Analysis of the Destination Image of Da Nang in the Minds of Tourists on Tripadvisor

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Abstract - *The city of Da Nang has become one of the most attractive tourist destinations in Vietnam, attracting millions of tourists each year. On the world's largest travel review platform, TripAdvisor, the image of Da Nang in the minds of tourists is reflected through their comments and reviews. This article analyzes the characteristic factors of the destination in the eyes of tourists about Da Nang through comments on TripAdvisor, helping managers make appropriate and reasonable strategies to fully exploit the unique features of Da Nang, thereby enhancing the competitive advantage of this coastal city in Vietnam.*
Keywords - *destination image, Da Nang, tourism, tourists, TripAdvisor.*

I. The Necessity of Analyzing the Destination Image of Da Nang

Tourism has been and continues to be considered a key economic sector of the nation, garnering attention not only from government agencies but also from researchers in related fields. With Vietnam's greatest advantage in tourism being its long coastline, with many locations listed among the world's most beautiful beaches and bays, marine tourism has long been a strength of Vietnam's tourism industry.

According to the Prime Minister's Decision approving the strategy for Vietnam's tourism development to 2030, issued on January 22, 2020, among the proposed solutions, the "development and promotion of the national tourism brand based on the development of regional, local, enterprise, and tourism product brands" has been mentioned alongside the "priority development of sea, island resort tourism products, and marine sports and entertainment tourism, in line with the orientation of Vietnam's sustainable marine economic development strategy. Focus resources on developing a number of tourism clusters, high-end sea resort centers, with strong brands in the international tourism market."

However, currently, coastal cities in Vietnam are exploiting this type of tourism in a similar manner. The distinctive images of each destination are not yet clear, resulting in low competitive advantages among these cities.

Da Nang, located centrally along the central coastline of the country, is one of the largest marine tourism centers in the South Central region. Famous for its beautiful and poetic sea tourist areas, endowed by nature with many beautiful beaches with fine white sand, clear blue water, and extremely picturesque scenery, along with opportunities to experience exciting activities such as fishing, surfing, diving, and yachting.

How can Da Nang attract tourists, ensure they return, and encourage them to introduce impressive tourist destinations to others, particularly by increasing the destination brand value to enhance the city's competitive advantage? This question should concern not only destination managers but also scientists. These issues are still quite new both in theoretical research and practical implementation. Therefore, studies on destination images should be emphasized.

Research projects domestically and internationally have pointed out that revisit intention and positive word-of-mouth have a significant impact on attracting tourists [1]; [2]; [3]; [4]. Other studies also show that one of the important and influential factors on revisit intention and positive word-of-mouth is the destination image factor [5]. Thus, building a positive, attractive, and unique destination image is essential for cities to achieve economic benefits from tourism development.

Nowadays, the development of the Internet has become a major factor changing the tourism and travel industry, as well as how tourists purchase and experience travel products [6]. Most authors agree on the importance of the Internet as a source of travel information [7]; [8]. User-generated content (UGC), such as travel blogs and online travel reviews, is an agent used to build destination images, where images are perceived and shared by users on social media, which other tourists can consult and use in their travel decision-making process [9]; [6]. In recent years, user-generated content and social networks have become the most popular sources of information generated by tourists [9].

TripAdvisor is the world's largest travel platform, with 463 million monthly users from all over the world and over 859 million reviews and opinions on 8.6 million accommodations, restaurants, experiences, airlines, and cruises. Simultaneously, TripAdvisor is present in 49 markets with 28 languages and owns and operates a portfolio of travel media brands loved by travelers.

From these observations, the necessity of "Analyzing the destination images of Da Nang in the minds of tourists on TripAdvisor" is evident.

II. Some Related Definitions

2.1. Tourism

Tourism is not only an essential need in cultural and social life but also an economic and social phenomenon in all countries around the world.

In 1963, at the United Nations Conference on International Travel and Tourism held in Rome, experts defined tourism as follows: Tourism is the totality of relationships, phenomena, and economic activities arising from the travel and stay of individuals or groups outside their usual place of residence or country for peaceful purposes. The place they visit and stay is not their place of work. This definition was the basis for the International Union of Official Travel Organisations, the predecessor of the World Tourism Organization, to officially adopt.

