Developing The Tourism Destination Image Through Social Media: The Case Of Vietnam

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This research aims to identify the positive factors of social media communication that influence tourists' perceptions of destination image. Subsequently, the research has proffered several propositions for the enhancement of destination image through social media platforms. To realize these objectives, the investigation employed a questionnaire-based survey methodology. Data collection encompassed the distribution of 300 questionnaires among university students across the Hanoi region, with analysis conducted employing SPSS 20 software. This study identified Attitude, Advertising Appeal, Content Similarity, Usefulness, Information Accuracy, and Honesty as factors exerting a positive influence on tourists' perceptions of destination image. **Keywords**: Destination image, social media communication, attitude toward social media communication.

1. Introduction

In the current era of rapidly developing Internet technology, the application of information technology in tourism promotion has become inevitable. Numerous websites, electronic information portals, online travel information sites, and so on have emerged to serve the tourism industry. However, in Vietnam, the potential of social networks as a highly effective promotional tool for tourism has yet to be fully exploited. Consulting and searching for information on social media increasingly become the preferred choice of many users. With a rapidly growing user base, vast amounts of shared and stored information, extensive application integration, ease of use, and low initial investment, social networks have become an efficient mixed communication and business channel for many organizations and individuals. Tourists, local authorities, and travel service companies need to better understand their customers to facilitate smoother business operations and to develop and enhance tourist areas. Therefore, this research focuses on the aspect of social media communication on these social media platforms.

2. Literature Review

Technological advancements are evolving incessantly and are being implemented across myriad domains, thereby rendering human existence progressively more convenient and facile. This has also changed how customers perceive, experience, and choose travel destinations. This transformation has also revolutionized how consumers perceive, experience, and choose travel destinations. Progress in technology furnishes captivating information through firsthand experiences of destinations, aimed at persuading customers to physically explore those locales. One pivotal technological advancement anticipated to exert a substantial influence on the contemporary tourism sector is the proliferation of social media platforms. This phenomenon has been adopted across diverse industries encompassing entertainment, commerce, and business functions, including advertising and sales. The emergence of social media platforms enables travel businesses and localities to swiftly disseminate information about their products and services to potential customers anytime, anywhere with Internet access.

There have been numerous studies on the development of tourism destination images. For instance, Choe, J. Y. J., & Kim, S. S. (2018) investigated the influence of local food consumption value on tourists' attitudes, warmth perceptions of destination images, and behavioral intentions, uncovering the impact of local food consumption value of tourists on their perceptions and behaviors. Prayogo, R. R., & Kusumawardhani, A. (2017) conducted research on the relationship between destination image, service quality, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), and revisit intentions in the tourism industry. Similarly, in the study by Sultan, M. T., Sharmin, F., Badulescu, A., Gavrilut, D., & Xue, K. (2021), the authors examined the most significant factors currently influencing the prospective behavior of tourists in selecting sustainable destinations.

Some studies also focus on destination image and social media. For example, Jaya, I., Trisna, P. G. I., & Prianthara, I. B. T. (2020) based their research on social media aimed at shaping images: A new approach to selecting sustainable destinations to measure the influence of social media influencers, destination images, and brand images on the purchasing intentions of tourists visiting Lake Bratan, Bedugul, a major tourist attraction. Qi, S., & Chen, N. (2019) studied Understanding Macao's destination image through user-generated content. This research evaluates the destination image of Macao as perceived by mainland Chinese tourists. Additionally, Ráthonyi, G. (2013) researched the Influence of social media on tourism - particularly among students at the University of Debrecen. The author collected more detailed information and carefully outlined alternative decision options to reduce uncertainty in evaluations. Meanwhile, Kim, S. E., Lee, K. Y., Shin, S. I., & Yang, S. B. (2017) investigated the role of content and non-content cues of tourism information quality in shaping users' destination images on social media. The impact of social media use and travel motivations on destination image and intention to travel to Taiwan by Thais, as conducted by Chu, C. P. (2018), presented a comprehensive view of the impact of social media usage and travel motivations on tourism promotion. Beerli, A., & Martin, J. D. (2004) studied the factors influencing destination image for the purpose of development and validation of a model explaining the various factors shaping the image after visiting a destination. Shuqair, S., & Cragg, P. (2017) researched the immediate impact of Instagram posts on changing viewers' perceptions of tourist destinations.

