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**Destination branding and cultural identity construction.
Discourse analysis of publications on the official website of Vietnam National
Administration of Tourism.**

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Abstract

Constructing the right destination image is important not only in the tourism industry - a well-developed tourism sector, that attracts a large number of international visitors, has the potential to enhance the national economy of a country. For this purpose, Destination Marketing Organizations strategically use tourism discourse in their destination-branding materials. Such goal-oriented discourses necessarily contain ideological component. Ideologies help the author create an engaging text for the readers and arouse the interest in the destination since they operate with people's beliefs and motivations and connect the author with the audience. This research examines the texts from nine publications on the official website of Vietnam National Administration of Tourism through the method of discourse analysis, in order to discover the underlying ideologies. First, based on Fairclough's framework of evaluations (2003), the constituents of the destination image were determined. These positively evaluated objects appear as the values of the destination for potential tourists. Secondly, these representations were examined against the theory of the "tourist gaze" (Urry, 1990) - the most prevalent form of tourism writing. This step defined the narrative characteristics which the author uses to construct the destination image in the desired way. The analysis revealed a high degree of exoticization in the representation of the values, and thus, orientalism was identified as the overarching ideology of the destination marketing publications. This concept refers to power relations between the West and East. Originated in the literary discourses of the colonial period, it proves to be an effective tool in contemporary tourism narratives, such as destination-branding publications on the official website of Vietnam National Administration of Tourism.

Keywords: destination branding, tourism discourse, orientalism, exoticism, Vietnam, cultural identity

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1. Introduction

Marketing of a destination is “an extremely complex and highly political activity”, a significant benefit of which is its potential to “enhance a nation’s economy, national self-image and identity” (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride, 2004, p. 14). It ensures public recognition of a destination, promotes it for tourism and investment, constructs its image and maintains it as a durable brand (Bieger, 2000, p. 215). Destination Management Organizations (DMO) are responsible for raising the attractiveness of the place as a travel destination and developing the tourism sector. The major concern of these institutions (a convention and visitors bureau, or tourism board, such as the National Administration of Tourism in Vietnam) is to prevent the spread of the negative, and at the same time, create and promote a positive destination image. The goal is to consolidate the right brand identity in the minds of potential visitors.

The established destination-brand identity performs multiple functions: it helps the brand meet the (potential) visitors’ demands, bring them emotional satisfaction, and most importantly, affect the whole experience of traveling. Therefore, DMO face the challenge: they have to construct the most positive, unique and distinct image of the destination, that would be appealing and understandable for potential tourists, and at the same time would not be at odds with the reality. If the visitors’ experience contradicts their expectations, built up with marketers’ promises, they will highly unlikely return or recommend the destination to others, and the entire branding strategy will be futile (Kolb, 2006). To create the desired image, build trust and rapport with the readers, and fulfill the marketing goals, DMO utilize specific discourses in their materials. The power of discourse lies in ideologies which the author shares with the audience and conveys through the texts.

The current research focuses on the discourse used in the publications on the official website of Vietnam National Administration of Tourism – the authority and main DMO of the country. The website takes a leading position among a variety of media, through which destination branding strategies can be implemented. The significant feature of official websites is their

credibility: they are run by a government body that has the authority to market the destination and serve as primary distribution channels for domestic and international tourism (Lee, Cai & O’Leary, 2006).

The relevance and societal value of the current study lies in the fact that a vast amount of research is available on image construction in marketing (Kolb, 2006; Morgan et al., 2004) and tourism discourse in narratives of guide books, journals and various media publications (Dann, 1996; Rhodes, 1995), while the case of official websites of local tourism authorities is a comparatively novel field; and representation of Vietnam in particular, as a destination brand has not been much discussed. This could be explained by the fact that Vietnam is currently developing as a tourism destination. Statistics demonstrate sustainable growth in the number of international visitors, which has increased almost twofold during the recent decade, from 7,572,352 visitors within the 12 months of 2013, to 15,497,791 in 2019. During the 12 months of 2018 alone, it witnessed a 19.9% increase over the same period of the previous year (Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism, 2019). Given this, Vietnam can be considered an example of a successfully marketed destination. This is also supported by the fact that the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism is the main local DMO which has the authority to represent the country, and the official website, in turn, serves as one of the primary sources of tourist information. This research analyzes the discourse of the website publications to determine what lies in the core of destination branding texts. Since the power of the discourse is in its ideological weight, the underlying ideologies are the main point of interest. Although the visual material, such as, images and photos on the web pages would provide insightful data, this study examines only the textual material through the method of discourse analysis. The research aims to provide an academic underpinning for the effective writing strategies in destination branding, and therefore, bears practical relevance for marketing in the tourism industry. Besides that, it addresses the issues of the country’s cultural self-representation and contributes to the field of intercultural communication studies.

2. Theoretical framework

This section covers several aspects that constitute the theoretical base of this research. First, it defines the term “destination” and explains the mechanism of branding. Next, it addresses the tourism discourse, as a distinct genre and socio-linguistic phenomenon, and explains its major constituents - the notions of “Orientalism” (Said, 1991) and “exoticism”, which stem from the narratives of the colonial period. The focus of attention is also the concept of the “tourist gaze” (Urry, 1990) in the general practice of traveling and in travel narratives. Lastly, the section addresses Fairclough’s (2003) discourse analysis, the method based on finding ideological grounds of the text through identifying evaluative statements in it.

2.1. Destination branding

The multidimensional and complex term “destination” refers to the geographic location, which in this case is the marketed product. According to Hall (2000), there are several factors that make a place a tourist destination: (1) a destination contributes to construction of regional identity, due to its cultural, physical and social significance; (2) in a destination adequate tourist infrastructure is available, that renders visiting possible, and thus, allows to develop tourism; (3) a destination provides, or has potential to create, attractions for visitors; (4) in a destination, purposeful tourism planning and marketing strategies are carried out; and (5) it is reachable by transport for a large number of visitors. It should be noted that such categorization applies to so-called mainstream tourist destinations, and not to the case of alternative forms of tourism, in which travelers prefer to visit less promoted and developed areas, not typically popular among tourists. However, this research considers these factors, since the analysis will focus on the texts which are published by a DMO – Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, and are aimed to promote popular destinations among a large audience.

Hall’s position is primarily based on the physical characteristics of a place. A different approach is proposed by Morgan, et al. (2011), who view a destination as a cognitive entity. Firstly, a destination is a set of attributes of a region as a geopolitical system, perceived by its

visitors as a unique entity. Secondly, it is a mental construct of symbolic meanings and “realities”, socio-cultural space, produced through discursive practices. Places become “destinations” through marketing strategies. The “mental construct” is the destination “identity” which is constructed through marketing strategies. Identity is a complex summation of attributed qualities, it is abstract and “constructed through and against representations” (Howarth, 2002, p. 20).

Destination image construction is a bidirectional process. On the one part, the destination image is strategically compiled for branding (by emphasizing the features which people commonly find positive). On the other part, the image is created through branding. This means that branding to a great extent influences the way people see a destination and its positive aspects. Image is always a perceptual construct and it includes reasonable, cognitive as well as emotional aspects - people’s beliefs, ideas and impressions regarding the place (Kotler, Gertner & Rein 1993). These beliefs determine people’s worldview and rather represent a set of simplified mental images than constantly reformed active apprehensions about objects. They are subjective and persistent, once imprinted in one’s mind (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride., 2011).

Destination branding is essentially identical to the branding of a product or service. By branding a destination, the two processes are important: differentiation and identification. Differentiation means communicating the unique identity of a destination by marking its distinction from competitors, like in case of branding of any other product. Its unique features and elements that contrast it to other countries are highlighted and thus the destination is made interesting for potential visitors. According to the definition drawn by American Marketing Association, a “brand” is “a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors” (as cited in Kotler and Keller, 2012, p. 241). Identification focuses on highlighting its unique characteristic features, also nominated as values. These processes are inseparable and are carried out in parallel. A branding strategy is efficient if it creates these differences, which can be considered as values of the firm, they “help consumers organize their

knowledge about products and services” (p. 243) and guide their decision making. Branding strategies are implemented in a variety of ways, one of which is textual materials, such as tourism website articles. To create these publications and promote the destination, DMO strategically use tourism discourse.

2.2. Tourism discourse, genre and socio-linguistic phenomenon

Tourism discourse aims to characterize a place and its people using a specific language, particular form of behavior, touristic establishments and activities (Lindknud, 1998). In other words, the elements which tourists may encounter in the destination – objects, places, phenomena or people are represented as its values, in a way to satisfy the (potential) tourist. The language of tourism “attempts to persuade, lure, woo and seduce millions of human beings” (Dann, 1996, p.2). It operates with people’s culture-specific demands, motivations, and values, and uses specific rhetorical structures to render the readers from potential into actual tourists. Tourism discourses make use of symbols and associations to create a “place-myth” - the desired and not an entirely realistic image of a touristic destination (Lash & Urry, 1994, p. 265). There are various discursive characteristics which help the author implement these goals. Among these, the present research gives particular consideration to the concept of “Orientalism” (Said, 1991), including its constituents - exoticism and primitivism; and the most common form of tourism narratives, the “Tourist gaze” (Urry, 1990). These terms will be addressed in the following sections.

2.2.1. Orientalism, exoticism, and primitivism

The concept of “Orientalism” first introduced by Said (1991), centers around the ideological relations between the dominant West and the colonized East. This concept is directly relevant to the context of this research, given the colonial heritage of Vietnam. For several decades of the 19th century, France took control over the Asian countries, including Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, which altogether were nominated as French Indochina. Colonialism has had not only physical repercussions on the countries, such as industrialization, slavery, and urbanization. The

initial orientalist viewpoint has stipulated western people's perception of the eastern country and its culture up to the present day.

Initially, the term orientalism was applied onto the representation of the two worlds in scholarly and literary discourses. In its essence lies the assumptive geographical and cultural delimitation between the West (so-called Occident) and the East (the Orient), whereby the West is treated as the normal and familiar "us" and the East as the strange and foreign "them". The language of orientalism intends to introduce (or rather to construct) this Eastern "other", make it known and less "fearsome" (p. 60). In this case, the word "fearsome" is used not in its literal meaning of "threatening", but it rather refers to discrepancies between the two cultures that make it hard for one (the West) to understand the other (the East). In other words, orientalism discourse describes the Eastern culture to make it more cognizable and apprehensible to the Western observer.

This language of orientalism uses the juxtaposition between the two dissimilar worlds, specifically by exoticization of Eastern cultures. The term "exoticism" refers to the Western, originally postcolonial, viewpoint on the ethnic and racial contrast of the East, and also its dissimilarity in cultural manifestations, for example in the art (Taylor, 2007), local lifestyles and national cuisine. The "other" is highly romanticized. "The exotic" is characterized by its "spice of life, and novelty which is arousing" (Endicott, 1984, p. 53).

Initially, orientalism and exoticism gained ground as key elements of early modern travel narratives - colonial and post-colonial immigrant novels, adventure novels, that privilege a return to an earlier, often simpler time, and science fiction of the nineteenth and twentieth-century (Barnes, 2014). The scholar outlines the characteristics of exoticism in the narratives. Firstly, the key component of exoticism is the exotic object. Secondly, such writing is always connected to the theme of "voyage", which can be spatial, temporal, social, or a combination of these; "the exotic text represents the quest to discover a new world, which is often figured as a promised land

or *Paradise Lost*” (p. 31). This new unknown world and its realia are contrasted to the world, that is familiar to both author and reader, who allegedly belong to the same cultural space.

The exotic narratives of the colonial epoch have found their implication in the modern narratives, specifically, in the language of tourism. Tourism narratives, in particular, originated within (or intended for) the West, intend to introduce the new world to the readers. The reality in such representation is modified and embellished, and the Other is highly romanticized. The language of tourism is the “extreme language” that “tends to speak only in positive and glowing terms of the services and attractions it seeks to promote” (Dann, 1996, p. 65); in the meantime, the routine, trivial, every-day life and problems of the native people are ignored and omitted in the discourse.

Tourists, especially from developed, Western countries, desire to encounter cultures that have preserved their traditional, pre-modern forms. This idea entails the concept of “primitivism”. Someone or something is considered “primitive” when it is “less complex, or less advanced, than the person or thing to which it is being compared” (Rhodes, 1995, p. 13). The culture of the destination is contrasted to the culture to which the observer belongs, however, primitivism in the discourse should not be mistaken for down-grading of one society and extolment of the other. In the case of travel-narratives, primitivism simplifies the image of the destination to cater to the primary interests of travelers and holidaymakers. In tourism discourse, it also puts emphasizes historical heritage, customs, and traditions to which the local population of the destination allegedly adheres.

2.2.2. Tourist gaze

Another fundamental notion in tourism as a general practice of seeing the place and a principal form of narrative in tourism discourses is the “tourist gaze” (Urry, 1990). Tourist gaze implies a set of practices distinct from reflective observing in that it rather “orders, shapes and classifies” (Urry, 2011, p. 2) the world phenomena. The scholar denies the very possibility of neutral, impassive “seeing”, claiming that visiting a site is a socially conditioned act. It involves

considerable cognitive work: a tourist gazes upon the sight through a personal “filter” and has to juxtapose the pre-existent knowledge, ideas, and expectations with the new information obtained through the experience. Despite its seemingly personal origins, the “gaze” can be reproduced, sustained and shared among the broad public through discourses (e.g. media). Destinations, sites, and objects become “signs” and “clichés”, and one specific feature may represent or substitute the whole place: “When tourists see two people kissing in Paris what they capture in the gaze is ‘timeless romantic Paris’” (Urry, 2002, p. 3).

The images embedded in a person’s mind evoke certain expectations for visit to a destination. When the image of the geographical site significantly differs from the one’s habitual environments, the person is most likely to be interested in visiting a place. This opposition of ordinary/everyday and extraordinary is what renders a geographical site or object into an object of the tourist gaze. By visiting a site, the tourist anticipates “particularly distinct pleasures which involve different senses or are on a different scale from those typically encountered in everyday life” (Urry, 2002, p. 12). Even familiar, routine activities when gazed upon in different settings, turn into fascinating experiences: sports and leisure, food and drinks become extraordinary when performed in an unusual context, and are, therefore, the incentives to visit the destination.

Urry (1990) introduced a classification of objects of the tourist gaze, that is based on three dichotomies: 1) Objects of the romantic versus collective tourist gaze; 2) Historical versus modern objects; 3) Authentic or inauthentic objects. The dichotomies do not exclude one another and function in parallel, so each touristic site reflects a different combination of the three elements. The literature review demonstrated the correlation between these three gaze types and the three types of “voyage” (spatial, temporal and social) in exotic writing. In addition, Urry’s classification is directly relevant to this research, since tourism texts are as a rule constructed in form of a “gaze” – they not only describe the objects and places but through the specific rhetoric involve the reader into active cogitative participation. In this research, the classification is further applied in the

second step of the analysis. It serves as a framework and helps the researcher assess the narrative techniques in the representation of the destination values.

2.2.2.1. Romantic versus Collective gaze

Stemming from the Romantic philosophy of the 18-19th centuries, the concept of Romanticism is premised on emotional “semi-spiritual” relations between the human and nature. Within this philosophy, contemplating “undisturbed natural beauty” (Urry, 2002, p. 40) and impressive sceneries in solitude and privacy are the central value. Typical signs of the solitary Romantic gaze are, for instance, pristine beaches, uninhabited hills, and forests. Romanticism fostered the development of “scenic tourism”, as the residents of new urban industrial areas have increasingly desired to escape. As an example, the author describes the view of the countryside in postmodern Britain. Opposite to increasingly developing cities, the rural areas appeared as ideal escape locations, due to their “lack of planning and regimentation, a vernacular quaint architecture, winding lanes and a generally labyrinthine road system, and the virtues of tradition and the lack of social intervention” (p. 88).