In 1979, the World Tourism Organization adopted the following definition: Tourism includes activities related to the temporary short-term movement of people to destinations outside their usual place of residence and work, along with activities during their stay at those destinations.

In Vietnam, the Tourism Law of June 2005 states: "Tourism involves activities related to the travel of people outside their regular place of residence to meet the needs of sightseeing, learning, entertainment, and relaxation within a certain period."

2.2. Tourist Destination

A tourist destination is a geographical location to which a traveler is making a journey depending on the purpose of their trip. The place chosen by tourists for their trip can be a specific landmark, an area, a region, a country, or even a continent. In scientific tourism literature, these places are collectively referred to as tourist destinations.

Geographically, a tourist destination is determined by the spatial territorial scope. A tourist destination is a geographical location to which a traveler is making a journey to satisfy the needs according to their trip's purpose [10] (Quoted in MSc. Ngo Thi Dieu An, 2014, p. 102). According to this concept, a tourist destination is still not clearly defined and remains general; it only identifies the geographical location based on tourists' needs, without specifying the factors that create the tourist destination.

According to Dr. Vu Duc Minh (2010), quoted in MSc. Ngo Thi Dieu An (2014, p. 103), a tourist destination is a place where the most important and impressive tourism factors appear; it is where the tourism industry welcomes guests and is also where tourists can find all the necessary amenities and support services for their visit.

2.3. Destination Image

The concept of the destination image was initiated in the 1970s by Hunt (1971) [11], and this concept continued to receive attention over the next two decades [12]. Previously, people traveled to a place based on an image and expectations primarily formed from experiences, rumors, articles, advertisements, and common beliefs [13][14]. The destination image is considered as the comprehensive perception or overall impression of an individual about a place [5] and is the cognitive representation of a destination [15].

According to Hunt (1975), the image of a country is the impression people have of a country when they do not live there. Millman and Pizam (1995) [16] defined the destination image as the entire tourism experience - the characteristics in relationships, while Buhalis (2000) [17] referred to it as "the set of expectations and perceptions a tourist has about a destination" (p. 101). Therefore, a destination's image is a subjective perception of the distinctive features of destinations influenced by advertising information from that destination, media, and other factors [18].

The destination image can be identified by many different factors. Therefore, Milman and Pizam (1995) [16] indicated that familiarity with a destination can affect the perceived image that tourists have of a destination. Many other researchers [12][5] argued that experience with a destination can influence and change the initial image of the destination. Thus, there is a correlation between the destination image and tourist satisfaction after experiencing tourism products and services [20].

Furthermore, the destination image has a direct impact on tourism behavior and plays a very important role in the destination selection process [19], as tourists often choose destinations with the most preferred image. This is why it is crucial to understand the formation of the image and the destination selection process.

According to Tasci and Kozak (2006) [18], the destination image can even contribute to forming the destination brand. Therefore, the strong brand position of a destination depends on the positivity of the image. The brand of a destination is often intertwined with the destination image, which can be an important factor in the destination selection process as well as loyalty to a destination. In other words, both the destination image and the destination brand can influence tourists' loyalty to a destination [18].

Thus, the destination image is a truthful expression of the anticipated experience for human tourism needs. This will be the core point for reflecting a destination most honestly, whether it is good or bad, and whether it meets tourists' needs. Therefore, building and promoting the image of a specific tourist destination must be

based on the factors that form a destination to honestly reflect its image.

2.4. User-Generated Content

User-generated content (UGC or user-created content UCC) refers to any form of content, such as images, videos, text, and audio, that has been posted by users on online platforms such as social media and wikis [21]. The term "user-generated content" emerged in the early 2000s on websites and media as a new means to produce more engaging content.

