotion centers); business-related communicators (travel agencies, airlines, accommodation and service providers, and associations); and actors who circulate destination images (the press, content creators, local communities and tourists). Because the dissertation takes the receiving side, destination communication is examined through all the sources publics have encountered.

3.1.2. Content and modes of Vietnam's tourism destination communication

Promotion focuses on Vietnam's tourism brand and on destinations and products linked to the distinctive values of nature, culture and people; promotion in 2024 concentrated on the United States, China, South Korea, Russia and Australia; the 2025 plan distinguished near and long-haul markets; and digital platforms, together with partnerships such as the 2024 promotion program on CNN, play an increasingly large role.

3.1.3. Characteristics of Vietnam's tourism destination communication environment

The destination communication environment has four characteristics: it is multi-actor and multi-source, so image is the cumulative result of many exposures; content carries layers of information beyond tourism, but generalization into judgments about the country is not automatic; the impact of information depends increasingly on publics' selection, interpretation and sharing; and coordination among central, local and business actors has received more attention but is still being developed. Impact must therefore be examined among recipients, not inferred from the number of promotion programs or arrival growth.

3.1.4. National image orientation in Party and State documents

Coding of nine documents (Table 3.1) shows that the socio-cultural dimension is the prominent positioning axis (identity, history, friendly and hospitable people, culture as soft power); the economic dimension reflects the image of a dynamically developing, integrating Vietnam with international positioning milestones; and the political–security dimension provides the foundation of a civilized, safe and stable country with international standing and credibility. This orientation is a policy-level frame of reference for comparison in section 3.4, not a variable in the tested model.

3.2. The impact of tourism destination communication on Vietnam's national image

3.2.1. Overview of hypothesis testing results

All five hypotheses are supported at $p < 0.001$ (Table 3.2). Durbin–Watson values range from 1.774 to 1.945; VIF equals 1.000 since each model has a single predictor.

Table 3.2. Summary of hypothesis testing results (H1 – H5)

Hypothesis	Model tested	B	SE	β	t	R^2	Adj. R^2	F	D–W
H1	Destination communication → Cognition	0.886	0.018	0.922	48.167	0.850	0.850	2320.087	1.945
H2	Destination communication → Affect	0.619	0.032	0.685	19.041	0.470	0.469	362.552	1.842
H3	Destination communication → Behavioral tendency	0.529	0.033	0.616	15.824	0.380	0.378	250.383	1.924
H4	Cognition → Affect	0.675	0.032	0.719	20.908	0.517	0.515	437.153	1.774
H5	Affect → Behavioral tendency	0.458	0.041	0.481	11.090	0.231	0.229	122.992	1.917

Source: Compiled from survey data analysis, N = 411.

Associations among the variables are uneven: of the three relationships originating from destination communication, the relationship with cognition has the highest β, followed by affect and behavioral tendency; of the two sequential relationships, cognition – affect has a higher β than affect – behavioral tendency. R^2 indicates explanatory power only within each model and is not used to rank relationships, since the five models have different dependent variables and are estimated separately.

3.2.2. The impact of tourism destination communication on cognition of Vietnam's national image

H1 is supported with $\beta = 0.922$ ($R^2 = 0.850$), the strongest association of the three relationships originating from destination communication. The representative indicators (Table 3.4) fall into two groups: symbolic and general indicators score above 4.2 – Vietnam presented as a peaceful and stable country (M = 4.53; SD = 0.75), an image of safety and professionalism (4.37), political stability (4.32), better understanding of culture (4.27); practical-information indicators score lower and are more dispersed – in-trip support information (3.64; SD = 1.18), emergency contact information (3.61; SD = 1.25), responsiveness to feedback (3.53; SD = 1.11). The latter three assess destination communication itself, showing that symbolic information is conveyed more clearly than practical information.