3. Research Models

Attitude toward social media communication represents relatively stable and enduring evaluations of a product, constituting a significant psychological framework as they have been found to influence and predict various behaviors (Kraus, 1995 in Jalilvand & Samei, 2012). Attitude toward social media communication underscores the behavior of social media users, describing the psychological inclinations manifested through positive or negative evaluations of tourists when engaging in specific behaviors (Ajzen, 1991; Schiffman & Kanuk, 1994; Kraus, 1995 in Jalilvand & Samei, 2012). Based on these premises, the study proposes the following hypothesis H1.

Hypothesis H1: Attitude toward social media communication positively influences the perception of tourist destination image among travelers.

Media outlets on social media serve as vital tools to analyze tourists' perceptions, evidenced by the increasing engagement and introduction to other users. Therefore, captivating advertisements contribute to fostering positive perceptions of travel destinations among customers. The allure of advertisements lies in their appeal and vividness. According to Ducoffe (1995), the appeal of online advertising can positively influence consumers' attitudes and perceptions. Moreover, Hoffman et al. (1996) indicated that users who are more satisfied and interact more with marketing tools through the internet are likely to develop positive attitudes and improve their mood. Shavitt et al. (1998) also affirmed that the perceived appeal of advertisements significantly impacts consumers' attitudes toward those ads. Tsang et al. (2004) further demonstrated that the liveliness and appeal of advertising information positively affect consumers' perceptions and behaviors. Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis H2: The factor of advertising appeal through social media positively influences the perception of destination image among tourists.

One of the fundamental principles of communication relates to the belief that the similarity between the communicator and the recipient enhances communication effectiveness. According to Rogers (1983), similarity denotes the extent to which individuals resemble each other in certain attributes, such as age, gender, education level, or lifestyle. Similarity in personal characteristics arouses common interests and worldviews and best explains the formation of expressive relationships based on attraction between individuals (Ibarra, 1992). Similarity is described in terms of shared demographic characteristics and lifestyles (Ruef, Aldrich, & Carter, 2003), with recent concepts of similarity in the online environment emphasizing shared interests and shared thinking (Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007). The basic assumption for both contexts is that people's perception of similarity with others significantly impacts the outcome of any interpersonal interaction, a notion referred to as the "similarity principle" (Laumann, 1966). From these arguments, hypothesis H3 is proposed.

Hypothesis H3: The factor of similarity in the content of social media communication positively influences tourists' perceptions of destination images.

Davis (1989) defined perceived usefulness as the extent to which an individual believes that using a specific system will enhance their job performance. In this study, perceived usefulness describes tourists' expectations that using social media will enhance their travel plans. Several studies have confirmed the central importance

of this factor as a fundamental component of technology use in the hotel and tourism environment (Huh, Kim, & Law, 2009; Law & Jogaratnam, 2005; Morosan, 2010). A common belief is that individuals will use an application if they perceive it as useful in achieving a specific outcome. From these arguments, the study proposes hypothesis H4 as follows.

Hypothesis H4: The factor of perceived usefulness of social media communication positively impacts tourists' perception of destination image.

The accuracy of information is defined as information without errors, as the accuracy of information contributes to the quality of decisions and avoids erroneous decisions, thus reducing costs and minimizing time wastage (Al-Zyadat et al., 2010). Furthermore, accurate information instills trust in tourists to make purchasing decisions based on what is displayed on social media about tourist destinations.

Hypothesis H5: The factor of information accuracy in social media communication positively influences tourists' perception of destination image.