In contrast, the collective tourist gaze implies conviviality. The prerequisite and main value in such places is the presence of large numbers of people, specifically tourists from all around the world who constitute the attractiveness of the place, imbuing it with “liveliness and atmosphere or a sense of carnival” and “indicate that this is the place to be” (p. 43). Urry illustrates this kind of gaze with Alton Towers - a modern and popular leisure park in the north-west of England (p. 94).

2.2.2.2. Historical versus Modern gaze

This type of gaze juxtaposes the observer’s interest in the past (historical, ancient objects) and present (modern and novel). The author explains the distinction by placing a particular emphasis on so-called heritage tourism as the implication of the Historical gaze. Its characteristic is the pervasive feeling of nostalgia that is not a general recalling of the past, but a socially organized construction of its particular elements. These elements, deliberately chosen for preservation, constitute the desired image of the site. Gazing at such sites takes the form of

reminiscence, which is not passive visual consumption, but rather stimulated active tactual and mental comprehension. When observing the historical artifacts, visitors imagine the life that used to surround them. In this image, however, significant social experiences (war, hunger, disease, poverty) are often omitted or trivialized (Jordanova, 1989).

The Modern gaze is oriented towards the present day and future, development and technology. Urry (2002) illustrates this tendency with examples. Seaside resorts attract visitors by offering novel services and brand-new accommodation; amusement parks “exhibit 'modernity', high technology, youth, controlled danger, anticipation and pleasure” and promote themselves as “cosmopolitan, international leisure center[s]” (p. 33). Even whole destination-countries may change in order to increase tourist traffic. One example is Singapore: starting with rebuilding and modernizing old areas into new sites like hotels and luxury complexes, the entire identity of the country has eventually reformed: “Singapore is in the east; but not really any more 'of the east'. It is almost the ultimate modern city and does not construct itself as 'exotic/erotic' for visitors” (p. 56). In this case, the image of the destination has obtained a different nature. If formerly it was exoticism and foreignness that attracted visitors from more developed Western countries, now it is modernity and advancement that serve as an appeal to tourists.

2.2.2.3. *Authentic versus Inauthentic gaze*

The way “Authentic versus Inauthentic gaze” is realized in the discourse is slightly different from the two other types. If “Romantic versus collective gaze” promotes either kind of places (remote and serene as well as crowded and convivial), and “Historical versus Modern gaze” also promotes objects of heritage and contemporary objects, the virtue in the third type of gaze is the “authenticity”. The second element of the dichotomy – “inauthenticity” has a negative connotation; tourists avoid such cultures and objects and seek “authentic experience”. In a broad sense, “authenticity” can be understood as a benefit that tourists expect to obtain by visiting the destination (Smith, 1990). Authenticity is linked to desired genuine, non-contrived experiences. The term was introduced by MacCannell (1973, 1976) who suggested that people of modernity

are alienated from their own society, and for them “reality and authenticity are thought to be elsewhere: in other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simpler life-styles” (1976, p. 3). Frow (1997) also sees authenticity as a principally modern value, which tourists pursue in supposedly “traditional cultures”; and tourism, in its turn, reinforces the ideological opposition between real-life modernity of the West and “non-modern — the natural, the non-Western, the traditional, the exotic, the primitive, the different” (p. 101). Third World, rural, “authentic” cultures are put into opposition with “their more shallow, media and consumption-driven Western/urban counterparts” (Jaworski & Pritchard, 2005, p. 12). MacCannell (1999) notes the certain degree of sacralization in this kind of tourist gaze: a site or cultural artifact becomes “a sacred object of the tourist ritual” (p. 42-8). It obtains a name, value and enshrinement, and various forms of reproduction. MacCannell compares a tourist with a religious pilgrim, with the difference that instead of one sacred center, the tourist pays homage to numerous centers – attractions, sights or events. For instance, the tourist may observe the sites of industry and work – this practice is designated as 'alienated leisure'. As an example, Urry describes a common point of interest among tourists visiting China, which is looking upon the daily routine of the locals in a 'communist' country (p. 10-13).

Scholars acknowledge the social, discursive nature of this concept: “however we define authenticity, it must be a quality of experience that is constituted discursively” (Jaworski & Pritchard, 2005, p. 205). Authenticity is subjective: “genuineness or authenticity of a tourism setting is not a tangible asset but, instead, is a judgement or value placed on the setting by observers” (Xie & Wall, 2002, p.354), and it is “not a non-negotiable, given quality, but is in practice often socially constructed” (Cohen’s, 2002, p. 270). It follows that anything can potentially be an attraction, and only requires the observer to notice and evaluate its distinctive, out of ordinary features, and compare them to the familiar settings.

2.3. Discourse analysis

As this paper focuses on textual material and investigates how the discourse constructs the image of Vietnam as a tourist destination for an international audience, discourse analysis developed by N. Fairclough (1995, 2003) has been chosen as the method for this research. According to Trew's (1979) definition: "Discourse is seen as 'a field of both ideological processes and linguistic processes, and... there is a determinate relation between these two kinds of process'" (as cited in Fairclough, 1995, p. 25). Linguistic choices which the author makes in the discourse, convey specific values and beliefs, and subsequently, ideological meaning to the readers. In their turn, the readers, are expected to share these beliefs. Fairclough (2003) viewed language in use as "an irreducible part of social life, dialectically interconnected with other elements of social life" (p. 2), and suggested that the "analysis of texts and practices should be mapped onto analysis of the institutional and wider social and cultural context of media practices, including relations of power and ideologies" (1995. p. 33). Discourses are the ways to represent various aspects of the world, and they reflect people's ideological relationships to the world determined by their social positions, identities, and other factors.

The use of specific discourses is an inextricable part of media text creation. Besides the representation of world objects, discourses can project the image that is divergent from reality, and aim to influence or change people's worldviews. Such assumptions are prevalent in media texts, such as the destination marketing materials, since their goal is to convince potential visitors. Jaworski & Pritchard (2005) emphasize the strategic meaning of ideologies in discourses that is the establishment of group rapport; this means that a shared system of beliefs about reality is created.

The ideological foundation of media texts imbues them with discursive power. Ideologies are "propositions that generally figure as implicit assumptions in texts, which contribute to producing or reproducing unequal relations of power, relations of domination" (Fairclough, 1995, p.14). These ways of seeing reality, the ideologies, can be disclosed by first detecting the implicit

assumptions (evaluations) behind the words. Evaluations are a type of a statement that manifests a certain quality, or value of an object. Thereby, among other types of statements (such as statements of fact, predictions, and hypothetical statements), they function as implicit motives for action. The overview of four basic types of evaluations is presented in the following section.

2.3.1. Evaluative statements

Evaluations are explicit or implicit ways in which its authors commit themselves to values, and can be divided into four categories (Fairclough, 2003):

1) Evaluative statements – as a general type;

And the three adjacent types:

2) Statements with deontic modalities;

3) Statements with affective mental process verbs;

4) Value assumptions.

Evaluative statements express desirability and undesirability and categorize something as good or bad (e.g. this is a good book). This theoretical framework serves as a base for the discourse analysis in this research. More specifically, by recognizing the evaluations in the texts, it is determined what elements (objects, phenomena, themes) are presented as positive and which serve as appeals for the readers of the tourism marketing materials.

In order to distinguish such statements in the text, it is important to know how they can be realized. An evaluative element in a statement can be formed with various word classes: in the attribute in the form of an adjective (e.g. good) or a noun phrase (e.g. a bad book); as a verb (instead of he was a coward, one can say he chickened out); or as an evaluative adverb (The author has put this book together dreadfully). Regarding a sentence type, the evaluative statement can also be expressed as an exclamation (What a wonderful book! instead of This book is wonderful).

The desirability or undesirability in the statements may take a variety of lexical forms, and estimate other qualities of an object (e.g. this is a useless book). The words have complex evaluative meanings, and in this case, (un)desirability is assumed and determined by context and

the discourse, within which they are used. Lastly, evaluations can be expressed on a “scale of intensity” (White, 2001, in Fairclough, 2003). Evaluative adjectives, adverbs and verbs cluster in semantic sets, in which terms range by the degree of expressiveness (“I like/love/adore this book” – this example also belongs to a subtype of evaluations, statements with affective mental process verbs mentioned below).

In addition, Fairclough distinguishes three adjacent types of evaluative statements: statements with deontic modalities, statements with affective mental process verbs and value assumptions. By using statements with deontic (obligational) modalities the speaker explicitly suggests taking action based on certain values and asserts its desirability. Such statements take the form of imperative (Open the window) or include modal verbs (You should/must/allowed to open the window). Statements with affective mental process verbs allow the speaker explicitly express his/her subjective opinion, through the respective choice of the verb (e.g. I like/hate this book).

Assumed values are the type of evaluation in which the value component is not expressed directly, but rather implicitly. Assumptions are “the implicit meanings of texts” (2003, p.212). This means that values are assumed, more deeply integrated into the text, comparing to the other types of evaluations. The discursive meaning of the statements is derived through the more complex mental process. The author provides the example: the statement “this book helps to . . .”, is likely to convey positive evaluation. Less obvious are the assumptions based on interactants’ (shared) familiarity with certain implicit value systems, or discourses.

2.4. Research questions

Based on the theoretical grounds outlined above, including the definition of destination branding, characteristics and practical use of tourism discourse; and the method of discourse analysis, which is based on identification of ideological weight of the text through the evaluative statements in it (Fairclough’s, 2003), the following main research question was formulated:

Which ideologies underly the discourse of publications on the official website of Vietnam National Administration of Tourism?

The investigation of the problem is approached through two sub-questions:

- 1) *Which elements of the destination are presented as values for tourists, according to the positive evaluations in the website texts?*
- 2) *How are these values presented, in regard to the narrative characteristics?*

3. Method

This section introduces the material that was selected for the research – the nine publications on Vietnam National Administration of Tourism official website and shows how the corpus of texts was compiled. Next, it provides insight into the research procedure and explains how the theoretical framework discussed in the previous chapter was applied to the investigation: namely, it justifies the choice of discourse analysis based on the recognition of evaluative statements (Fairclough, 2003) as the relevant and applicable method for this research case.

3.1. Material

The research material was taken from the website section “Places to go”, which is divided in accordance with the country’s regions: Northern, Central and Southern Vietnam. These web pages contain articles about the cities found in each geographical region, for instance, Ha Noi, Mai Chau, Sapa etc. in Northern Vietnam; Da Nang, Da Lat and Hoi An in Central Vietnam; Ho Chi Minh City, Mekong Delta and Phu Quoc in Southern Vietnam (see Figure 1).

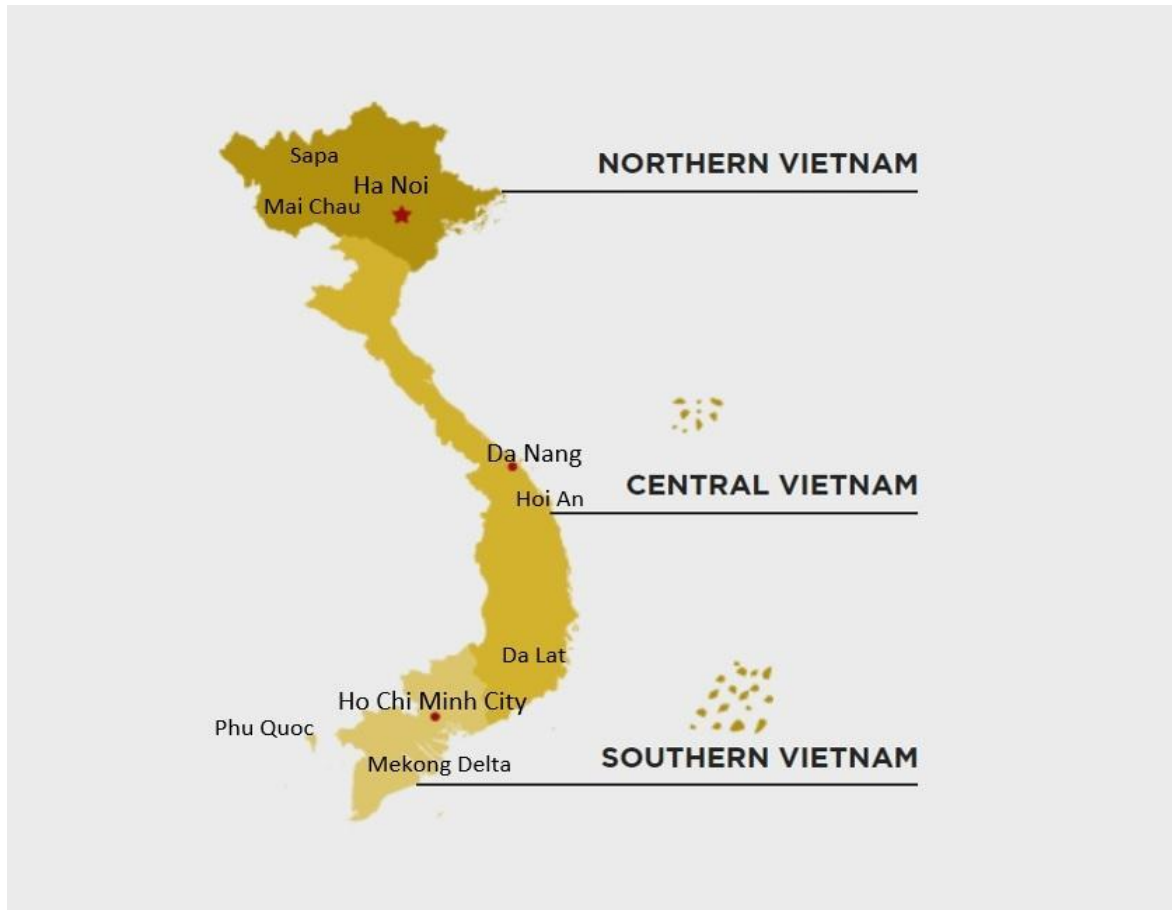


Figure 1. The Map of Vietnam, adapted from <https://vietnam.travel/place-to-go>. Copyright (2016) Official Website Vietnam Tourism.

Due to the limited time available, the whole website content, the articles concerning each city of Vietnam cannot be involved in the examination. Therefore, the publications covering one city per each region were chosen as the material for this research: Ha Noi, Da Nang, and Ho Chi Minh City, respectively. This approach allows for even inspection of all three regions of Vietnam. On the website, the selected cities are highlighted as the major tourist destinations, thus, they are of primary interest for visitors. Given that, the researcher assumes that the selected material provides sufficient data for the comprehensive study. In addition, the researcher admits, that visual aspects, such as images and web pages layout are important for cultural representation research; however, the present study is primarily focused on the writing strategies in destination branding, and employs the method of discourse analysis. In order to investigate the ideological weight of

images, a different research method would be required. For these reasons, only textual data derived from the website materials is examined.

After reviewing the website content within the chosen sections, the equivalent articles per each of the three cities were taken. Based on the similarities in structure, concepts, and thematic orientation, the following types of articles were selected per each city:

1) General overviews of the destinations (1, 4, 7 in Appendix 1). These articles serve as a starting page for each city's subsection, give basic information on such topics as areas and main landmarks of the place, local food, art and culture, transportation, weather, and recommend itineraries for potential tourists.

2) Itineraries: "Perfect Weekend" (in Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh) and "Three Perfect Days in Da Nang" (2, 5, 8 in Appendix 1). These articles represent daily and hourly schedules for possible tours visitors may make. These conveniently developed plans are intended to help travelers efficiently manage the time of their stay and orient themselves in an unfamiliar city. Detailed information is provided on the matters, most frequently sought after by tourists, including landmarks, sights, attractions and food.

3) "My Vietnam" (3, 6, 9 in Appendix 1). Through these publications, the researcher examines the representation of each destination in the local, insider perspective, as the articles take the form of interviews with natives of Ha Noi, Da Nang, and Ho Chi Minh City. Moreover, two of the interviewees had experience of long-term residing in Western countries, and one of the interviewees has lived and worked in various locations all over Vietnam. This is deemed particularly advantageous because such experience might enable the respondents to critically reflect on their native cities, salient features and particularities of the local cultures.