Interview data show that destination communication draws a "cognitive map" of Vietnam through three operations: establishing anchor symbols (Ha Long, Sa Pa,

Ninh Binh, Hoi An, pho, coffee, motorbikes, street life), which operate even among non-visitors such as Janan (Lebanon); repositioning Vietnam on a tradition–modernity axis (Vattey, Cambodia; Rahul, India); and framing Vietnam as a peaceful, stable and accessible destination. Perceptions of vibrant urban life come with cautionary signals about traffic and destination operations. Familiar images of everyday life were remembered more vividly by respondents than macro-level promotional messages; as national image is constructed in a dispersed way through much informal content, management agencies need to shift from the role of spokesperson to that of coordinator of the information ecosystem.

3.2.3. The impact of tourism destination communication on public affect toward Vietnam's national image (H2)

H2 is supported with $\beta = 0.685$ ($R^2 = 0.470$). The weaker association than in H1 is theoretically consistent, as affect is a psychological structure that requires absorption, association and validation. Thematic analysis identifies several forms of affect: aesthetic appreciation and curiosity from visual communication, formed even before any visit (Janan: "free", "beautiful", "fantasy"); excitement about street life and food (Vattey); respect and emotion evoked by historical content (Mia, Canada); affection and belonging through interaction with Vietnamese people (Jonathan, Paolo, Hugh); and pride among domestic respondents (Thu Hà). The durability of affect appears to run inversely to the speed of its formation; the same urban attribute may be felt as cultural energy (Vattey, Niv) or as a source of unease (Jaiden, a Vietnamese Australian).

3.2.4. The impact of tourism destination communication on behavioral tendency toward Vietnam's national image (H3)

H3 is supported with $\beta = 0.616$ ($R^2 = 0.380$), the weakest association of the three relationships originating from destination communication. Destination communication is associated with readiness to act, but further supporting conditions are needed before publics book a trip, return or recommend Vietnam. Qualitative data identify four forms of behavioral tendency: intention to visit among non-visitors, as short videos and stories put Vietnam on their wish list (Rahul); intention to return tied to specific emotional memories (August, Chin); word-of-mouth based on safety, affordability and food (Andy, Khang); and electronic word-of-mouth, which may occur even before a visit. The gap between intention and action is evident where experiences were unfavorable, as with Jaiden, who does not actively recommend Vietnam.

3.2.5. The transformation mechanism among cognition, affect and behavioral tendency (H4, H5)

H4 is supported with $\beta = 0.719$ ($R^2 = 0.517$); H5 with $\beta = 0.481$ ($R^2 = 0.231$); the affect–behavioral tendency relationship is the weaker of the two sequential relationships. Cognition turns into affect through landscape aesthetics, everyday culture, historical values, and people and social interaction – materials with a high capacity to evoke emotion. From affect to behavioral tendency, positive affect is an

important but not sufficient condition: low-commitment behaviors such as sharing content occur quickly, whereas high-commitment behaviors need reinforcement by experience, trust, clear information and a sense of safety. Two deviant cases define the operating conditions of H4 and H5: Jaiden holds positive cognition without forming attachment; Eujun (South Korea) retains goodwill but is cautious about recommending Vietnam after an unfavorable service experience.

3.2.6. The transfer from the destination level to the national level

This process is identified in statements where respondents move from evaluating a place, service or experience to judgments about Vietnam. For Anh Tú, communication about Hanoi evokes associations with the country's economic development, cultural diversity and political stability; for Khang (a Vietnamese German), comparing price transparency across localities shows that national image is built from experiences in many places. The interview with a manager (Ly) shows both directions: combining cultural and tourism promotion with the second US – DPRK Summit in Hanoi in 2019 helped consolidate the national image, while reports on infrastructure, waste and service quality in Phu Quoc in 2022 – 2023 had the opposite effect. Destination image can therefore become a reference point from which publics form and adjust national image in both directions.

3.3. Factors differentiating the reception of destination communication across public groups

3.3.1. Differences by demographic characteristics

Gender produces no statistically significant differences in any of the four composite variables (independent-samples t-test, $p > 0.05$). By age, data shows statistically significant differences in all four variables, with older groups rating lower: destination communication falls from 3.966 (ages 18 – 25) to 3.266 (over 45), cognition from 4.056 to 3.348, and behavioral tendency from 3.468 to 2.818, while affect is highest among those aged 26 – 35. The lower scores of the over-45 group signal that communication does not yet meet this group's information needs well. By cultural region, interviews identify three patterns: North American and European respondents approach Vietnam through history, films and vlogs, with experience revising earlier stereotypes; Asian, especially East Asian, respondents pay more attention to traffic, costs, safety and visas; and Southeast Asian respondents view Vietnam through a frame of development, consumption and urbanization.