According to Casalo et al. (2011), the trust provided by online travel community members significantly influences attitudes towards advice. Cheung et al. (2009) investigated the moderating effects of positive electronic word-of-mouth on the relationship between consumer trust (perceived trust), attitudes (emotional trust), and intentions (online shopping intentions) among university students in Hong Kong. Zendehdel, Paim, Bojei, and Osman (2011) conducted a study in Malaysia to examine the impact of trust on attitudes towards online shopping and online shopping intentions among a group of students. The results of several studies have found that both honesty and competence trust are positively related to attitudes towards online shopping. Therefore, the group proposes hypothesis H6.

Hypothesis H6: The honesty of social media communication positively influences tourists' perceptions of destination image.

Figure 1. Proposed research model
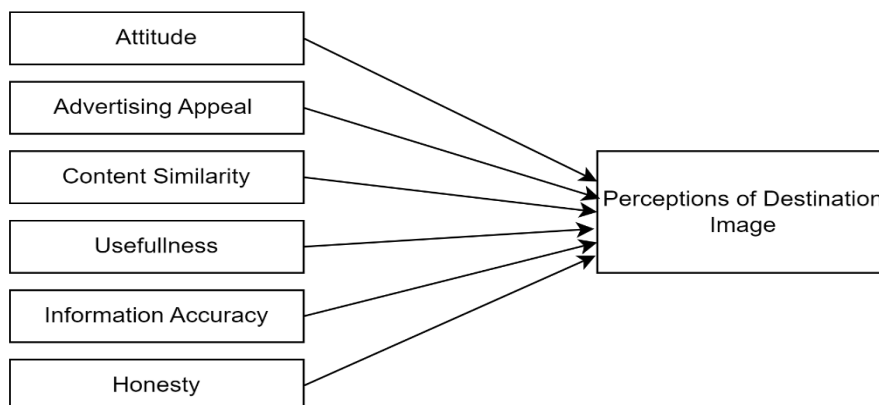
4. Research Methods and Results

4.1 Research Methods
This survey was administered both online and offline. A total of 300 valid survey responses from application users were collected for analysis. The study employed 6 independent variables across 20 questions, making a sample size of 300 appropriate for the analysis.

4.2 Research Results
Reliability Analysis of the Scale
The variables STH, TDSD, ND, THI, DCX, and TDSD achieved high Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.845, 0.857, 0.836, 0.820, 0.885, and 0.834 respectively, all exceeding 0.8.
Conclusion: Retain all variables for conducting exploratory factor analysis (EFA).

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)
Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.879
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3539.012
	df	210
	Sig.	.000

The KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) value of 0.879 > 0.5 demonstrates that the research data is suitable for factor analysis. The Bartlett's test yields a chi-square value of 3539.012 with a significance level of sig = 0.000 < 0.05, which is statistically significant and further supports the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis.

Table 2. Rotated Component Matrix

Rotated Component Matrix[a]

	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
STH2	.844					
STH3	.780					
STH4	.785					
STH1	.740					
TDSD1		.788				
TDSD3		.759				
TDSD2		.751				
TDSD4		.704				
ND3			.780			
ND1			.757			
ND2			.743			
ND4			.705			
DCX3				.869		
DCX2				.818		
DCX1				.768		
TD2					.811	
TD1					.807	
TD3					.791	
THI1						.818
THI3						.797
THI2						.673
Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings. Cumulative %						73.264

The total variance explained is 73.264% > 50%, indicating that the EFA model is suitable. Thus, the six factors extracted account for 73.264% of the variance in the observed variables. The variables with an Eigenvalue of 5.195 > 1 meet the requirements, and no variables were eliminated.

From the results of the rotated matrix, 21 observed variables converged into six factors, and all these observed variables have factor loadings greater than 0.5.