The texts taken from the website publications, which are selected as the research materials, are presented in Appendix 1. They are labeled with a number 1 to 9 - this numeration is used for visual clarity and linking the findings in Appendix 2 to the source texts. The types of articles are not specified in the analysis results section. The three specific article types described above were

used for the compilation of the corpus: they are present on the webpage of each city and their general outline is unified. Therefore, they are believed to provide an equal amount of data for each city in the case. In this study, the subject is the overall representation and branding of the country as a destination, therefore, the corpus of publications is considered as a whole.

3.2. Procedure

The procedure of discourse analysis was approached in two steps, in conformity with the research subquestions. In the first step, the material was inspected in order to find positive evaluative statements (Fairclough, 2003). This step is justified by the fact, that evaluations in discourse serve as incentives for action. In the case of the destination marketing materials, the positively evaluated objects constitute the desired image of the place and encourage the reader to visit the destination. The detected evaluations were grouped and coded in accordance with the their objects. In the second step, attention was paid the narrative characteristics of the texts – how these objects are introduced to the target reader. Since the texts are tourism marketing materials, the findings of the first step were examined in light of tourism discourse theory (Urry, 1990). Through these steps, the strategic use of the language is specified, in regards to its purpose and the target audience. In more detail, the research procedure is described below.

First, as soon as the corpus of texts was collected and organized, the aim was to discover, *which elements of the destination are presented as values for tourists, according to the positive evaluations in the website texts.* For this purpose, the following strategy in discourse analysis was undertaken. The texts were examined to detect the linguistic devices which form positive evaluative statements in light of Fairclough's discourse analysis (2003). Since the purpose of marketing materials is to promote an appealing image of the destination, the researcher focused on the lexical tools and thereby formed semantic structures which convey only positive evaluations in the texts. The tools and structures are, for instance, emphatic adjectives which describe objects, noun phrases or verbs, or complete sentences. These elements are reviewed as explicit and implicit evaluations, following Fairclough's classification. These included evaluative statements as a

general kind, and the additional types, such as statements with deontic modalities, statements with affective mental process verbs and implicit value assumptions.

Once the explicit and implicit evaluations were detected throughout the entire corpus and listed, they were reviewed and grouped according to their thematic orientation. The thematic groups were coded as follows: “natural landscape and cityscape”, “places of livelihood and solitude”, “heritage and modernity”, “local production: art, museums and shopping”, “portrayal of local people” and “food and drinks”. At this stage, it was determined what objects (places, facts, phenomena) are positioned in the texts as the most interesting and attractive for tourists. In other words, these are the values of the destination. The evaluated objects constitute a positive image of Vietnam. Thus, this part responds to the first research question. The illustrative fragments of the texts that contain these positive evaluations are presented in the tables in Appendix 2, in accordance with the groups to which they were assigned.

Next, the second research subquestion was addressed: *How are these values presented, in regard to the narrative characteristics?* This step of the research process examines the narrative features of the discourse of the selected marketing publications. The use of narratives is predicated on a number of factors. Among these are the author’s intent, the goal which the text helps to achieve, the settings of the communicative act and the target audience. Taking these factors into consideration, it was determined that the language of the publications corresponds to the canons of tourism discourse delineated in academic literature. More specifically, the framework of the tourist gaze (Urry, 1990) proved to be fully applicable to this case: the thematic groups (compiled in the first step) were inspected against the theory of the language of tourism, and subsequently allocated among the three types of objects of tourist gaze, according to Urry’s classification: (1) Objects of the romantic versus collective tourist gaze was applicable to the groups “natural landscape and cityscape” and “places of livelihood and solitude”; (2) Historical versus modern objects corresponded to the groups “heritage and modernity”, “local production: art, museums and shopping”; (3) Authentic or inauthentic objects involved the groups “portrayal of local people”

and “food and drinks”. Testing the findings of the first step of the research (the values of the destination) against the theory of tourism discourse (the ways they are presented to the reader) demonstrated how the language of the publications is tooled for the marketing purpose. The distinctive feature of tourism discourse is that it aims to woo and lure the readers, and this is achieved through the use of specific rhetoric forms which in essence, modify and attune the reality. Finally, in the discussion section, the findings of the two stages of the research were summarized in order to find the answer to the main question: *Which ideologies underly the discourse of publications on the official website of Vietnam National Administration of Tourism?* As was mentioned previously, the author’s linguistic choices convey specific values and beliefs, and subsequently, ideological meaning to the readers. An underlying ideology in a text establishes rapport between the author and the target audience, as it refers to their shared beliefs. It is what imbues the text with the discursive power, due to its ability to influence the readers’ perspectives. Therefore, underlying ideologies allow the author to fulfill of the communicative goals through the discourse.

4. Results

The research was approached in two steps, following the two research subquestions. This section outlines the findings in detail and thus answers to the subquestions.

4.1. Positive evaluations and destination values

Which elements of the destination are presented as values for tourists, according to the positive evaluations in the website texts?

After a range of statements that contain positive evaluations was detected throughout the corpus, the six groups were created. The groups were assembled thematically, in accordance with the evaluated objects. These objects are the world realia, such as objects, places or people, which can be encountered during a visit, and they are presented to the readers as the values of the destination. These depictions are the components of the positive image of the destination. They give the readers a perspective onto what they can see and experience in Vietnam, and generate

their interest in the destination. The complete lists of evaluations per each thematic group can be found in Appendix 2. Below, some examples will be used to illustrate how the positive evaluations constitute the elements of the destination image – the values of the destination. In the examples, the explicit evaluative components and implicit discursive elements of statements are italicized.

4.1.1. Natural landscape and cityscape

A significant number of positive evaluations in the texts concerned the depictions of natural or city sights. The nature as one of the values in the image of Vietnam can be noticed in evaluative statements as “The 17-km shoreline makes for a *fantastic* cycling route” and “The view over the city is as *magnificent* as you might expect, with the Han River, the East Sea and the Son Tra Peninsula stretching out *majestically* before you”. Evaluative statements with deontic modalities such as “*Grab* some binoculars, hire a motorbike, and *head out* for a day of wildlife spotting” explicitly encourage readers to visit the country and do possible tourist activities in nature. For the statements with affective mental process verbs, exemplary is the fragment that promotes the Vietnamese seaside “I *would go* to the beach... I *love* to dance, so the perfect night out is a dancing event at a bar by the beach”. Statements with assumed values perform this function implicitly: in the example “you'll be *rewarded* by views of deserted beaches and jungle-clad slopes”, the element “rewarded” points on the positive evaluation of the landscape.

Regarding the cityscape, the evaluative statements such as “Hanoi is particularly *beautiful* in May when its many trees come into bloom – orange, white, purple and red flowers elevate the already *beguiling* street scenes to another level” use expressive adjectives to explicitly demonstrate the advantages of city sights. Through the statements with deontic modalities, the reader is invited for a visit: “To fully immerse yourself, *grab* a map to *explore*. Or *jump* in a cyclo and *take a tour*”. Statements with affective mental process verbs demonstrate the city spots that the locals would recommend: “For rooftop bars I *like* Lighthouse in District 1”. Statements with assumed values also create a positive image. Such statement as: “Vibrating with energy, innovation and traffic – lots of traffic... A freewheeling, *cosmopolitan metropolis*, HCMC's *dynamic cityscape* draws

together old and new Vietnam” provides an illustrative description of the urban landscape and shows that these features make the city distinct and special.

4.1.2. Places of livelihood and solitude

Among both natural and urban sites of all three cities, the two kinds of sites appeared to be of value. Tourists are either invited to experience the “buzz” of big cities and popular crowded places or to escape the crowds and enjoy the tranquility of less visited hidden locations. The examples of the places of livelihood that have received positive evaluations are found in the statements “It’s really *fun, and noisy*”, “Ho Chi Minh City *is bursting at the seams* with *enticing* experiences for travelers”. Statements with deontic modalities give the reader a full insight into the atmosphere of such places and attract their interest: “*soak up* the invigorating rhythm of life, with everything from open air aerobics to laughing yoga ringing across the waters”, “*Rise* early and *enjoy* the buzz of My Khe beach”. Statements with affective mental process verbs share the views of local people on popular places with the reader “I *love* my city and there are so many exciting things to do”. In the following example, the evaluation is created through the comparison of Vietnamese and another foreign culture, where the Vietnamese culture is presented as distinctly positive and exciting: “I *love* the excitement of the city. A few years ago, I studied overseas and what I missed the most was the craziness, the colourful life in Asia... That’s what I *love* about it: the excitement, the energy, the craziness”. Statements with assumed values do not contain the explicit emphatic words, but still, express positive evaluations implicitly within the context: “much of the beach still belongs to the *people* who make it their playground, gym, and source of *livelihood*”, “a sensory *overload* for the eyes, ears and nose... in a far-flung corner the clang of a blacksmith’s hammer mingles with a mobile fruit seller’s call”.

In contrast to crowded, noisy areas, the places of solitude attract visitors with their tranquility and offer the travelers an opportunity to rest and contemplate on the surroundings in separation. For instance, in the evaluative statement such as “These *off-the-beaten track havens* are a *wonderful* place to find a sense of calm within the city”, the noun phrase and the adjective refer

to the peacefulness as the value of the place. Statements with deontic modalities “the *less-visited* Truc Bach and West Lake shouldn’t be missed”, “After exploring the local markets, make a *peaceful pilgrimage* to Thien Hau Pagoda, or Chu Van Phat Temple”, encourage the readers to look beyond popular city tours and visit less crowded sites. Statements with affective mental process verbs reflect the natives’ preferences for calmer places: “One of my favourite places in Ho Chi Minh City is Thien Hau Pagoda... When I arrive there *I find myself really calm*, quiet and peaceful, in the middle of the city”. Statements with assumed values implicitly propose the benefits of such places, namely, the opportunity to stay undisturbed for a while to contemplate “You’ve got this noise and energy out there, but at the same time you find little corners that are *calm enough* to look at yourself and your thoughts”.

4.1.3. Local production: art, museums and shopping

The analysis of evaluations in the destination marketing materials demonstrated that the local production (including art scene, visiting museums, and shopping for local goods) is a common point of interest among tourists. Thus, such destination-specific objects and related activities serve as the incentive for traveling. The general evaluative statements create a positive portrayal of the sites with the emphatic adjectives: “Hanoi has long had a reputation as Vietnam’s art capital, with the *elegant* Fine Arts Museum housing the country’s *foremost* collection”; “The streets and alleys branching off of Dong Khoi are packed with all kinds of *fascinating* stores”. Statements with deontic modalities introduce the readers to the activities they can participate in during the trip: “*Don’t miss* the Water Puppet theatre performance at 2 p.m.”; “*visit* the superb Cham Museum of Sculpture in Da Nang, home to the largest collection of Cham sculpture in the world”; “*Shop* small boutiques”. Statements with assumed values implicitly tell the readers why the sights should be visited. The adjective “popular” in the sentence “Dong Khoi, a *popular* shopping street” informs the readers that the goods at local shops are in high demand. The listing of museum items in “the museum draws together artefacts including *altars, lingas, garudas, apsaras, Ganeshas and images of Shiva, Brahma and Vishnu*, all dating from the 5th to the 15th

century” shows the richness and versatility of museum collections. Statements with affective mental process verbs were not found for this thematic group. They are mainly found in “My Vietnam” publications and require the specific sentence form – the first-person narrative. Therefore, the availability of such statements across the texts is comparatively limited.

4.1.4. Heritage and modernity

The cities of Vietnam, modern and actively developing now, at the same time reflect the country’s long history. The analysis of the descriptions of all cities demonstrated that one of the destination values, used as an appeal for potential visitors, is the intersection of heritage sites and objects of modernity. The evaluative statements in the texts prove this claim: “*amazing* images of the Old Town’s historic streets and the *gorgeous* countryside that surrounds the ancient port” and “it’s been growing and blooming very fast. It’s totally changed, in a different and *exciting* way”. In the sentence “There can be *tension* between the old and new, or it can be a *beautiful* relationship” the possible negativity (expressed with the noun “tension”) is dismissed with the use of the adjective “beautiful” containing positive evaluation. Statements with deontic modalities convey the recommendations for tourists, and these include visiting both objects of heritage and contemporary facilities: “*walk over* the historic Notre Dame Cathedral”, “*enjoy* a different perspective with few laps in one of the city’s excellent rooftop pools”. Statements with affective mental process verbs represent the local’s positive opinion regarding the modern development in the country and preserving the authentic history: “What *I’m proud of* is not only the speed of growth and development. What I’m *most proud of* is that there are things that are really Danang”. Statements with assumed values also imply that the combination of the historical and modern is a positive part in the country’s portrayal: through the interrogation in “Vietnam is changing so fast, you cannot bring the old back, so why not make something old, new?”, and implicit assumption in “HCMC’s dynamic cityscape draws together *old and new* Vietnam in the most compact of spaces, representing the city’s *past as well as its future*”.

4.1.5. Portrayal of local people

Interaction with the locals and observing the local life is an important part of travel experience. The analysis of the texts supported this claim. Each article contained a significant number of positive evaluations that created the portrayal of Vietnamese people. In the texts, the evaluative statements in the representation of local people were solely positive. The illustrative examples are: “With broad beaches, fantastic street food, the fabled Hai Van Pass, and a growing collection of cafes, restaurants, and bars, it’s no wonder the residents of Da Nang sport some of the *broadest smiles* in the country”, where the hyperbole in the adjective carries the discursive weight; and “Ho Chi Minh City really gives people this *positive* energy. People here are *generous, outgoing*, and welcome new ideas”, in which the adjectives give positive generalization to the population portrayal. Statements with deontic modalities encourage the reader to interact with people and eliminate the gap between the tourist and the local: “*Walk* on the streets, see families, the vendors, *sit down and have* a coffee. *Find* a local old lady, selling bread or something. *Ask* her anything and she will always find a way to communicate with you. *Eat* a banh mi and *have* a coffee right next to her. It truly feels like you’re a part of it”. Statements with explicitly evident affective mental process verbs were not found, however, through first-person narrative and the modality of the verbs, the following example from the interview article provides the reader with the insight into the local life, which is represented as positive - happy and problem free: “I go to a coffee shop with my family and friends. It’s Sunday so you can spend hours having a coffee and gossiping with friends. For lunchtime, I would go to the beach and relax at a nice restaurant, swim, eat some seafood. Sometimes I go to a waterfall, camping from lunch until sunset”. One of the examples of statements with assumed values is “you can *sit and hang out* with your friends, after breakfast before work” found in the local interviewee’s description of his daily activities. This phrase also creates an appealing image for tourists who, are typically looking for relaxation on their vacation.

4.1.6. Food and drinks

Culinary discourse, or “gastrolinguo” (Dann, 1996) prevails in tourism writing. The promotion of national cuisine and food traditions prove to be a popular destination marketing tool. Tourists are invited to indulge in local delights which cannot be found anywhere else. The culinary experience is thus equated to the whole cultural experience. The evaluative statements use stimulating adjectives such as: “a *tantalizing* Vietnamese buffet lunch”, and noun phrases such as “The banh mi, a light baguette... has become a *global icon*”, to expose the local cuisine in the most attractive way to the readers. Multiple evaluative statements within extensive descriptions bring in the exotic hue to the discourse: “Phở noodle soup is *king of cuisines* here, with steaming pots of its star anise-infused broth simmering on every corner; while every day, the *irresistible* scent of bún chả fills the air as barbecued pork sizzles over hot coals”. Statements with deontic modalities are intended to arouse the interest in potential visitors, showing that culinary experience is an inextricable part of the overall travel experience: “You're in Vietnam, so *don't miss* the chance to sample some of the city's famous dishes”; “*Hunker down* on a tiny plastic chair and *enjoy* a breakfast to remember”. The statements with affective mental process verbs are found in the interview-articles with native Vietnamese people. Showing the “insider’s” recommendation in terms of local food and drinks, such phrases intend to arouse the readers’ interest: “I *cannot get through* a day without my coffee”, “All the spots *I take* people to are food places”. Statements with assumed values demonstrate the close interrelation between the destination culture and the national cuisine: “It is by taking a seat and waiting as your coffee slowly filters that the Vietnamese capital can best be understood”, “The term ‘*di nhau*’ I think must be our national anthem in Danang. You go to a nice restaurant, eat a lot of food, drink a lot of beer, and talk all day long”.