By nationality, within the sample the international group ($n = 22$) scores lower than the domestic group ($n = 389$) on destination communication (3.519 vs. 3.934) and cognitive image (3.530 vs. 4.011); the comparison is descriptive. Interviews show that goodwill toward Vietnam coexists with difficulty finding complete and reliable information before a trip. For foreign nationals of Vietnamese origin, attachment depends on connections through language and family and social ties: Jaiden remains neutral because of limited Vietnamese, whereas Khang (Germany) and Amy (Australia) have more opportunities to connect and to spread Vietnamese culture.

3.3.2. Differences by on-site exposure in the formation of national image perceptions

Qualitative data reveal two mechanisms consistent with Han's (1989) two models: a halo structure among those unfamiliar with Vietnam and a summary construct among those who have visited. Among non-visitors, perceptions form mainly from media and others' accounts, depend on symbols and "vibe", and lean toward beauty rather than systematic knowledge (Rahul, Janan); Vivian (Australia) expected Vietnam to be moderately developed because the media usually feature old quarters. Among visitors, communication creates initial expectations that on-site experience confirms, adjusts or extends (Jonathan, Vattey, Mia); prior perceptions shaped by history and migration, as with Andy (Australia), are adjusted mainly through direct experience. Many respondents found Vietnam more modern than expected, so communication needs to calibrate expectations realistically.

3.3.3. Differences by communication channel and format

Data shows statistically significant differences in destination communication and cognitive image. The social-media-only group (n = 48) scores highest on both variables (4.173 and 4.282); the social media plus word-of-mouth group (n = 88) scores lowest (3.531 and 3.633); and the three-or-more-channel group (n = 214) is not the highest-rated group. One explanation is that the social media plus word-of-mouth group encounters more conflicting information. Because respondents selected their channels, the results reflect differences between public groups and do not establish the separate effect of each channel. Interviews identify complementary roles for four channel groups: social media and short videos as the gateway to initial awareness and emotion; word-of-mouth and personal networks as a trust filter; YouTube, vlogs and documentaries as sources of cognitive depth; and official communication as the positioning frame for national image.

3.3.4. Information sources beyond destination communication

Qualitative data identify three groups of sources, some of which lie beyond the direct control of domestic communicators: information from foreign official bodies, such as travel advisories, which carry high institutional credibility for citizens of the issuing country (Quân, a Vietnamese Canadian); regional comparisons with other countries; and direct experience at touchpoints such as airports, together with the transparency of service prices. That a fluent Vietnamese speaker still encountered overcharging indicates that the cause lies more in service management and provision. The impact of destination communication should therefore be considered within the entire information and experience environment.

3.4. Analysis of findings and overall assessment

3.4.1. Analysis of findings in relation to theory and previous research

Regarding the mechanism of impact, destination communication matters for national image when information about a destination is used by publics to envisage and evaluate the country more broadly. Within Gartner's (1994) structure, the findings call for distinguishing three levels: knowing and understanding a place, feeling

favorably toward it, and being ready to act positively in relation to it. Read alongside interview data, the H5 result suggests that goodwill should be considered together with the conditions that support forming and acting on behavioral intentions. The coefficients come from five simple regressions on cross-sectional data and reflect associations within the sample; they do not establish a causal sequence or mediation.

Regarding compatibility with the national image orientation, culture is both the positioning axis in policy documents and prominent in remembered images, yet mainly through everyday life and informal sources; the political–security dimension is perceived favorably (the peaceful and stable indicator reaches 4.53) and in some cases is reinforced by observing daily life and urban order; and the economic dimension needs further consideration, since documents emphasize dynamic development while the indicator on information accurately reflecting economic development reaches 4.09, lower than several cultural and stability indicators. Content on economic development can therefore be clarified through expressions close to the visitor experience, such as infrastructure, service organization and visitor assistance. *Regarding the role of experience and information sources*, respondents' use of on-site observations to judge Vietnam relates to the spillover effect (Balachander and Ghose, 2003); the role of interpersonal exchange can be linked to two-step flow theory (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955); and coordinating sources should start from recipients' information needs.