According to the perspective of many researchers [22][23], UGC is considered a form of electronic word-of-mouth marketing (eWoM) where customers create messages to friends, family, and colleagues about an event where they have achieved a certain level of satisfaction [24]. UGC has advantages, including writing comments or posting content and images related to a tourist destination without commercial advertising purposes. Most importantly, marketers can also interact back with them by sending information through their official accounts on social media websites.

In summary, user-generated content (UGC) is part of big data. The explosion of UGC results from the Internet and mobile technology, providing individuals with unprecedented power to instantly access digital footprints on computers when conducting transactions related to aviation, hotel, and restaurant services, customer complaints, recording travel experiences, or uploading photos and videos to the global big data bank. Facebook, Flickr, TripAdvisor, Twitter, Yelp, and other social media platforms contain enormous volumes of UGC suitable for research related to tourism and hospitality applications.

2.5. TripAdvisor – The World's Largest Travel Review Platform

The reviews on TripAdvisor contain a wealth of useful information about flight and hotel prices that can help businesses boost their operations. It is also a repository of valuable statistics about popular tourist destinations, hotels, and restaurants.

As of 2020, TripAdvisor had over 884 million reviews of hotels, accommodations, and more. This means that the reviews on TripAdvisor can tell us a lot about flights, facilities, experiences, and other aspects that can help consumers better understand the most and least favored tourist spots in a specific area. Users can gain in-depth research on tourist destinations, avoid common tourist pitfalls, and discover new places, accommodations, and experiences. Furthermore, TripAdvisor reviews also help travel companies understand the reputation of their tourism establishments and identify areas for improvement. Whether tourists are visiting local wineries, bed and breakfasts, inns, or hotels, TripAdvisor's review data will reveal how the public perceives these businesses.

Keeping up with current travel industry trends and knowing how businesses can stand out from their competitors is key to success.

III. Analysis Results

According to the votes of tourists on TripAdvisor, the top five favorite destinations in Da Nang City are:

+ Marble Mountains (Ngũ Hành Sơn): With 7,774 comments, this site is the most mentioned by tourists. Prominent keywords related to the Marble Mountains include "marble rock", "caves", "temples", and "scenic views from the summit".

+ Ba Na Hills: With 6,206 comments, Ba Na Hills impresses tourists with its "cable car system" and "natural scenery".

+ Dragon Bridge (Cầu Rồng): Dragon Bridge, with 5,756 comments, is loved by tourists for its unique architecture and weekend fire-breathing performances.

+ Lady Buddha - Linh Ung Pagoda (Tượng Bồ Tát - Chùa Linh Ứng Sơn Trà): With 4,401 comments, the Lady Buddha statue and Linh Ung Pagoda are noted for their tranquility and sacredness.

+ My Khe Beach: My Khe Beach receives 2,584 comments, highlighted by its fine white sand and clear blue waters.

Considering all the comments on the top five attractions in Da Nang voted by TripAdvisor users, the results show that the city's image is closely tied to its bridges, true to the impression many visitors have of this central Vietnamese city. By running Word Frequency on Nvivo software with the grouping of synonymous words, the results are shown in Figure 6. Besides the image of beautiful bridges, the stunning beaches, marble mountains of the Marble Mountains, and the cable car system of Ba Na Hills also leave a special impression on tourists.
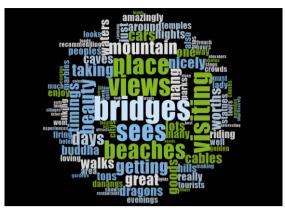
Figure 1. The Image of Da Nang from the Perspective of Tourists

The word frequency analysis on Nvivo software shows that positive keywords dominate the comments about Da Nang. Words such as "amazing", "great", "enjoy", "loving", "good", and "worthy" frequently appear, reflecting positive emotions and satisfaction of tourists with the city.

IV. Conclusion

The article has analyzed and identified the unique images of Da Nang as a tourist destination. The analysis results can be used to implement a brand positioning strategy for Da Nang, design a brand identity system such as logos, slogans, and mascots for the destination, and guide the development of unique tourism products based on the local "specialties". This will help design tours with compatible core values, modern, friendly, and professional tourist attractions, as well as vibrant and friendly cultural and entertainment festivals.

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