4.2. Tourism discourse in destination marketing materials

How are these values presented, in regard to the narrative characteristics?

This part of the research analyzes the properties and characteristics of the narrative forms of the selected publications and determines how the specific ways of representation serve the

marketing goals. The texts were published by a DMO – Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, thus their purpose is not only informational, but also promotional. And the language of tourism helps to fulfill this task - lure and captivate the readers. The ways in which the values of the destination (found and classified in the first step) and presented for the readers were examined against the theoretical base of tourism discourse. In this regard, the concept of the “tourist gaze” (Urry, 1990) proved to be fully applicable in the case of this research: the thematic groups of values appeared to comply with the three types of objects of the tourist gaze, according to Urry’s classification. The values were allocated respectively: (1) Objects of the romantic versus collective tourist gaze: “natural landscape and cityscape” and “places of livelihood and solitude”; (2) Historical versus modern objects: “local production: art, museums and shopping” and “heritage and modernity” and (3) Authentic or inauthentic objects: “portrayal of local people” and “food and drinks”.

The review of theoretical literature showed that tourism discourses utilize symbols and associations in order to create a “place-myth”, which is the desired and not always realistic image of a touristic destination. The reality is confined to travel and leisure related themes and assumed interests of the Western tourists. This hypothesis has been tested by reviewing the presented values of the destination within the framework of tourism narratives. The results that correspond to this supposition are presented below.

4.2.1. Objects of the romantic versus collective tourist gaze: “natural landscape and cityscape” and “places of livelihood and solitude”

This type of gaze is based on the opposition: in the collective gaze, it is the people and the atmosphere of conviviality that make the site attractive. For the romantic gaze, in contrast, it is the tranquility and the opportunity to experience the journey in solitude. The manifestations of this category of gazes were found in the discourse of the group “natural landscape and cityscape”, in which the descriptions of both sites correspond to the two ways of “gazing”: the tourist can experience the haste and “buzz” of the big Asian cities or discover the pristine nature of Vietnam.

The group “places of livelihood and solitude” responds to the category directly, demonstrating the sites of the two kinds across different areas in the country, and also provides the locals’ equally positive views on the popular crowded locations like busy city streets and quieter places like temples and hidden cafes. Even though it is unknown, what readers are used to seeing in their everyday surroundings, all these elements are presented as exceptional and exotic.

4.2.2. Historical versus modern objects: “local production: art, museums and shopping” and “heritage and modernity”

This type of the tourist gaze, is focused on objects of the past (old, ancient, historical) or of the present (modern, new, futuristic objects). The two thematic groups of values fit this category. Describing the “local production”, the author involves the elements of history, as well as modernity in the discourse, aiming to attract the readers with various interests, from historical museums to modern boutiques. The same tendency was discerned in the group “heritage and modernity”, which contains the depictions of the touristic sites which belong to different epochs, and also shows the native people’s relationships with the traditions and their attitudes towards development. Both appear to be of importance: people are concerned about preserving their authentic traditions and heritage and at the same time support the development and modernization of the country. The value of heritage, and people’s adherence to traditions is highly emphasized; and even though a number of “modern” objects are described, the country is presented as balancing between the ancient traditions and comparatively recent development.

4.2.3. Authentic or inauthentic objects: “portrayal of local people” and “food and drinks”

Within the scope of this gaze, tourists are looking for a genuine experience of local life on their journey. Firstly, given that the essence of holidays is escaping mundanity, the country is represented as an ultimate holiday destination. This effect is achieved through the discourse that is primarily leisure-oriented. For instance, in the “portrayal of local people”, the joyfulness of residents is highly exaggerated, the descriptions of their daily tasks are simplified and confined to the activities, potentially interesting for tourists.

Secondly, the authentic perspective is peculiar in that it contrasts the routine everyday life to a new, extraordinary reality that one can experience in a new destination. By that, even the normal, familiar activities become extraordinary, “authentic” experiences, when they are done or gazed upon in different settings. Therefore, they form incentives to visit the destination. In the value-group of “food and drinks”, not only the people are depicted indulging in local delights as regularly as the holiday-maker would do, but also the very act of having a meal is rendered into a unique and “exotic” cultural experience.

5. Discussion

This section summarizes the results of the two steps of the research process and answers the main question: *Which ideologies underly the discourse of publications on the official website of Vietnam National Administration of Tourism?*

The ideologies are the main point of interest of this research for the reason that the ideological weight of the discourse is the main factor in the realization of the goals of the text. As was found in the theory of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995, 2003), the underlying ideologies in a text are what connects the author and the target audience, influences the readers’ views and generally gives the text its discursive power. In this research, the goal-oriented texts are the publications on the official website of Tourism Administration of Vietnam, the purpose of which is to attract a broad international audience and encourage readers to visit the destination.

For this purpose, the most positive image of the destination should be created and promoted. In the first step of the research, the constituents of the desired image of the country, the realia, actual objects, which tourists can encounter and observe in Vietnam, were determined. The method of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003) was used to find these objects, based on positive evaluative statements throughout the corpus of texts. Positive evaluation indicates that the objects are presented as the values of the destination. These values were grouped and nominated as: “natural landscape and cityscape” (for instance, “shoreline makes for a *fantastic* cycling route” and “a freewheeling, *cosmopolitan metropolis*”); “places of livelihood and solitude” (such as “the

craziness, the colourful life in Asia” and “*off-the-beaten track havens*”); “local production: art, museums and shopping” (“all kinds of *fascinating* stores” and “elegant Fine Arts Museum”); “heritage and modernity” (illustrative example is: “There can be *tension* between the old and new, or it can be a *beautiful* relationship”); “portrayal of local people” (“People here are *generous, outgoing*”); “food and drinks” (“a *tantalizing* Vietnamese buffet lunch”).

Secondly, the characteristics of the narrative form were examined, that allow the author to represent the destination in the desired way, in other words, create the mental construct of its identity in the reader’s mind (Morgan, et al. 2011). Given the context and purpose of the texts (tourism marketing), the results of the first step were analyzed against the most common framework of tourism narratives - the three types of the tourist gaze (Urry, 1990). This step had the following outcomes.

“Objects of the romantic versus collective tourist gaze” describe the natural or urban sites which a tourist can visit. Even though similar environments (forests, beaches and city streets) can exist even in the readers’ home countries, the tourism narratives represent them as exceptional in Vietnam. The texts are imbued with expressive descriptions, which are supposed to arouse the readers’ interest: The view over the city is as *magnificent* as you might expect, with the Han River, the East Sea and the Son Tra Peninsula stretching out *majestically* before you”.

The category of “Historical versus modern objects” gives vivid images of cultural artifacts to the reader, for instance, art, architecture, historical objects: “*amazing* images of the Old Town’s historic streets”. The modern facilities are also described, but to a lesser extent, and still in a way that would woo the reader: “HCMC’s dynamic cityscape draws together *old and new* Vietnam”.

The third category, “Authentic versus inauthentic objects is intended to give insight into the “genuine”, unchanged culture. The language of tourism presents any object as “authentic” and unique when it is gazed upon in unusual settings, such as during a visit to another country (Urry, 1990). In the analyzed texts, people are viewed as the destination peculiarities rather than individuals and actual society, equal to the observer, and all the daily activities such as having a

meal are promoted as exceptional local experience: “the residents of Da Nang sport some of the *broadest smiles* in the country”, “the banh mi, a light baguette... has become *a global icon*”.

The results reveal a strong correlation between the discourse of the publications and the “exotic narratives” described in the literature. Exoticism mostly focuses on cultural manifestations, which can be art, national cuisine, daily activity of the population (Taylor, 2007). The specific features of exotic narratives are the theme of “voyage” and the romanticizing of the “other” (Barnes, 2014; Dann, 1996). The first feature refers to the traveler’s desire to discover a new and different world. In the same line, the publications on the tourism website cater to the readers’ interest in Vietnam as a tourist destination. Further, the academic literature on exotic narratives states that the “voyage” can be spatial, temporal, social, or a combination of these. This can be aligned with the three types of gaze (Urry, 1990) – romantic or collective for spatial travel; historical or modern for the temporal; and authentic or inauthentic for the social. Tourism texts are a type of exotic narratives and typically speak in “positive and glowing terms”, which has been noticed in the ways the elements of the destination are presented (Dann, 1996, p. 65). Thus, they display the second feature of exoticism – romanticizing of the “other”. The elements of the “exotic” world are “arousing” and characterized by their “spice of life” and novelty (Endicott, 1984). Exotic narratives, as well as tourism texts, ignore the mundanity, routine, and problems of real life. These discourses modify and embellish reality.

Another tendency detected in the tourism discourse of the website publications is the simplification of the cultural portrait of the country. The representation of various objects of tourist gaze was confined to leisure-related themes or traditionalism of the locals. The objects of “Romantic versus Collective gaze” are mainly the places in the city or in the nature, where people can spend their vacation or free time (“*I would go to the beach... I love to dance, so the perfect night out is a dancing event at a bar by the beach*”). “Historical versus Modern objects” category involves the cultural heritage of the country and people’s adherence to traditions. The objects of modernity are also described. However, there is still a strong emphasis on people’s concern to

preserve the traditional Vietnamese culture and heritage (“What *I’m proud of* is not only the speed of growth and development. What I’m *most proud of* is that there are things that are really Danang”). The category of “Authentic or inauthentic” objects is illustrative. It omits any aspects of the reality, that are potentially irrelevant for a holiday-maker. The local people are depicted only in positive terms and in leisure settings (“you can *sit and hang out* with your friends, after breakfast before work”). In regards to the food, the traditional cuisine is positioned as the first choice for the locals. International and modern restaurants are mentioned briefly compared to the national cuisine that is described in abundance (“You’re in Vietnam, so *don’t miss* the chance to sample some of the city’s famous dishes”). The observed simplification of the culture resonates with the concept of “primitivism”, that is integral to “exotic narratives”. In this discourse, primitivism simplifies the observed culture, people and their lives, in comparison to the viewer’s habitual settings (Rhodes, 1995); and also places such aspects of cultural representation as local traditions and heritage to the forefront.

Specific discursive strategies are used in the texts of the publications to construct the image of the destination, or to conduct the two core processes of destination branding – identification of the destination image and its differentiation from the competitors (Kotler and Keller, 2012). The way to fascinate the readers is to contrast the assumptive image of their home countries to the image of the travel destination. In the discourse, the distinction between the two worlds is drawn by means of exoticization of the destination country (including viewing the local life through the lens of primitivism concept). Summing up the findings of the two steps, it can be concluded that the ideological relations between the West and East – the ideology of Orientalism (Said, 1991), come to the fore in the discourse. This concept proved to be applicable to the present case, first of all, because the website promotes the Eastern country, Vietnam, as a destination, target the Western audience. Secondly, the examination of the narrative characteristics of the discourse revealed distinct orientation to the westerner’s view on the exotic foreign destination. Orientalism puts the cultures into opposition in terms of the geographical location, as well as cultural features.

The initial goal of orientalism discourse is to acquaint the Western observer with the Eastern culture. For this purpose, this discourse constructs the identity of the “Other” that would be apprehensible for the reader (observer) and creates an image that would display the differences between the two worlds.

6.1. Conclusion

The purpose of destination branding is to construct and promote such an image of the destination, that would fascinate the readers and motivate them to visit the country. An established image reflects the cultural identity of the destination, recognized by the broad audience of international readers. Thereby, the destination-brand is created, the attractiveness of which directly pre-determines the development of the tourism sector in the country. Vietnam, in particular, has experienced a considerable increase in the number of international visitors within the recent decade. Therefore, it is assumed, that the destination branding strategies of the National Administration of Tourism, as the main DMO of Vietnam, prove to be efficient. The main practical objective of this research was to provide an academic explanation of the effective writing strategies in destination branding, particularly, in the case of official websites of a tourism authority - Vietnam National Administration of Tourism. The research examined the textual material of nine promotional web-publications.

The investigation was approached through the question: *Which ideologies underly the discourse of publications on the official website of Vietnam National Administration of Tourism?* The method of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003), which identifies the ideological weight of the text through the incorporated values, appeared to be the most relevant for this study. The author of the method suggests that discourses are the specific ways in which the world phenomena are represented in a goal-specific text. The ideologies which the text conveys allow the author to realize the goals through the text – they establish rapport between the author and the audience and operate with the readers’ views and motivations. The discourse and the underlying ideologies are inextricably linked with the socio-cultural settings of the communication and have to be analyzed

within the context of these relations. Since the destination-branding materials serve a concrete goal (cultural representation of Vietnam and its promotion as a tourist destination), operate with people's worldviews and demands and establish connection and relationship between different societies and cultures, the chosen method of discourse analysis is the most applicable in the current case.

The outcomes of this study explain the efficient discursive strategies in destination image construction, which can find further practical use in destination marketing. To define, how the desired destination image is created in the discourse, the research focused on the properties of the narrative strategies. The classification of "objects of tourist gaze" (Urry, 1990) created a base of the analysis. According to the author of the theory, this typical form of travel-writing implies the reader's active cognitive involvement, rather than passive consumption of the given information. Destination marketing materials indeed invoke an active cognitive process in the readers: perception, apprehension and evaluation, and decision making (visiting the destination). Ideologies shared between the author and the reader and conveyed through the discourse facilitate this process.

The analysis of the tourism discourse of website publications indicated that orientalism (with its adjacent concepts such as exoticism and primitivism) is the primary underlying ideology in the website publications. It can be claimed, however, that texts promoting so-called "occident", western countries may display similar characteristics to the texts which market Vietnam. Yet, the concept of Orientalism reflects the ideological polarization between the West and the East, which includes geographical as well as a cultural aspect. In the same line, the website creates the image of the Eastern country for the Western reader and constructs the identity of the "other" with clearly outlined distinctive features. The positive evaluations detected throughout the corpus of texts emphasize the flair of Asian culture and display intrinsic exoticism. The illustrative examples can be: "views of deserted beaches and jungle-clad slopes" which describes the exotic nature sites in the country, "a sensory overload for the eyes, ears and nose... in a far-flung corner the clang of a

blacksmith's hammer mingles with a mobile fruit seller's call" which describes the scenery of the Asian city, and "the craziness, the colourful life in Asia" as a generalized description of the local culture. Thus, it can be concluded that the ideology of Orientalism, imbues the destination branding texts with the discursive power and allows DMO to market Vietnam as a destination-brand. This finding shows, that the concept initially developed in colonial literary discourses proves to be applicable to contemporary tourism writing. Moreover, it proves to be an effective discursive tool: it helps the author introduce the foreign culture to the readers and evoke their interest in it, which is essential for tourism marketing strategies. Therefore, the findings of this research can find further practical application in the tourism industry.

6.2. Limitations and suggestions for future research

During the research process, several noticeable limitations arouse, which could be taken into consideration for future studies. First, the method of discourse analysis presupposes a certain amount of subjectivity. It is the researcher who collects, assesses and interprets the data; therefore, the findings can be influenced by personal factors. Future research may utilize computer-based techniques, for instance, to determine the prevalent values on the base of keyword frequency. Second, due to the restricted time available for the research, the material selection was comparatively limited, amounting to nine website publications. Therefore, more expansive research can be suggested. The third limitation lies in the fact that the analysis was put onto two frameworks – Fairclough's (2003) discourse analysis based on evaluative statements and Urry's (1990) classification of objects of the tourist gaze. In addition, the study focused only on the textual data, while media publications are multimodal and include visual appeals. Pictures, photos, and videos, in fact carry substantial meaning and ideological weight. Further research can employ other frameworks in order to examine the case from a different perspective, and also involve broader different forms of material.