3.4.2. Achievements

First, tourism destination communication is positively and significantly associated with all three components of national image ($p < 0.001$). Second, the association with cognition is the most pronounced; the indicator presenting Vietnam as a peaceful and stable country scores highest (4.53). Third, the study provides qualitative evidence of the transfer from destination image to national image across economic, cultural and political–security dimensions. Fourth, the study identifies two image-formation mechanisms corresponding to publics with and without on-site experience.

3.4.3. Limitations and their causes

First, the association between affect and behavioral tendency has the lowest β among the tested relationships ($\beta = 0.481$; $R^2 = 0.231$); this is a finding that requires further explanation and is not sufficient grounds for regarding it as a weakened causal link; qualitative data point to the role of service quality, assistance and the ease of the experience. *Second*, there is a gap between symbolic information (indicators above 4.0) and practical information (3.64, 3.61 and 3.53). *Third*, evaluations of destination communication differ between international and domestic publics (3.519 vs. 3.934), together with the difficulty of finding pre-trip information recorded in interviews. *Fourth*, national image is influenced by sources beyond the control of destination communication. *Fifth*, transparency and consistency between communication and destination reality regarding prices, service quality and assistance; this is not merely

a communication issue but also a requirement of destination governance and service provision.

Summary of Chapter 3

All five hypotheses are supported at $p < 0.001$, but associations are uneven; the relationship from affect to behavioral tendency has the lowest β. Qualitative data show that destination image can be transformed into national-level judgments in both positive and negative directions; two image-formation mechanisms correspond to levels of experience; among domestic publics there is also a route of image formation tied to identification and identity; and the political–security dimension is rated highly but in many cases is inferred from experiences at destinations. Age, nationality and channel combination are associated with differences in reception, while gender shows no significant differences in the composite variables. Comparison with the policy orientation shows that the economic dimension needs further consideration. The four achievements and five limitations form the empirical basis for the solutions in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4
EMERGING ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS TO STRENGTHEN THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF TOURISM DESTINATION COMMUNICATION ON VIETNAM'S NATIONAL IMAGE

4.1. Contextual forecasts and emerging issues for destination communication

4.1.1. Changes in information search and reception

From the second half of 2026 to 2030, a period matching the Tourism System Master Plan for 2021 – 2030, destination communication faces a dual requirement: information must be easy to find and clear enough for publics to check and verify. If AI-assisted search continues to spread, some publics may form initial images of destinations from synthesized answers before consulting original sources; preparing for this means ensuring that information is clear, current and traceable to its source, rather than chasing each technology.

4.1.2. Demand for clear information and convenient experiences

The *OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2024* report links digital transformation and sustainable development to business capacity, human resources and local benefits. The convenience of digital services is perceived very differently: those familiar with domestic apps and payments may rate them highly, while newcomers encounter barriers at registration or language. Public demand is therefore for information that is usable and verifiable, not simply for more information.

4.1.3. Multi-actor coordination and adaptive capacity in communication

The dissertation considers three conditional scenarios: good coordination creating seamless information experiences; communication tools developing faster than operational capacity; and coordination needs becoming evident during disruptions related to weather, transport or service conditions. For the rest of 2026 and 2027, priority may be given to identifying where information is frequently disrupted and piloting selected support tasks at an appropriate scale; in 2028 – 2030, approaches that prove suitable may be considered for scaling up.

4.2. International experience and conditions for application in Vietnam

4.2.1. Consistency between national image positioning and actual experience

The "100% Pure New Zealand" brand (Morgan, Pritchard and Piggott, 2002) and Bell's (2008) study show that destination positioning is closely tied to how actors are organized and to on-site practice; a national positioning must be clear enough to be recognized yet open enough for localities to express their distinctiveness, and is meaningful only when what is repeated remains credible. Sodawan and Hsu's (2025) study in Thailand compared first-time and repeat visitors – both of whom had visited – so it is not equivalent to the visitor–non-visitor comparison in this dissertation.