ANOVA analysis results

Table 3. ANOVA

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	113.540	6	18.923	113.779	.000[b]
	Residual	48.731	293	.166		
	Total	162.271	299			

ANOVA analysis shows that the F-statistic is 113.779 with a significance level (sig.) of 0.000, which is less than 5%. This demonstrates that the regression model constructed is suitable for the data collected, and all the variables included are statistically significant. Thus, the independent variables in the model are related to the dependent variable "Perceptions of Destination Image."

Regression Coefficients

Table 4. Coefficients

Coefficients [a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-.692	.192		-3.605	.000		
	TD	.249	.038	.258	6.498	.000	.651	1.537
	STH	.216	.040	.205	5.343	.000	.694	1.441
	ND	.159	.042	.156	3.781	.000	.602	1.660
	THI	.269	.046	.237	5.826	.000	.620	1.612
	DCX	.124	.032	.152	3.831	.000	.651	1.536
	TDSD	.172	.050	.139	3.466	.001	.633	1.580
a. Dependent Variable: CN								

The results show that TD is the most significant factor, with a standardized Beta coefficient of 0.258, indicating the strongest impact within the model. Next, THI is identified as the second most significant factor with a Beta coefficient of 0.237, reflecting a substantial level of influence. STH ranks as the third most significant factor, with a standardized Beta coefficient of 0.205, showing a moderate level of influence. ND is ranked as the fourth most significant factor, with a standardized Beta coefficient of 0.156, indicating a relatively moderate impact. DCX plays the fifth role in the model, with a standardized Beta coefficient of 0.152, showing a relatively mild influence. Lastly, TDSD is considered the sixth most significant factor, with a standardized Beta coefficient of 0.139, demonstrating a lower impact compared to the other factors, but still significant.

Standardized regression equation:
CN=TD*0,258+THI*0,237+STH*0,205+ND*0,156+DCX*0,152+TDSD*0,139

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the regression results, descriptive statistics across the groups of variables show that there is a certain positive impact on the perception of destination image through social media.

The research findings indicate that "Attitude" has the most significant positive influence on destination image perception. Following "Attitude" is "Usefulness," then "Advertising Appeal," "Content Similarity," and finally, "Information Accuracy" and "Honesty."

Usefulness encourages social media users to browse more on social networks, where they can find the information they seek, and may also unexpectedly discover interesting content while browsing. This increased exposure can be leveraged by incorporating targeted information to enhance the reach of posts and facilitate user recognition and identification of products or services marketed by advertisers. Discovering new information can equip users with knowledge, particularly about potential travel destinations. Social media travel imagery allows users to learn about and recognize travel destinations in the most realistic and vibrant ways. They can read diverse comments from previous travelers to make informed decisions about which destinations to include in their trips, inspiring them to visit these destinations and share their experiences with friends and family.

Advertising Appeal offers a positive perspective on a product or service, especially concerning the image of a tourist destination. Ads featuring beautiful visuals, engaging content, and clear, vivid presentations create a favorable impression of the destination. Engaging social media ads often receive high shares, thereby expanding their reach. Those who view content shared by friends, family, or trusted sources tend to develop a positive perception of the destination's image.

Content similarity suggests that articles and videos share themes related to the interests of social media users. When browsing content aligned with their preferences, users tend to engage more actively due to their interest. Social media platforms continuously collect data on user browsing patterns and favored content to recommend articles, advertisements, and video ads that correspond to frequently accessed topics. This represents a potential strength for leveraging social media marketing to promote the image of tourist destinations effectively.

The accuracy of information further persuades users to engage with and trust social media. Honesty from those sharing content on social media also reinforces users' trust. Consequently, users' perceptions and understanding of proposed destination images in social media articles and promotional videos become more positive, as they expect and trust the content they encounter. Additionally, users tend to trust content shared by individuals who have had personal experiences over content created by company employees actively promoting advertisements, as the former typically provides a more objective perspective. However, the use of fake reviews for marketing purposes is increasingly common and has significantly eroded trust in the accuracy of information and honesty of social media content sharers. As a result, while these two factors still contribute to users' positive perceptions of the destination image, their overall impact ranks lowest in terms of strength.

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