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Hanoi – Overview, URL: <https://vietnam.travel/places-to-go/northern-vietnam/ha-noi>

Ho Chi Minh City – Overview, URL: <https://vietnam.travel/places-to-go/southern-vietnam/ho-chi-minh>

My Da Nang: Mai Thùy Trâm, URL: <https://vietnam.travel/things-to-do/my-danang-mai-thuy-tram>

My Ha Noi: Maia Do, URL: <https://vietnam.travel/things-to-do/my-ha-noi-maia-do>

My HCMC: Nam Quan, URL: <https://vietnam.travel/things-to-do/my-hcmc-nam-quan>

Three Perfect Days in Da Nang, URL: <https://vietnam.travel/things-to-do/three-perfect-days-danang>

The Perfect weekend in Ha Noi, URL: <https://vietnam.travel/things-to-do/perfect-weekend-ha-noi>

The Perfect Weekend in HCMC, URL: <https://vietnam.travel/things-to-do/ho-chi-minh-city-itinerary>

Appendix 1 – Corpus of texts

(1) Ha Noi - Overview

Founded over 1000 years ago, Vietnam's capital city is rich in history, with the streets of its rambling Old Quarter dating back to the 14th century. Wandering these tree-lined lanes past crumbling colonial facades will transport you back in time. However, today's Hanoi is about much more than the past. The ancient city is being invigorated with modern cafes, world-class restaurants, and cool art galleries. When the sun goes down, you have your pick of watering holes, from sophisticated rooftop bars to buzzing *bia hoi*.

TOP THINGS TO DO IN HANOI:

Sample the street food

A wander around a morning market provides a tantalising hint of what you can expect to hit your table in Hanoi. For an authentic taste of Hanoi, look no further than the street kitchens of the Old Quarter. *Phở* noodle soup is king of cuisines here, with steaming pots of its star anise-infused broth simmering on every corner; while every day, the irresistible scent of *bún chả* fills the air as barbecued pork sizzles over hot coals. In recent years a growing band of superb international dining rooms have emerged, serving everything from contemporary tapas to fusion fare.

Stroll the Old Quarter

Hanoi's Old Quarter serves up a sensory overload for the eyes, ears and nose. Wisps of incense drift out onto streets from ancient temples painted a riot of reds and oranges, while in a far-flung corner the clang of a blacksmith's hammer mingles with a mobile fruit seller's call. To fully immerse yourself, grab a map to explore. Or jump in a cyclo and take a tour of this intoxicating maze of markets, street kitchens, shop houses, and more.

Explore Hanoi's cafe culture

It is by taking a seat and waiting as your coffee slowly filters that the Vietnamese capital can best be understood. Fast-paced on the surface, the true rhythm of city life is far from hurried. Alongside the thousands of coffee houses selling traditional Vietnamese coffee, an ever-growing band of unique coffee shops serve espressos and macchiatos in surroundings rivaling the world's coolest caffeine dens.

Check out the art scene

Hanoi has long had a reputation as Vietnam's art capital, with the elegant Fine Arts Museum housing the country's foremost collection, including ancient Cham artifacts and impressionist pieces. For something more contemporary, head for Manzi--an art space-cum-cafe--or the Vietnam Art Gallery. Both are top places to take the pulse of the city's art scene. Smaller gallery spaces include Nha San Collective at the up-and-coming Hanoi Creative City urban project.

Join the locals at Hoan Kiem Lake

Hoan Kiem lake rests at the heart of Hanoi and embodies the soul of the city. Every morning it comes alive with walkers, aerobics classes, badminton, ballroom dancers, and even a laughing

yoga group. It bursts back into life at sunset, and after dark, is again thronged with locals out to take the evening air. A little further north the lesser-visited Truc Bach and West Lake shouldn't be missed--their calm temples and lakeside cafes provide peaceful enclaves away from the buzz of downtown.

Ha Noi Itineraries

24 hours in Hanoi

Begin your day early with a wander around Hoan Kiem and soak up the invigorating rhythm of life, with everything from open air aerobics to laughing yoga ringing across the waters. After a breakfast *phở*, wander the streets of the Old Quarter before sampling the capital's staple lunch dish, *bún chả*. Visit the Women's Museum in the afternoon, then head to Summit Lounge for the best sunset views in town before crowning the day with dinner at Chim Sao.

48 hours in Hanoi

Plan an early morning visit to Cong Vien Thong Nhat, then head to the Museum of Fine Arts before refreshing with a drink at Manzi, for a rewarding morning of artistic exploration. In the afternoon go temple-hopping around West Lake, stopping at some of the many coffee and juice bars that surround it. For a Vietnamese dinner, dine at Quan An Ngon. Round out your 48 hours with a nightcap at Hanoi's coolest bar, Tadioto.

Ha Noi Weather

The climate is inviting from April to June, but Hanoi is particularly beautiful in May when its many trees come into bloom – orange, white, purple and red flowers elevate the already beguiling street scenes to another level. October and November are also excellent months to visit when temperatures are cooler.

Transport to Ha Noi

Hanoi is served by Noi Bai international airport as well as trains. A bus network links all major destinations within the country and international buses also link the capital with Laos.

(2) The Perfect weekend in Ha Noi

Discover the beauty of Vietnam's capital in less than 48 hours. From culinary highlights to architectural gems, historic sites to social enterprises, this two-day Hanoi itinerary will give you a well-rounded taste of Hanoi.

SATURDAY MORNING: EXPLORING OLD HANOI

9 a.m.: When in Hanoi, do as the Hanoians do: greet the morning with a steaming bowl of *phở*. While the northern iteration of this noodle soup is known for its simplicity, Pho Thin stands out from the crowd. For over 40 years, owner Nguyen Trong Thin has been serving up bowls of *phở* with a special flair. Unlike other shops, Thin stir-fries his beef flanks in garlic before adding them to the broth. This innovation has made his version of *phở* one of the most popular in Hanoi.

10 a.m.: Burn off the calories on a stroll around Hoan Kiem Lake. A 15th century legend says a giant turtle in the lake recovered the magical sword Emperor Ly Thai To used to defeat the Chinese. On the weekends, the roadways aroundlake are closed to vehicles, and on the northern side the picturesque Ngoc Son Temple sits on a small island.

11 a.m.: Give your feet a break and see the Old Quarter by way of cyclo, a type of pedal-powered rickshaw. If you're keen to do a little shopping, you'll find several enticing boutiques tucked away on Silk Street. An hour-long ride through the Old Quarter labyrinth will help you map out your nighttime affairs, as this neighbourhood is a prime spot for local libations.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON: IRRESISTIBLE HISTORY

1 p.m.: Make your way to the Sofitel Legend Metropole for a tantalizing Vietnamese buffet lunch at Spices Garden. The lunch will set you back VND780,000++, but the price is well worth the luxury and the chance to sample a wide variety of fantastic Vietnamese dishes. Afterwards check out the hotel's beautiful interiors, which have seen the likes of novelist Graham Greene, actor Charlie Chaplin and actress Angelina Jolie, to name a few.

TIP: For a less pricey lunch option with just as many options, take your pick from the stalls at the buzzing garden restaurant Nha Hang Ngon.

3 p.m.: You can't come to Hanoi and not see the Temple of Literature. Built in honour of Confucius, this is also the site of Vietnam's oldest university, established in 1076. Admire the traditional-style architecture, the pond dubbed "The Well of Heavenly Clarity" and a collection of ancient stone slabs inscribed with the names of exceptional scholars, all mounted on the backs of stone turtles. A pavilion, which houses a statue of Confucius and his four greatest disciples, lies in the furthest courtyard.

SATURDAY EVENING: LIKE A LOCAL

5 p.m.: Academic endeavours tend to work up an appetite. Fortunately, one of Hanoi's best restaurants is right around the corner. KOTO, which stands for "Know One, Teach One," is a social platform dedicated to transforming lives by providing vocational training to underprivileged youth. The wait staff are all trainees learning the ropes of the hospitality trade and all proceeds go directly to funding the charity.

7 p.m.: As night descends, head back to the intersection of Ta Hien and Luong Ngoc Quyen in the Old Quarter to experience the revelry of *bia hơi*. No need for signage as you'll immediately recognise "Bia Hoi Corner," a chaotic sight where pubs spill out onto the street in true Vietnamese fashion, clogging up the intersection. Park yourself on a little stool and order a glass of freshly brewed beer (15,000 VND) served straight from the barrels.

SUNDAY MORNING: HANOIAN TRADITIONS

8 a.m.: Kickstart day two with a brew unique to Hanoi, *cà phê trứng*, aka egg coffee. There's only one location to indulge in this frothy concoction: Giảng Cafe. The founding father of this

establishment is none other than the creator of the recipe himself, Nguyen Giang. Invented purely out of necessity, Giang's substitution of fresh milk with whisked eggs during French War food shortages birthed this famous hybrid. The recipe remains top secret.

9:30 a.m.: Quickly make your way to the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, an imposing marble stronghold situated in centre of the grandiose Ba Dinh Square. If you want a chance to see the embalmed body of Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam's revered communist political leader, dress modestly and be early: the last entry is slated at 10:15 a.m. If you're lucky, you'll see the spectacular display of the changing of the guard outside the mausoleum. Photography is strictly forbidden.

TIP: The mausoleum shuts down annually between September 4 to November 4, when the body is sent to Russia for upkeep. Plan accordingly.

11:30 a.m.: You can't come to Hanoi and not try *bún chả*. *Bún chả* became an overnight sensation after Anthony Bourdain and President Barack Obama lunched at Bun Cha Huong Lien on the show *No Reservations*. The "Obama Combo" includes *bún chả*, a side of *nem rán* (fried spring rolls) and an ice cold bottle of beer. Dump the cold rice vermicelli and the fresh herbs in the bowl of sweetened fish sauce.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON: CULTURAL SNAPSHOT

1:30 p.m.: Time for some ethnographic inquiry. On the outskirts of the city lies the Museum of Ethnology, about a 20-minute taxi drive from the city centre. A first class museum-going experience, the 40,000 VND (\$2 USD) ticket covers all areas on this three-part complex. The museum is dedicated to the traditions of Vietnam's 54 ethnic groups, and includes a garden with full-scale replicas, some relocated originals, and a museum devoted to Southeast Asia.

TIP: Don't miss the Water Puppet theatre performance at 2 p.m.

4:30 p.m.: On your way back to town, stop by at the enormous Tay Ho Lake, also known as West Lake. The 17-km shoreline makes for a fantastic cycling route. The Hanoi Bicycle Collective is your one-stop for bike rentals (60,000 VND for up to six hours.) The circumference of the lake is lined with hip cafes, ancient pagodas and picturesque gardens.

SUNDAY EVENING: A NEW PERSPECTIVE

7 p.m.: Conclude your Hanoian adventure at Highway 4. With four locations, quirky decor and an even quirkier menu, you won't be disappointed. Indulge in the local tipple, a Vietnamese spirit called *rượu*, made from sticky rice laced with herbs and spices. Hopefully, the liquor motivates you to try the adventurous items on the menu: chicken hearts, locusts, eel, buffalo and frog.

9 p.m.: Make your last view of Hanoi one from the top. A number of fantastic rooftop bars are sprinkled around the city, but for classy cocktails and a mesmerizing view, look no further than the cushy chairs at The Summit, on the top of Pan Pacific Hotel. *Cheers!*

(3) My Ha Noi: Maia Do

Maia Do is an art enthusiast, born and raised in Hanoi. After going abroad to the United States and the United Kingdom to study, she returned to Vietnam. Back home she fell accidentally into the capital's flourishing art scene, and led Sophie's Art Tour in Hanoi for several years. Here she shares her perspective on recent changes, tips for art lovers, and her favourite spots in the city.

What was it like growing up in Hanoi?

In the late 90s it was nothing like today. My grandma picked me up from kindergarten and primary school in a cyclo -- now you only see them with tourists in the Old Quarter! When my dad bought his first motorbike, it was a big deal. Now you see millions of them on the street.

On the roads it was a completely different scene. You'd walk along West Lake and there were no villas, no beautiful houses. It was just one giant lake with ponds and fields around it. I look back at family photos and think, 'Wait, where is this?' It looks nothing like today.

What do you think about the changes Hanoi has seen?

It's kind of weird, because we are living inside the change, sometimes we don't feel the pace of it. With technology coming in, people pick up things really fast. But then there are some people who refuse to change, and they preserve themselves in their bubble. You have things going really fast outside, and then people who want to keep things the old way.

Where do you take friends and family when they come to visit you?

All the spots I take people to are food places. For example, the other day I took a friend to Hòe Nhài where there's a *bít tết* place. *Bít tết* is a Vietnamese version of a fancy French beefsteak. *Bánh cuốn*, also on Hòe Nhài, is another really good dish to try. Then, of course, *bún chả*, either on Hàng Mành street, or next to Đồng Xuân market.

I also take people to Chim Sáo Restaurant, a traditionally themed restaurant. People dress in old-style peasant clothes and the restaurant is in a French villa. The food is amazing -- it's the sort of food we would make at home.

If you're an art lover coming to Hanoi, what should you know?

The art scene in Hanoi at the moment is split into different groups. Depending on what you want to see, you can reach out to that particular group. If you want to see contemporary art, installations and videos, there are places like Art Vietnam and Manzi. If you want to purchase a piece, then Apricot Gallery and Green Palm Gallery are the big galleries in town, and represent a huge range of artists.

Where can people easily learn more about Vietnamese art?

The fine arts museum is a good place to start because it shows you the entire history: the old, traditional craftsmanship up until the colonial times, when the French brought fine art to Vietnam, and when it changed to propaganda art during war time. The way the museum is curated is chronological, so you can see the whole history of Vietnamese art, as well as changes in style and content.

What are some of your favourite cafés in Hanoi?

I like to take people to classic places, such as Đinh Café. Đinh is on the second floor of an old French house that looks out onto Hoan Kiem lake. It's a really nice place to see the old Vietnamese style, it's kinda smokey and mystical and the drinks are amazing.

I also love the hidden cafés, like Pho Co Café at 11 Hàng Gai street. Nola Café is also really cool. There's a gallery on top now -- from the top you can look down into the oldest house on the street.

Do you feel like there is tension between old and new Hanoi?

There can be tension between the old and new, or it can be a beautiful relationship. I believe people are leaning more towards the beautiful connection rather than tension. I think in a way, because Vietnam is changing so fast, you cannot bring the old back, so why not make something old, new? Make it a part of our lives again -- just improved or a level up -- then it becomes something new and unique.

(4) Da Nang – Overview

With broad beaches, fantastic street food, the fabled Hai Van Pass, and a growing collection of cafes, restaurants, and bars, it's no wonder the residents of Da Nang sport some of the broadest smiles in the country. Da Nang is a true beach city. The warm sands of My Khe Beach sweep south from the mountainous Son Tra Peninsula. Da Nang hosts some of Vietnam's top luxury resorts, but much of the beach still belongs to the people who make it their playground, gym, and source of livelihood.

TOP THINGS TO DO IN DA NANG:

Enjoy the beach

In the early morning there is a palpable sense of positive energy in Da Nang. It's impossible not to feel the buzz of Da Nang life and be swept along with it, so be sure to set the alarm clock early at least once on your stay. Along the shore, fishermen sell the day's catch, football and volleyball matches spring up all around, and people jog, stroll or simply relax as the morning breeze kicks up and waves wash the sands.

See the Son Tra Peninsula

The Son Tra Peninsula strikes out into the ocean, its densely forested hillsides are home to rhesus macaques, long-tailed macaques, pygmy lorises, and the endangered red shanked douc langur -- one of the world's most striking primates. Grab some binoculars, hire a motorbike, and head out for a day of wildlife spotting.