4.2.2. Organizing support information by need

Japan's experience with the Japan Visitor Hotline, operating 24 hours a day in English, Chinese and Korean, and a tiered network of information centers shows the principle of matching the scope of commitment to implementation capacity; according

to CG-02, support information should be assessed by whether visitors can find, understand and use it.

4.2.3. Coordination among communicators and sustaining capacity

Warren's (2025) study of 44 place-branding practitioners in 19 cities highlights the role of relationships and connecting activities among stakeholders: coordination does not require shared views but a sufficiently specific common task, an exchange mechanism and a way of handling disagreement. Experts emphasize assessing the fit of international models against public needs and local conditions (CG-03), piloting with feedback monitoring (CG-01), pairing training and operational support with technology (CG-02), and the constraints of resources, professionalism and training needs (CG-04).

4.2.4. Scope of reference and conditions for application in Vietnam

The selection of international experience should therefore start from the problem to be solved and four factors: public needs, sustaining resources, decision-making authority and coordination capacity; application should begin with a task narrow enough to monitor and be scaled up only when there is evidence of user outcomes and sustainability.

4.3. Solutions to strengthen the positive impact of tourism destination communication on national image

The solutions rest on three requirements derived from the findings: information that meets public needs, is credible and matches actual experience. Each group of solutions addresses the limitations identified in section 3.4.3: the first group addresses the gap in the economic dimension and the second limitation; the second group addresses the three low-rated indicators on support information and feedback while also addressing the first limitation; the third group addresses the third and fourth limitations; and the fourth group addresses the fifth limitation.

4.3.1. Adjusting communication content and managing public expectations

a) Concretizing the image of development and modern services through what visitors can observe, use and verify (transport connections, digital services, payment methods); distinguishing planned projects from operational services; tourism authorities working with service providers to build shared information sources and assign update responsibilities. *b)* Expanding information on lesser-known destinations through itineraries connected to places publics already know. *c)* Aligning communication with expectations and actual experience: pairing inspirational content with preparatory information (traffic density, seasonal weather, requirements for joining cultural activities) and stating update dates and scope of application. *d)* Deepening cultural content and diversifying storytelling by extending accessible associations with context and people; cultural agencies and destination managers providing reliable background materials, with transparency about sponsorship and editorial control.

4.3.2. Organizing support information and improving feedback mechanisms

a) Standardizing essential information at destinations: easy-to-find, multilingual and up-to-date sources; price information stating the provider and effective date; emergency contacts separated from general travel advice; information available both online and at transport hubs and accommodation. *b)* Linking inspirational content with action-oriented information, with content producers responsible for linking and service providers for accuracy. *c)* Improving feedback handling: publicizing contact points; acknowledging, classifying, forwarding to the responsible unit and reporting outcomes to the sender; periodically publishing aggregated results. *d)* Standardizing data and ensuring searchability, with a responsibility register for each data group; cooperating with training institutions to build capacity in fact verification and operations.

4.3.3. Coordinating channels and enhancing communication consistency

a) Allocating channels by information need – awareness, understanding, verification or guidance for action – with indicators for each function; viewing time and engagement do not replace reception-outcome indicators. *b)* Unifying core information and maintaining official sources: a positioning framework focused on attributes that both align with development orientations and can be verified. *c)* Collaborating with content creators and distributors: providing materials, site access and connections with local experts; disclosing sponsorship; treating well-founded criticism as an early signal of problems. *d)* Expanding access for international publics through content developed from the actual questions of international visitors, rather than mere translation. *e)* Tailoring content to the experience level and needs of non-visitors, visitors, Vietnamese nationals abroad and people of Vietnamese origin.