Learn about Cham culture

A couple of hours outside of Da Nang lies My Son Sanctuary, a UNESCO-listed complex of abandoned temples dating from the 4th to the 14th century. Hidden among the jungle, some towers are overgrown and many are in ruin, but enough remains to whisk you back in time. To learn more about Cham culture, visit the superb Cham Museum of Sculpture in Da Nang, home to the largest collection of Cham sculpture in the world.

Dine on street food

Da Nang is a dream destination for foodies, with scores of seafront eateries serving every night of the week. Banh mi—the Vietnamese baguette—is taken to a new level here. Mi quang is another delight and every Da Nang local will offer an opinion on where to find the best. Each bowl features yellow rice noodles, pork, shrimp, and a flavour-infused broth topped off with chopped peanuts, quail eggs and plenty of fresh herbs.

Plan a daytrip

Marble Mountains, a collection of five outcrops topped with atmospheric pagodas, is a rewarding daytrip from Da Nang. Not far away, Ba Na Hills has made a comeback in recent years thanks to a record-breaking 5km cable car that rises almost 1,300m from sea level. The view across the mountain and jungles from the cable car is spectacular, but the fun begins at the top with an alpine coaster, funicular railway, 18-hole golf course and more.

Drive the Hai Van Pass

Hai Van Pass is one of the finest stretches of coastal road anywhere in Vietnam. Climbing for 9km out of Danang, you'll be rewarded by views of deserted beaches and jungle-clad slopes. The descent on the other side leads to the Lang Co lagoon, where floating restaurants will be happy to serve you a fresh seafood lunch.

Da Nang Itineraries

24 hours in Da Nang

Rise early and enjoy the buzz of My Khe beach before a ride out onto the Son Tra Peninsula in search of primates. Escape the afternoon sun at the Museum of Cham Sculpture then head for a sundowner at Sky 36.

48 hours in Da Nang

With an extra 24 hours choose from a cultural visit to the UNESCO-listed My Son Sanctuary, a road trip over the stunning Hai Van Pass coastal road, or a ride in a record breaking 5km long cable car up to the fantasy theme park of Ba Na Hills.

Da Nang Weather

Danang is a great destination nearly year round. The best months to visit are from March to May and September to October, when the weather is warm and crowds minimal. June - August is prime time for local tourists; it's very hot then but very little rain and the sea is clear and calm.

Transport to Da Nang

The Danang International Airport has a number of daily connections from Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, as well as other major cities in Vietnam. There are also a growing number of international connecting flights from Hong Kong, Cambodia, South Korea, Japan, China, Bangkok, and Singapore.

(5) The Three Perfect Days in Da Nang

With world-class leisure, heritage attractions allied to a laid-back ethos and an impressive dining scene, it's easy to wile away a few days in Central Vietnam's biggest city.

DAY ONE

9 a.m.: Wake up early and catch a cab or ride a motorbike up to the summit of Nui Son Tra (Monkey Mountain) to catch the stupendous views of My Khe Beach to the south and the Hai Van Pass to the north. The turn-off to the road up the mountain is about 3 km before Tien Sa Port (Cang Tien Sa) and is marked by a blue sign that reads 'Son Tra Ecotourism.' If you've got time to spare, drive all the way around the Son Tra Peninsula on the new coastal road. The scenery is spectacular.

11 a.m.: By the time you head back to town, you'll be ready for a coffee fix. The Vietnamese can mix it with the best of them when it comes to caffeine consumption. Local coffee shops such as Happy Heart and Cong Caphe serve up the potent, almost chocolaty native brew at criminally low prices.

After coffee, it is possible to squeeze in most of Danang's top sightseeing attractions. From the centre of town, it is an easy walk to the Museum of Cham Sculpture along D Tran Phu. The walk will take you past Danang Cathedral, a candy-pink edifice constructed by the French colonial authorities back in 1923 that serves the city's sizeable Catholic community. The Cham Museum itself is a must for history buffs. Danang was once the capital of the Hindu Champa Dynasty, which once dominated Central Vietnam, and the museum draws together artefacts including altars, lingas, garudas, apsaras, Ganeshas and images of Shiva, Brahma and Vishnu, all dating from the 5th to the 15th century.

1.30 p.m.: Time for lunch. The imperial cuisine of nearby Hue may be more renowned but Danang has a few interesting staples of its own. Try mi quang, a delicious local dish made with yellow noodles, pork, half a hard-boiled egg and sautéed shrimp, chilli and peanuts, and garnished with fresh herbs.

2.30 p.m.: After lunch take a taxi to the Marble Mountains, five craggy marble outcrops topped with pagodas just out of town on the road to Hoi An. Thuy Son is the most famous of the five mountains with a number of natural, and bat-infested, caves in which first Hindu and later Buddhist sanctuaries have been made over the centuries.

7 p.m.: After laying your head down for a while at the hotel, take a short cab into the city for dinner at Fat Fish. Danang's dining scene got a hefty shot in the arm with the recent opening of this stellar venue. Marrying Asian flavours with Mediterranean traditions and produce from exemplary sources, the restaurant shines with its delicate salads and succulent smoked meats.

DAY TWO

8 a.m.: Start the day with some self-improvement by heading to Hoi An for a crash course in photography with French travel photographer Etienne Bossot. His workshops aim to give travellers the tools to capture amazing images of the Old Town's historic streets and the gorgeous countryside that surrounds the ancient port.

1 p.m.: Competition in Hoi An is not limited to the tailors vying for the right to clothe you. There's a tastier battle being fought over the identity of the town's best banh mi (Vietnamese filled baguette). The banh mi, a light baguette stuffed with a combination of fillings that can include anything from grilled pork to canned sardines in tomato sauce, has become a global icon, and Hoi An's versions are particularly legendary. Celebrity chef Anthony Bourdain waxes lyrical about the version at Phuong Banh Mi near the town's main market. Others yield more to the alchemy of Madam Khanh, the "Banh Mi Queen" of Hoi An, who serves up her magic from a stall on Tran Cao Van Street.

3 p.m.: My Khe Beach near the city remains easily accessible to everyone. Laze on the sand or sit at one of the beachside bars and restaurants and watch the light drain from the day with a cold La Rue beer and a meal of fresh seafood plucked live from giant tanks.

DAY THREE

8 a.m.: Skip the hotel breakfast and continue to investigate Danang's food scene with a walking tour conducted by Danang Food Tour. With the East Sea lapping close by, it is not surprising that Danang has a food scene the equal of most cities in Vietnam. The city has a wealth of sensational local venues whipping up a range of regional specialties. Hunker down on a tiny plastic chair and enjoy a breakfast to remember.

2 p.m.: After all that indulgence, it is time for some exercise. Danang gets some excellent surf between November and March so try to catch a wave or two. Conditions are also suited to stand-up paddle boarding (SUP). Exciting and healthy, the pastime is easy to pick up. Danang Surf School can organise boards and paddles and offers lessons for beginners.

5:30 p.m.: Round out your time in Danang overlooking the Han River at Splash Pool Bar at the top of the city's Novotel Hotel. The view over the city is as magnificent as you might expect, with the Han River, the East Sea and the Son Tra Peninsula stretching out majestically before you. Enjoy a late afternoon swim at the bar's infinity pool, and take advantage of happy hour specials to toast three perfect days in Danang.

(6) My Da Nang: Mai Thùy Trâm

Mai Thùy Trâm grew up in Danang, and had a successful career in events management, working all over Vietnam. She loved the vibrant energy of Ho Chi Minh City, but missed her coastal hometown, so she moved back to start a restaurant. Today she's co-owner of Burger Republic, where the speciality is great burgers for everyone.

Here she talks eating out in Danang, local culture, and what it's like to see her hometown change so quickly.

Are you excited to see the changes happening here in Danang?

Of course I am! I'm proud of my city in so many ways. What I'm proud of is not only the speed of growth and development. What I'm most proud of is that there are things that are really Danang, that only Danang people have and we preserve it.

What makes Danang different from other places in Vietnam?

It's really a small community, like a village. Some people might find it annoying, as everyone knows each other. But at the same time it also feels very friendly, in a homey kind of way. You always find a way to have a conversation as people here are very friendly.

What's your take on the food in Danang?

We say that in the North, they eat more dishes with soup. It's tasty, but the taste is really light. In the South, everything goes with sauce, and the taste is mainly sweet. In the centre, we share a little bit from Saigon, a little bit from Hanoi, but the flavours here are strong. Our fish sauce, shrimp sauce, and tofu sauce is all fermented and so the smell is really strong.

What do you think is a quintessential Danang meal?

In Danang the speciality dish is *mì Quảng*, which translates to Quang noodles. "*Quang*" is the central region, '*mi*' are the noodles, which look almost like pasta. You eat them with fresh vegetables and a thick sauce, with shrimp, pork, and sometimes chicken. The special thing is the sauce. Mix it all together and eat. Put some herbs inside and the whole taste is different.

What are some great cafes you recommend in Danang?

For Vietnamese cafes, it's not just tasting the coffee: it's in the vibe, in the crowd, in the scene, watching people passing by. My friend and I often go to a cafe on 16A Nguyen Chi Thanh st. That place is really local. It's just street coffee but they have a great sound system, and they play all the old songs from the golden times. Sometimes, people come to listen to the songs and remember the old times.

You always find a way to have a conversation as people here are very friendly.

Another one that's always crowded is Long Café. The coffee is the best, and early in the morning when you pass by the smell of the coffee is strong and good. There's one woman, she always dresses like a queen and comes with her husband. She's always sparkling with hair clips, jewellery and jade. She's there every morning and wears the latest fashions. She must be 60 or so, but she looks like a Vietnamese diva or model.

Where would we find you on a Sunday?

In the morning, I go to a coffee shop with my family and friends. It's Sunday so you can spend hours having a coffee and gossiping with friends. For lunchtime, I would go to the beach and relax at a nice restaurant, swim, eat some seafood. Sometimes I go to a waterfall, camping from lunch until sunset.

What's a must-have experience in Danang?

The term '*di nhau*' I think must be our national anthem in Danang. You go to a nice restaurant, eat a lot of food, drink a lot of beer, and talk all day long. We have so many good seafood restaurants here because the seafood is so fresh.

How can travellers experience local life in Danang?

The best way to see Danang is to not only do touristy stuff. Walk on the streets, see families, the vendors, sit down and have a coffee. Find a local old lady, selling bread or something. Ask her anything and she will always find a way to communicate with you. Eat a banh mi and have a coffee right next to her. It truly feels like you're a part of it.

Another thing that's typically Danang, is to go to the beach at 4:30am! I know it's early, but stay out or wake up and go. It's still dark, but beautiful. So many local people go there, exercise, and bathe. It's so typical of people in Danang to start their day on the beach. It's really something to see and experience.

What is a perfect night out in Danang?

I'll be honest: I love my city and there are so many exciting things to do. For me, I love to dance, so the perfect night out is a dancing event at a bar by the beach.

What do you think about the growth happening in Danang?

It's nice because you see yourself growing, and my growth happened along with the city. Especially the last decade, it's been growing and blooming very fast. It's totally changed, in a different and exciting way. Danang is home, and at the same time, we keep growing together.

To really feel Danang you really need to open your heart and you see the personality and the charm that my city has. It's right there, throughout all the growth, all the nationalities that pass by, we still have some things that are just ours.

(7) Ho Chi Minh City – Overview

Vibrating with energy, innovation and traffic – lots of traffic – Ho Chi Minh City, formerly known as Saigon, is the economic heart of Vietnam and the main hub of the southern region. A freewheeling, cosmopolitan metropolis, HCMC's dynamic cityscape draws together old and new Vietnam in the most compact of spaces, representing the city's past as well as its future.

TOP THINGS TO DO IN HO CHI MINH CITY:

See the top landmarks

Ho Chi Minh City's colonial attractions are sprinkled around District 1, with the Reunification Palace looking down tree-lined Le Duan Boulevard where you'll find the Notre Dame Cathedral and the city's Central Post Office. Walk down Dong Khoi street, and you'll pass the Saigon Opera House and the Continental Hotel. On a more local level, the Ben Thanh Market and the Jade Emperor Pagoda are both worth a stop.

Shop small boutiques

Around District 1, a host of old apartments and former office buildings have been repurposed as shopping centers, leading to some surprising retail discoveries. Decades-old buildings such as 22 Ly Tu Trong and 42 Nguyen Hue are good examples of these impromptu shopping malls, as are the shops at 3A Station near the riverfront. The streets and alleys branching off of Dong Khoi are packed with all kinds of fascinating stores.

Visit the War Remnants Museum

The War Remnants Museum recounts a tumultuous time in 20th-century Vietnamese history, documenting both the atrocities of the war and the aftermath of the conflict. If you're interested in learning about the war from another point of view, this museum offers a wealth of information as well as some compelling photo exhibits.

Explore the Chinese Quarter

The Chinese neighbourhood known as Cho Lon houses Binh Tay Market, a colossal wholesale trading center, as well as Thien Hau Pagoda, an atmospheric temple that pays homage to the goddess of the sea amid clouds of incense and burning votive paper. Next door, the colorful Chaozhou Assembly Hall and pale blue Cho Lon Mosque highlight the neighbourhood's intersection of cultures.

Hop on a motorcycle

Beyond landmarks, Ho Chi Minh City serves up a taste of urban Vietnam by way of its traffic. Do as the locals do and hop on the back of a motorbike to see the city on street level and feel its energetic pulse. If you can't drive, there are many tour companies offering motorbike tours. Some of the best set off in the evening, when the city is at its most romantic and the sidewalk vendors are out in force.

Eat street food

Ho Chi Minh City's street food draws together countless regional specialties from across Vietnam. Locals love to gather around dented metal tables across the city for incredible roadside feasts. The

options are plentiful, but don't miss highlights such as Vietnamese sandwiches (*bánh mì*), southern-style savoury pancakes (*bánh xèo*) and broken rice (*com tấm*).

Get to know Vietnamese art

Though they may be small and sometimes difficult to find, Ho Chi Minh City's contemporary art galleries are worth your effort. Start your artistic adventure at the Fine Arts Museum, once the mansion of one of HCMC's wealthiest residents, before venturing out to other spaces. Noteworthy venues include Galerie Quynh, The Factory and Craig Thomas Gallery.

Ho Chi Minh City Itineraries

24 hours in Ho Chi Minh City

Begin your first day in the southern hub with a visit to the War Remnants Museum. You'll want to get here early in order to take in all the exhibits before grabbing a bite and heading down to the grand Reunification Palace. Take the free hour-long tour of the grounds and then walk over to the historic Notre Dame Cathedral and Central Post Office nearby. In the evening, sip a drink at one of the city's many rooftop bars.

48 hours in Ho Chi Minh City

Start your morning with a jaunt to Ben Thanh Market, the city's most famous trading centre, before strolling toward Nguyen Hue walking street. Here you'll find Hotel de Ville, a building now home to the municipal government, as well as the Opera House nearby. Walk a block over to Dong Khoi, a popular shopping street; or swing back toward Ben Thanh for a visit to the city's antique street and Fine Arts Museum.

72 hours in Ho Chi Minh City

For one more day in Ho Chi Minh City, add on a tour, either in town or just beyond the city limits. Book a motorbike excursion out to the Mekong Delta for a taste of rural life, brush up on your history with a trip to the Cu Chi Tunnels or get your dose of local culture by heading out to District 6's Cho Lon area. A handful of other activities such as cooking classes and spa facilities are also worthy options.

Ho Chi Minh City Weather

Rainy season runs from May to November, however the Ho Chi Minh City is a year-round destination. April and May tend to be especially hot, while cooler weather appears around December and January. Perhaps the only ill-advised time to visit would be during Tết, the Vietnamese Lunar New Year, as most residents head back to their hometowns for the holiday.

Transport to Ho Chi Minh City

Travellers can arrive in Ho Chi Minh City by bus, train or plane. Tan Son Nhat, the international airport, welcomes foreign and domestic arrivals everyday, while various bus companies operate shuttles from Phnom Penh and domestic destinations. As the terminus of Vietnam's north-south railway, Ho Chi Minh City also sees a steady stream of train travellers.

(8) The Perfect Weekend in HCMC

Ho Chi Minh City is bursting at the seams with enticing experiences for travelers. A weekend is not a whole lot of time, but with the help of our insider itinerary, you'll see, do, and taste just enough to get a well-rounded picture of this dynamic metropolis.

SATURDAY: DO AS THE LOCALS DO

9 a.m.: Wake up with a *ca phe sua da* in one of HCMC's many hidden cafés to prepare yourself for a solid day of exploring. Here's a tip: Most of the good stuff is happening down an alley or up a stairs. There are many old classics sprinkled around District 1, but chances are you'll find a worthy candidate right on your street corner.

10 a.m.: Start your sightseeing with a walking tour of District 1. The Notre Dame Cathedral is at its best in the early morning, and right across the street is the old Saigon Post Office, a worth-while stop with photogenic tiled floors and ancient phone booths. Cut a path through the park on your way to the Reunification Palace to see how young Vietnamese enjoy their downtime. After scoping out the Reunification Palace, let your legs carry you back toward Dong Khoi st., the city's main shopping throughfare, toward the Saigon Opera House.

TIP: Lune Production stages riveting contemporary circus and cultural shows at the Opera House several nights a week. Score a ticket for an hour of fascinating entertainment right in the heart of Ho Chi Minh City.

12 p.m.: Ready to eat like a local? Nha Hang Ngon serves up dishes from all over the country in a large, open-air villa. Chi Hoa offers an expert take on southern Vietnamese fare. And countless small eateries and stalls on the sidewalks serve everything from noodle soups, to banh mi, to broken rice (com tam.) Take your pick.

2 p.m.: Nguyen Hue is one of the few pedestrian streets in Ho Chi Minh City. Spend a few hours of your afternoon strolling this broad throughfare, and stop in at Apartment 42 to check out the eclectic assortment of cafes, boutiques, and shops that have sprung up in this former residential block. Afterward, you might like to do a mini-shopping spree at Takashimaya, wander the stalls of Ben Thanh Market, or cool off with a coffee at L'Usine.

5 p.m.: For your first evening in the city, have a classic Saigon experience at the Rex Hotel Garden Bar on the rooftop bar of the Rex Hotel. Overlooking a crucial junction of roads, this watering hole rose to fame as a favourite haunt of journalists during wartime. Today, most patrons come for the outstanding downtown views and happy hour specials. At five stories up you're above the hustle, but still close enough to the ground to watch the action below.

7 p.m.: Feeling adventurous? Venture out for a shellfish-themed spread at Oc Oanh at 534 Vinh Khanh in District 4, for an immersive experience of streetside fare: an assortment of crab, scallops, mollusks, and freshwater snails cooked in butter, garlic, lemongrass, and chili. A little more subdued? Take a table alongside the locals at Quan Bui for a delicious and authentic Vietnamese dinner.

9 p.m.: Beer connoisseurs would be crazy to miss the craft brews at Pasteur Street Brewing Company (144 Pasteur Street) -- known for some of the best beer in town. If you're in the party mood, PIU PIU will take good care of you, as will The Observatory, an underground dance club populated by the cool kids of Ho Chi Minh City.

TIP: Ho Chi Minh City is awash spas and wellness centres, with options to fit every budget. If you're looking to de-stress for less, book a Vietnamese foot or body massage at Miu Miu.

SUNDAY: BE AMBITIOUS

9 a.m.: Start your Sunday with a street-side *banh mi* packed with pickled vegetables and succulent pork. Afterward, get an insider view into everyday life at Tan Dinh Market on Hai Ba Trung in

District 3. The morning markets in Ho Chi Minh City are a great photo opportunity, with bright vegetables, intriguing streetfood snacks, and just-picked produce at every turn.

10 a.m.: After exploring the local markets, make a peaceful pilgrimage to Thien Hau Pagoda, or Chu Van Phat Temple -- both in District 5. These off-the-beaten track havens are a wonderful place to find a sense of calm within the city. Stay as long as you like.

12 p.m.: You're in Vietnam, so don't miss the chance to sample some of the city's famous dishes. Propaganda Bistro on Han Thuyen is a colourful spot by the park where you can order mango salad, sweet and sour fish soup, and com tam and other Vietnamese staples from a set lunch menu.

1 p.m.: Ho Chi Minh City boasts an incredibly colourful history. Spend an afternoon checking out some of the better museums within the city centre. The War Remnants Museum is chock-full of exhibits and photos that will give you deeper insight into the American War. For art lovers, the Fine Arts Museum is a graceful old mansion with a wealth of gorgeous pieces. And for those who just want something different, FITO Museum consistently earns rave reviews for its unusual portrayal of traditional medicine in Vietnam.

4 p.m.: Round out your Ho Chi Minh City weekend with a sunset swim. Get up above the hustle of the streets, and enjoy a different perspective with few laps in one of the city's excellent rooftop pools. Muong Thanh Saigon Centre, a 100% Vietnamese hotel, boasts an inviting 11-floor swimming pool, with panoramic views of the downtown area. Swim a few refreshing laps, and get ready for one more foray into town.

7 p.m.: For your last dinner in Ho Chi Minh City, treat yourself to authentic Vietnamese food at Mountain Retreat, on the 6th floor of 36 Lê Lợi, or Cuc Gach Quan -- a family-style restaurant tucked away in a beautiful old house. Both restaurants are popular, so book ahead, and prepare for a delicious feast.

(9) My HCMC: Nam Quan

Nam Quan is a Ho Chi Minh City native, entrepreneur and avid sneakerhead. He's created his own brand at Retrokid, and finds himself inspired by the energy and hustle of his city. Here, Nam shares his personal Ho Chi Minh City highlights, including alleyway cafes, hidden pagodas, and must-try dishes.

What was it like growing up in Ho Chi Minh City?

Growing up in Ho Chi Minh City gave me a different perspective. New people come in every day, new businesses open every day, you've got this energy of striving forward, of trying new things.

What is the best part about living in Ho Chi Minh City?

I love the excitement of the city. A few years ago, I studied overseas and what I missed the most was the craziness, the colourful life in Asia. Ho Chi Minh City's got that, but at the same time, there are so many modern things going on. That's what I love about it: the excitement, the energy, the craziness.

Is there a place in the city that's your favourite?

One of my favourite places in Ho Chi Minh City is Thien Hau Pagoda. To get there, I have to go through all the traffic that leads to District 5. When I arrive there I find myself really calm, quiet and peaceful, in the middle of the city. It's really typical Ho Chi Minh City to me: You've got this noise and energy out there, but at the same time you find little corners that are calm enough to look at yourself and your thoughts. You arrange everything, and then come back out striving again.

What do you notice about people from Ho Chi Minh City?

The one thing that is really interesting about Ho Chi Minh City is the people. They come from everywhere. You've got people from different provinces and countries who live and work here, so you see the excitement and the diversity. Ho Chi Minh City really gives people this positive energy. People here are generous, outgoing, and welcome new ideas.

What is your favourite coffee experience in Ho Chi Minh City?

I cannot get through a day without my coffee. One of my favourite coffee places in Ho Chi Minh City on Pham Ngoc Thach, in District 3. It's in this alleyway and the owner sets up little chairs so you can sit and hang out with your friends, after breakfast before work. You can talk to your friends, come up with new ideas, exchange stories -- and the coffee is amazing.

What's your favourite Vietnamese dish?

Originally, cơm tấm means 'broken rice.' After the harvest they'd choose the best grains to sell to people. The badly shaped grains, the broken rice, were hard to sell. So, people in the countryside put together these ingredients, broken rice and then pork chops, some cucumber, tomatoes, onions -- and that's the history of cơm tấm. That's how it's always been served, and it's become one of Vietnam's finest combinations of food I think.

What are your best tips for travellers coming to Ho Chi Minh City?

I would advise people to take their time in Ho Chi Minh City. Find a really local market. Wake up early, go down to the market, just for an hour, and you'll see the city coming to life. Talk to people. Everyone has their own story and favourite food place.

For coffee, one of my favourite local places is called Phin and Bean, a specialty coffee place. After dark, I go down to the snail fish street in District 4 -- in Vietnamese it's called Vinh Khanh. You've got this flame and smoke coming up. It's really fun, and noisy. For rooftop bars I like Lighthouse

in District 1, in the centre of the city. It's not too high, so you have a tucked-into-the-city kind of view.

How has your relationship with Ho Chi Minh City changed over the years?

When I was younger Ho Chi Minh City was changing a lot. A lot of new things were going on: new businesses and events happened every week. It gave me that energy too, of always being excited. After growing up I realized Ho Chi Minh City also carries so many older values. Day by day, somehow those values get left behind.

So now, as a grown man, I think one of my duties to the city is to preserve and remind people of those values. We strive for new things, new ideas, but at the same time we don't forget the older stories, the authenticity.

Appendix 2 – Evaluative statements

Natural landscape and cityscape

Evaluations	Hanoi
Evaluative Statements	<p>Hanoi’s Old Quarter serves up a sensory overload for the eyes, ears and nose (1)</p> <p>Hanoi is particularly beautiful in May when its many trees come into bloom – orange, white, purple and red flowers elevate the already beguiling street scenes to another level (1)</p> <p>the grandiose Ba Dinh Square (2)</p> <p>The 17-km shoreline makes for a fantastic cycling route (2)</p> <p>A number of fantastic rooftop bars are sprinkled around the city, but for classy cocktails and a mesmerizing view, look no further than the cushy chairs at The Summit, on the top of Pan Pacific Hotel (2)</p>
Statements with deontic modalities	<p>When the sun goes down, you have your pick of watering holes, from sophisticated rooftop bars buzzing <i>bia hoi</i> (1)</p> <p>To fully immerse yourself, grab a map to explore. Or jump in a cyclo and take a tour of this intoxicating maze of markets, street kitchens, shop houses, and more (1)</p> <p>head to Summit Lounge for the best sunset views in town (1)</p>
Statements with affective mental process verbs	
Assumed values	<p>Wisps of incense drift out onto streets from ancient temples painted a riot of reds and oranges, while in a far-flung corner the clang of a blacksmith’s hammer mingles with a mobile fruit seller’s call (1)</p> <p>The circumference of the lake is lined with hip cafes, ancient pagodas and picturesque gardens (2)</p>

Evaluations	Da Nang
Evaluative Statements	<p>The view across the mountain and jungles from the cable car is spectacular (4)</p> <p>...a road trip over the stunning Hai Van Pass coastal road, or a ride in a record breaking 5km long cable car up to the fantasy theme park of Ba Na Hills. (4)</p> <p>the stupendous views of My Khe Beach (5)</p> <p>The scenery is spectacular (5)</p> <p>Danang gets some excellent surf (5)</p> <p>The view over the city is as magnificent as you might expect, with the Han River, the East Sea and the Son Tra Peninsula stretching out majestically before you (5)</p> <p>Another thing that’s typically Danang, is to go to the beach at 4:30am! ... It’s still dark, but beautiful. (6)</p>
Statements with deontic modalities	<p>Enjoy the beach (4)</p> <p>See the Son Tra Peninsula (4)</p> <p>Grab some binoculars, hire a motorbike, and head out for a day of wildlife spotting (4)</p>

Statements with affective mental process verbs	I would go to the beach... Sometimes I go to a waterfall, camping from lunch until sunset (6) I love to dance, so the perfect night out is a dancing event at a bar by the beach. (6)
Assumed values	Da Nang is a true beach city (4) The warm sands of My Khe Beach sweep south from the mountainous Son Tra Peninsula. Da Nang hosts some of Vietnam's top luxury resorts (4) The Son Tra Peninsula strikes out into the ocean, its densely forested hillsides are home to rhesus macaques, long-tailed macaques, pygmy lorises, and the endangered red shanked douc langur - one of the world's most striking primates (4) you'll be rewarded by views of deserted beaches and jungle-clad slopes (4)

Evaluations	Ho Chi Minh City	
Evaluative Statements	outstanding downtown views... At five stories up you're above the hustle.... (8)	
Statements with deontic modalities	In the evening, sip a drink at one of the city's many rooftop bars. (7) ...have a classic Saigon experience at the Rex Hotel Garden Bar on the rooftop bar of the Rex Hotel (8) Get up above the hustle of the streets, and enjoy a different perspective with few laps in one of the city's excellent rooftop pools (8)	
Statements with affective mental process verbs	For rooftop bars I like Lighthouse in District 1, in the centre of the city. It's not too high, so you have a tucked-into-the-city kind of view. (8)	
Assumed values	Vibrating with energy, innovation and traffic – lots of traffic... A freewheeling, cosmopolitan metropolis, HCMC's dynamic cityscape draws together old and new Vietnam in the most compact of spaces, representing the city's past as well as its future (7)	

Places of livelihood and solitude

Ha Noi		
Evaluations	Livelihood	Solitude
Evaluative Statements	this neighbourhood is a prime spot for local libations (1)	It's a really nice place to see the old Vietnamese style, it's kinda smokey and mystical and the drinks are amazing (3)
Statements with deontic modalities	soak up the invigorating rhythm of life, with everything from open air aerobics to laughing yoga ringing across the waters (1) experience the revelry of <i>bia hoi</i> (1)	the lesser-visited Truc Bach and West Lake shouldn't be missed (1)

Statements with affective mental process verbs		I also love the hidden cafés (3)
Assumed values	<p>a sensory overload for the eyes, ears and nose... in a far-flung corner the clang of a blacksmith's hammer mingles with a mobile fruit seller's call (1)</p> <p>Hoan Kiem lake... embodies the soul of the city. Every morning it comes alive with walkers, aerobics classes, badminton, ballroom dancers, and even a laughing yoga group. It bursts back into life at sunset, and after dark, is again thronged with locals out to take the evening air (1)</p> <p>the buzzing garden restaurant (1)</p> <p>a chaotic sight where pubs spill out onto the street in true Vietnamese fashion, clogging up the intersection (1)</p>	<p>Fast-paced on the surface, the true rhythm of city life is far from hurried (1)</p> <p>their calm temples and lakeside cafes provide peaceful enclaves away from the buzz of downtown (1)</p>

Da Nang		
Evaluations	Livelihood	Solitude
Evaluative Statements	<p>positive energy (4)</p> <p>So many local people go there, exercise, and bathe... It's really something to see and experience (6)</p>	<p>The view over the city is as magnificent as you might expect, with the Han River, the East Sea and the Son Tra Peninsula stretching out majestically before you. (5)</p>
Statements with deontic modalities	<p>Rise early and enjoy the buzz of My Khe beach (4)</p>	
Statements with affective mental process verbs	<p>I love my city and there are so many exciting things to do (6)</p>	<p>I go to a waterfall, camping from lunch until sunset (6)</p>
Assumed values	<p>much of the beach still belongs to the people who make it their playground, gym, and source of livelihood. (4)</p> <p>In the early morning there is a palpable sense of positive energy in Da Nang. It's impossible not to feel the buzz of Da Nang life and be swept along with it, so be sure to set the alarm clock early at least once on your stay. Along the shore, fishermen sell the day's catch, football and volleyball</p>	<p>Climbing for 9km out of Danang, you'll be rewarded by views of deserted beaches and jungle-clad slopes. (4)</p>