4.3.4. Linking communication with the quality of on-site experience

a) Transparency of information and service conditions: prices, units, additional charges, change and cancellation conditions; simple support for small operators. *b)* Improving information and support at first touchpoints such as airports, border gates and stations. *c)* Facilitating connection with local communities and strengthening the role of bilingual cultural guides. *d)* Ensuring unified safety information from competent authorities, stating the time and area of application. *e)* Checking communicated content against actual capacity before determining the scope of promises and the timing of promotion. *f)* Building the capacity of destination communication and management staff: a minimum competency framework (fact verification, writing guidance, working with service providers, monitoring feedback) and task-based training with verifiable outputs.

Summary of Chapter 4

Destination communication can help form and consolidate national image in three ways: providing quality information, creating or orienting the meaning of experiences, and maintaining relationships with publics. International experience suggests ways of linking positioning with experience conditions, organizing information according to service capacity and sustaining relationships among actors,

with application conditioned by needs, resources, authority and coordination capacity in Vietnam. All four groups of solutions are linked to the limitations identified in Chapter 3, with implementing actors and monitorable outcomes; their common feature is placing communication content, support information and feedback mechanisms within a single process.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation has clarified the impact of tourism destination communication on Vietnam's national image in the current period from the perspective of receiving publics, by applying the cognitive-affective-conative model and combining quantitative and qualitative research, and draws the following main conclusions.

Regarding the mechanism of impact, tourism destination communication participates in national image formation not through an assumed bridge, but through publics' inferential operations, as evaluations of a specific place are extended into judgments about Vietnam across the political–security, economic and socio-cultural dimensions. This process operates in both positive and negative directions and varies by level of experience: for non-visitors, communicated information and expectations play the dominant role; for visitors, national image is adjusted, reinforced or challenged by comparing messages with reality. Communication effectiveness therefore cannot be assessed separately from supply conditions at destinations.

Regarding the magnitude and structure of associations, all five hypotheses are supported at $p < 0.001$. Tourism destination communication is positively associated with cognition ($\beta = 0.922$; $R^2 = 0.850$), affect ($\beta = 0.685$; $R^2 = 0.470$) and behavioral tendency ($\beta = 0.616$; $R^2 = 0.380$); cognition is positively associated with affect ($\beta = 0.719$; $R^2 = 0.517$), and affect with behavioral tendency ($\beta = 0.481$; $R^2 = 0.231$); the indicator of a peaceful and stable Vietnam scores highest ($M = 4.53$; $SD = 0.75$). Coefficients are interpreted within their respective models. The affect–behavioral tendency relationship is the weaker of the two sequential relationships – a finding that requires further explanation and is not sufficient grounds for regarding it as a weakened causal link; read alongside interview data, it suggests that turning goodwill into intention and action also depends on service quality, assistance and transparency at destinations.

Regarding differences across publics, evaluations of tourism destination communication and Vietnam's image differ significantly by age and information channel, but not by gender; differences by background are presented descriptively, and differences by on-site experience are identified through interviews. Because respondents selected their own channels, differences between channel combinations reflect the characteristics of each public group rather than the effectiveness of combining channels as such.

Regarding limitations, the dissertation identifies five limitations of destination communication in relation to national image: the affect–behavioral tendency relationship is weaker than the cognition–affect relationship; a gap between symbolic and practical information; a difference in evaluations between international (3.519) and domestic (3.934) respondents; the influence of sources beyond the control of domestic communicators; and the transparency and consistency of services at destinations. *Regarding the three dimensions*, culture is both the positioning axis in policy documents and the most prominent dimension in perception, yet the remembered symbols form mainly through everyday micro-narratives in informal

content; the political–security dimension is rated highly but is largely inferred from observation and experience; and the economic dimension needs further consideration.

Regarding solutions, the dissertation proposes four groups of solutions linked to the five limitations: adjusting communication content and managing public expectations; organizing support information and improving feedback mechanisms; coordinating channels and enhancing communication consistency; and linking communication with the quality of on-site experience; each group specifies implementing actors and monitorable outcomes.

In sum, publics receive and interpret communicated information in relation to their prior knowledge and their own experience, thereby forming, consolidating or adjusting their image of Vietnam. The dissertation affirms the role of tourism destination communication in cultivating Vietnam's national image, with the guiding orientation of taking public reception as the basis and consistency between message and reality as the foundation, toward a positive, deep and credible image of Vietnam.