	<p>matches spring up all around, and people jog, stroll or simply relax as the morning breeze kicks up and waves wash the sands (4)</p> <p>For Vietnamese cafes, it's not just tasting the coffee: it's in the vibe, in the crowd, in the scene, watching people passing by (6)</p>	
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Ho Chi Minh City		
Evaluations	Livelihood	Solitude
Evaluative Statements	<p>Ho Chi Minh City is bursting at the seams with enticing experiences for travelers (8)</p> <p>dynamic metropolis (8)</p> <p>It's really fun, and noisy (9)</p> <p>The one thing that is really interesting about Ho Chi Minh City is the people. They come from everywhere. You've got people from different provinces and countries who live and work here, so you see the excitement and the diversity. Ho Chi Minh City really gives people this positive energy. People here are generous, outgoing, and welcome new ideas (9)</p>	<p>These off-the-beaten track havens are a wonderful place to find a sense of calm within the city. (8)</p>
Statements with deontic modalities	<p>Do as the locals do and hop on the back of a motorbike to see the city on street level and feel its energetic pulse (7)</p> <p>see how young Vietnamese enjoy their downtime (8)</p> <p>get an insider view into everyday life at Tan Dinh Market (8)</p> <p>Wake up early, go down to the market, just for an hour, and you'll see the city coming to life. Talk to people. (9)</p>	<p>After exploring the local markets, make a peaceful pilgrimage to Thien Hau Pagoda, or Chu Van Phat Temple (8)</p> <p>Round out your Ho Chi Minh City weekend with a sunset swim. Get up above the hustle of the streets, and enjoy a different perspective with few laps in one of the city's excellent rooftop pools (8)</p>
Statements with affective mental process verbs	<p>finds himself inspired by the energy and hustle of his city (9)</p> <p>I love the excitement of the city. A few years ago, I studied overseas and what I missed the most was the craziness, the colourful life in Asia... That's what I love about it: the excitement, the energy, the craziness. (9)</p>	<p>One of my favourite places in Ho Chi Minh City is Thien Hau Pagoda... When I arrive there I find myself really calm, quiet and peaceful, in the middle of the city... (9)</p>
Assumed values	intersection of cultures (7)	At five stories up you're above the hustle, but still close enough to the

	<p>Ho Chi Minh City serves up a taste of urban Vietnam by way of its traffic (7)</p> <p>...in the evening, when the city is at its most romantic and the sidewalk vendors are out in force (7)</p> <p>Most of the good stuff is happening down an alley or up a stairs... chances are you'll find a worthy candidate right on your street corner (8)</p> <p>an underground dance club populated by the cool kids of Ho Chi Minh City (8)</p>	<p>ground to watch the action below. (8)</p> <p>You've got this noise and energy out there, but at the same time you find little corners that are calm enough to look at yourself and your thoughts. (9)</p>
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Local production: art, museums and shopping

Evaluations	Hanoi
Evaluative Statements	<p>Hanoi has long had a reputation as Vietnam's art capital, with the elegant Fine Arts Museum housing the country's foremost collection (1)</p> <p>Enticing boutiques (2)</p> <p>the capital's flourishing art scene (3)</p>
Statements with deontic modalities	<p>Check out the art scene (1)</p> <p>Don't miss the Water Puppet theatre performance at 2 p.m. (2)</p> <p>you can see the whole history of Vietnamese art (3)</p>
Statements with affective mental process verbs	
Assumed values	<p>The art scene in Hanoi at the moment is split into different groups.... If you want to see contemporary art, ... there are places like Art Vietnam and Manzi. If you want to purchase a piece, then Apricot Gallery and Green Palm Gallery are the big galleries in town, and represent a huge range of artists (3)</p>

Evaluations	Da Nang
Evaluative Statements	
Statements with deontic modalities	<p>visit the superb Cham Museum of Sculpture in Da Nang, home to the largest collection of Cham sculpture in the world (4)</p> <p>Escape the afternoon sun at the Museum of Cham Sculpture (4)</p>
Statements with affective mental process verbs	
Assumed values	<p>the museum draws together artefacts including altars, lingas, garudas, apsaras, Ganeshas and images of Shiva, Brahma and Vishnu, all dating from the 5th to the 15th century (5)</p>

	Competition in Hoi An is not limited to the tailors vying for the right to clothe you. There's a tastier battle being fought over the identity of the town's best banh mi (5)
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Evaluations	Ho Chi Minh City
Evaluative Statements	The streets and alleys branching off of Dong Khoi are packed with all kinds of fascinating stores. (7) contemporary art galleries are worth your effort (7) For art lovers, the Fine Arts Museum is a graceful old mansion with a wealth of gorgeous pieces (8)
Statements with deontic modalities	Shop small boutiques (7) Explore the Chinese Quarter (7) Get to know Vietnamese art (7) Start your artistic adventure at the Fine Arts Museum (7) Start your morning with a jaunt to Ben Thanh Market, the city's most famous trading centre (7)
Statements with affective mental process verbs	
Assumed values	surprising retail discoveries (7) ...a colossal wholesale trading center, as well as Thien Hau Pagoda, an atmospheric temple... (7) Dong Khoi, a popular shopping street (7)

Heritage and modernity

Evaluations	Hanoi
Evaluative Statements	Vietnam's capital city is rich in history; (1) The ancient city is being invigorated with modern cafes, world-class restaurants, and cool art galleries; (1) There can be tension between the old and new, or it can be a beautiful relationship (3)
Statements with deontic modalities	Stroll the Old Quarter (1) Admire the traditional-style architecture (2)
Statements with affective mental process verbs	
Assumed values	Wandering these tree-lined lanes past crumbling colonial facades will transport you back in time;(1) Hanoi is about much more than the past; (1) In recent years a growing band of superb international dining rooms have emerged, serving everything from contemporary tapas to fusion fare (1) Saturday Morning: Exploring Old Hanoi (2) Saturday Afternoon: Irresistible History (2) Sunday Evening: A New Perspective (2) With technology coming in, people pick up things really fast. But then there are some people who refuse to change. (3)

	<p>I also take people to Chim Sáo Restaurant, a traditionally themed restaurant. People dress in old-style peasant clothes and the restaurant is in a French villa (3)</p> <p>Vietnam is changing so fast, you cannot bring the old back, so why not make something old, new? Make it a part of our lives again - - just improved or a level up -- then it becomes something new and unique (3)</p>
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Evaluations	Da Nang
Evaluative Statements	<p>The Cham Museum itself is a must for history buffs. (5)</p> <p>amazing images of the Old Town's historic streets and the gorgeous countryside that surrounds the ancient port. (5)</p> <p>Especially the last decade, it's been growing and blooming very fast. It's totally changed, in a different and exciting way (6)</p>
Statements with deontic modalities	Learn about Cham culture (4)
Statements with affective mental process verbs	What I'm proud of is not only the speed of growth and development. What I'm most proud of is that there are things that are really Danang (6)
Assumed values	<p>...a UNESCO-listed complex of abandoned temples dating from the 4th to the 14th century. Hidden among the jungle, some towers are overgrown and many are in ruin, but enough remains to whisk you back in time (4)</p> <p>...caves in which first Hindu and later Buddhist sanctuaries have been made over the centuries (4)</p> <p>they play all the old songs from the golden times (6)</p>

Evaluations	Ho Chi Minh City
Evaluative Statements	<p>Ho Chi Minh City boasts an incredibly colourful history (8)</p> <p>-- a family-style restaurant tucked away in a beautiful old house (8)</p>
Statements with deontic modalities	<p>Visit the War Remnants Museum (7)</p> <p>walk over the historic Notre Dame Cathedral (7)</p> <p>In the evening, sip a drink at one of the city's many rooftop bars. (7)</p> <p>...have a classic Saigon experience at the Rex Hotel Garden Bar on the rooftop bar of the Rex Hotel (8)</p> <p>Get up above the hustle of the streets, and enjoy a different perspective with few laps in one of the city's excellent rooftop pools (8)</p>
Statements with affective mental process verbs	We strive for new things, new ideas, but at the same time we don't forget the older stories, the authenticity (9)
Assumed values	<p>Vibrating with energy, innovation and traffic... A freewheeling, cosmopolitan metropolis, HCMC's dynamic cityscape draws together old and new Vietnam in the most compact of spaces, representing the city's past as well as its future (7)</p> <p>...dynamic metropolis (8)</p> <p>Ho Chi Minh City also carries so many older values (9)</p>

Portrayal of local people

Evaluations	Hanoi
Evaluative Statements	
Statements with deontic modalities	Join the locals at Hoan Kiem Lake (1) When in Hanoi, do as the Hanoians do: greet the morning with a steaming bowl of <i>phở</i> (2)
Statements with affective mental process verbs	All the spots I take people to are food places (3)
Assumed values	The museum is dedicated to the traditions of Vietnam's 54 ethnic groups (2) there are some people who refuse to change, and they preserve themselves in their bubble (3)

Evaluations	Da Nang
Evaluative Statements	With broad beaches, fantastic street food, the fabled Hai Van Pass, and a growing collection of cafes, restaurants, and bars, it's no wonder the residents of Da Nang sport some of the broadest smiles in the country (4) The Vietnamese can mix it with the best of them when it comes to caffeine consumption (5) people here are very friendly (6) There's one woman, she always dresses like a queen ... she looks like a Vietnamese diva or model (6) It's really a small community, like a village. Some people might find it annoying, as everyone knows each other. But at the same time it also feels very friendly, in a homey kind of way. You always find a way to have a conversation as people here are very friendly. (6)
Statements with deontic modalities	The best way to see Danang is to not only do touristy stuff. Walk on the streets, see families, the vendors, sit down and have a coffee. Find a local old lady, selling bread or something. Ask her anything and she will always find a way to communicate with you. Eat a banh mi and have a coffee right next to her. It truly feels like you're a part of it (6)
Statements with affective mental process verbs	people come to listen to the songs and remember the old times (6) It's so typical of people in Danang to start their day on the beach (6) I go to a coffee shop with my family and friends. It's Sunday so you can spend hours having a coffee and gossiping with friends. For lunchtime, I would go to the beach and relax at a nice restaurant, swim, eat some seafood. Sometimes I go to a waterfall, camping from lunch until sunset (6)
Assumed values	The term ' <i>di nhau</i> ' I think must be our national anthem in Danang. You go to a nice restaurant, eat a lot of food, drink a lot of beer, and talk all day long. (6)

Evaluations	Ho Chi Minh City
Evaluative Statements	<p>an underground dance club populated by the cool kids of Ho Chi Minh City (8)</p> <p>The one thing that is really interesting about Ho Chi Minh City is the people. They come from everywhere. You've got people from different provinces and countries who live and work here, so you see the excitement and the diversity. Ho Chi Minh City really gives people this positive energy. People here are generous, outgoing, and welcome new ideas (9)</p>
Statements with deontic modalities	<p>Saturday: Do as the Locals Do (8)</p> <p>to see how young Vietnamese enjoy their downtime (8)</p> <p>you can sit and hang out with your friends (9)</p> <p>Talk to people. Everyone has their own story and favourite food place (9)</p>
Statements with affective mental process verbs	
Assumed values	<p>They come from everywhere. You've got people from different provinces and countries who live and work here, so you see the excitement and the diversity (9)</p> <p>you can sit and hang out with your friends, after breakfast before work (9)</p>

Food and drinks

Evaluations	Hanoi
Evaluative Statements	<p>a tantalising hint of what you can expect to hit your table (1)</p> <p><i>Phở</i> noodle soup is king of cuisines here, with steaming pots of its star anise-infused broth simmering on every corner; while every day, the irresistible scent of <i>bún chả</i> fills the air as barbecued pork sizzles over hot coals. In recent years a growing band of superb international dining rooms have emerged, serving everything from contemporary tapas to fusion fare (1)</p> <p>a tantalizing Vietnamese buffet lunch (2)</p> <p>The food is amazing -- it's the sort of food we would make at home. (3)</p>
Statements with deontic modalities	<p>Sample street food (1)</p> <p>Explore Hanoi's café culture (1)</p> <p>For an authentic taste of Hanoi, look no further than the street kitchens of the Old Quarter (1)</p> <p>When in Hanoi, do as the Hanoians do: greet the morning with a steaming bowl of <i>phở</i>. (2)</p> <p>Kickstart day two with a brew unique to Hanoi, <i>cà phê trứng</i>, aka egg coffee. (2)</p> <p>You can't come to Hanoi and not try <i>bún chả</i>. <i>Bún chả</i> became an overnight sensation (2)</p> <p>Indulge in the local tittle, a Vietnamese spirit called <i>rượu</i>. (2)</p>
Statements with affective mental process verbs	All the spots I take people to are food places (3)

Assumed values	<p>It is by taking a seat and waiting as your coffee slowly filters that the Vietnamese capital can best be understood. ... the thousands of coffee houses selling traditional Vietnamese coffee;... unique coffee shops; ... the world's coolest caffeine dens (1)</p> <p>With four locations, quirky decor and an even quirrier menu, you won't be disappointed... . Hopefully, the liquor motivates you to try the adventurous items on the menu: chicken hearts, locusts, eel, buffalo and frog (2)</p> <p>a traditionally themed restaurant. People dress in old-style peasant clothes and the restaurant is in a French villa (3)</p>
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Evaluations	Da Nang
Evaluative Statements	<p>fantastic street food (4)</p> <p>Da Nang is a dream destination for foodies... the Vietnamese baguette—is taken to a new level here. Mi quang is another delight... Each bowl features yellow rice noodles, pork, shrimp, and a flavour-infused broth topped off with chopped peanuts, quail eggs and plenty of fresh herbs. (4)</p> <p>The banh mi, ... has become a global icon, and Hoi An's versions are particularly legendary (5)</p> <p>The coffee is the best, and early in the morning when you pass by the smell of the coffee is strong and good (6)</p>
Statements with deontic modalities	<p>Dine on street food (4)</p> <p>sit at one of the beachside bars and restaurants and watch the light drain from the day with a cold La Rue beer and a meal of fresh seafood plucked live from giant tanks. (5)</p> <p>Hunker down on a tiny plastic chair and enjoy a breakfast to remember. (5)</p>
Statements with affective mental process verbs	I would go to the beach and relax at a nice restaurant, swim, eat some seafood. (6)
Assumed values	<p>Danang's dining scene got a hefty shot in the arm with the recent opening of this stellar venue. Marrying Asian flavours with Mediterranean traditions and produce from exemplary sources (5)</p> <p>The city has a wealth of sensational local venues whipping up a range of regional specialties. (5)</p> <p>The term '<i>di nhau</i>' I think must be our national anthem in Danang. You go to a nice restaurant, eat a lot of food, drink a lot of beer, and talk all day long. We have so many good seafood restaurants here because the seafood is so fresh. (6)</p>

Evaluations	Ho Chi Minh City
Evaluative Statements	<p>a delicious and authentic Vietnamese dinner (8)</p> <p>Beer connoisseurs would be crazy to miss the craft brews at Pasteur Street Brewing Company (144 Pasteur Street) -- known for some of the best beer in town (8)</p> <p>a family-style restaurant tucked away in a beautiful old house (8)</p> <p>it's become one of Vietnam's finest combinations of food (9)</p>
Statements with deontic modalities	<p>Wake up with a <i>ca phe sua da</i> in one of HCMC's many hidden cafés (8)</p> <p>Start your Sunday with a street-side <i>banh mi</i> (8)</p>

	<p>You're in Vietnam, so don't miss the chance to sample some of the city's famous dishes... (8)</p> <p>prepare for a delicious feast (8)</p>
Statements with affective mental process verbs	I cannot get through a day without my coffee (9)
Assumed values	<p>Ready to eat like a local? <u>Nha Hang Ngon</u> serves up dishes from all over the country in a large, open-air villa... And countless small eateries and stalls on the sidewalks serve everything from noodle soups, to banh mi, to broken rice (8)</p> <p>Feeling adventurous? Venture out for a shellfish-themed spread at Oc Oanh at 534 Vinh Khanh in District 4, for an immersive experience of streetside fare: an assortment of crab, scallops, mollusks, and freshwater snails cooked in butter, garlic, lemongrass, and chili. A little more subdued? Take a table alongside the locals at Quan Bui for a delicious and authentic Vietnamese dinner (8)</p> <p>That's how it's always been served (9)</p>