The role of the Government in promoting Vietnam as a global tourist destination

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the Vietnamese government's role in marketing the country as a global tourist destination, focusing on marketing strategies, resource allocation, policy implementation, industry collaboration, and responsible tourism promotion. A generalized structured component analysis was used to analyze data from a convenience sample of 240 international tourists and key stakeholders in Ho Chi Minh City. The results show that government strategies, resource distribution, policies, collaboration, and responsible tourism efforts significantly influence the perceptions of Vietnam as a tourist destination. The study recommends enhancing collaboration, adopting integrated marketing strategies, efficiently allocating resources, refining policies, and promoting responsible tourism. Despite these limitations, this study provides insights for policymakers and stakeholders in Vietnam and other countries seeking to enhance their tourism sectors. It contributes to the literature by analyzing Vietnam's context and providing a framework for comparative studies. Recommendations include developing targeted marketing strategies, investing in infrastructure and campaigns, streamlining procedures, partnering with industrial stakeholders, and promoting sustainable tourism.

1. Problem Statement

The Vietnamese government, specifically the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, plays a crucial role in marketing the country to international tourists through strategic marketing, resource allocation, policy development, industry collaboration, and the promotion of responsible tourism. Marketing strategies are integrated with public relations to enhance reputation and establish trust while ensuring adherence to legal and ethical standards. Resource allocation encompasses

financial and technical support to foster innovation, particularly among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) involved in tourism. Vietnam's tourism policies have transitioned from being centrally planned to market-driven, emphasizing international integration and domestic resource mobilization for development. Government-industry collaboration, exemplified by vaccine diplomacy during the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrates a proactive approach to public health and economic stability. The government promotes foreign direct investment (FDI) and international economic

integration, thereby strengthening the tourism sector. The emphasis on responsible tourism involves tour operators' stakeholder engagement and sustainability promotion. Policies focus on environmental and cultural protection, aligned with global trends for long-term sustainability. Significant rationales for researching the government's role in marketing Vietnamese tourist destinations.

Tourism is becoming increasingly crucial to Vietnam's economy, contributing approximately 9.2% of its GDP in 2019. However, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a 79% drop in international visitors in 2020, highlighting the need to analyze the government's role in tourism recovery and development.

Although extensive research has been conducted on tourism marketing in countries such as Australia, Egypt, and Spain, studies focusing on Vietnam remain limited. Each country's unique cultural, political, and economic context necessitates targeted research to understand the government's role in Vietnam's tourism marketing.

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of government involvement in tourism marketing including strategies, policies, resource allocation, industrial partnerships, and responsible tourism. These factors collectively shape Vietnam's image of tourism.

The findings of this study will assist policymakers, tourism businesses, and international organizations in enhancing marketing strategies, resource allocation, policy improvement, cooperation, and promoting sustainable tourism in Vietnam, particularly post-COVID-19.

Additionally, this study contributes to the broader literature on government roles in tourism marketing by offering a framework applicable to other countries. Researchers can use these findings for comparative analyses or to explore specific government-led marketing aspects and the evolution of destination marketing amid global challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study provides a timely perspective on the role of the Vietnamese government in promoting tourism. By addressing research gaps and offering substantive insights, the findings can inform strategic decision-making and foster sustainable development in Vietnam's tourism sector, particularly through the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism.

2. Theoretical basis and model research

2.1. Theoretical basis

Government involvement is essential for promoting Vietnam's tourism industry (Thang & Thanh, 2023). The Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism has developed comprehensive marketing strategies, including market trend analysis, target market identification, and campaigns that highlight Vietnam's attractions (Quian, 2010). Resources are allocated to advertising, infrastructure development, and training programs (Crompton & Lamb, 1986). Tourism policies facilitate visa procedures, enhance transportation, and ensure visitor safety (Kaini et al., 2022). Collaboration with tourism organizations enhances marketing initiatives (Belias et al., 2022), emphasizing Vietnam's natural landscapes, historical landmarks, and cultural experiences (Lai & Vinh, 2013). The government promotes responsible tourism by implementing regulations that support community-based initiatives (Anika et al., 2020). Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) is fundamental to understanding organizational interactions with stakeholders, positing that success depends on managing relationships with key stakeholders. This theory underscores the necessity of cooperation among governments, industries, local communities, and other stakeholders in tourism destination marketing (Sautter & Leisen, 1999). Effective management of stakeholder relationships can provide a sustainable competitive advantage (Berman et al., 1999). Sheehan and Ritchie (2005) applied stakeholder theory to the tourism industry, identifying and ranking stakeholders' importance for Destination Management Organizations and emphasized the need to identify key stakeholders and model impacts for destination management. Buhalis (2000) contends that destination marketing requires stakeholder coordination and cooperation to address challenges. Byrd (2007) found that stakeholder involvement in planning positively influences sustainable tourism development, emphasizing the importance of government engagement with stakeholders. This research utilizes stakeholder theory to examine the government's role in managing stakeholder relationships in marketing Vietnamese tourism destinations and investigates stakeholder engagement in policymaking, industry collaboration, and marketing initiatives to understand how governments can collaborate with stakeholders to enhance destination imagery and promote tourism growth. This research model identifies key elements of government involvement in marketing Vietnam to international tourists: marketing strategies by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism; resource

allocation; tourism policies; industry collaboration; and promoting responsible tourism as a primary factor shaping Vietnam's appeal as a tourist destination.

2.2. Model research

2.2.1. Data

A sample of 240 international tourists was selected to ensure reliability and validity of the findings. Convenience sampling was employed because of its practicality and efficiency, targeting tourists who had recently visited Vietnam to capture their current and relevant perceptions. In addition, 20 key people in tourism management and other stakeholders were interviewed to provide a comprehensive view of the government's role in promoting tourism. The decision to collect 240 valid responses from international tourists was guided by statistical requirements for Generalized Structured Component Analysis (GSCA), and Hair Jr et al. (2010) recommended a minimum of 200 for structural equation modelling to achieve reliable results. This threshold was exceeded to enhance the robustness and meaningfulness of the model's fit indices. The tourist sample included international visitors from Asia (45%), Europe (30%), North America (15%), Australia (5%), and other regions (5%), thereby capturing a broad range of perspectives and enhancing the generalizability of the findings. The respondents were fairly evenly divided between males (52%) and females (48%). The majority were aged–25-44 years old (65%), followed by 45-64 years old (20%), 18-24 years old (10%), and > 65 years (5%). In terms of travel companions, most tourist respondents traveled with friends/relatives (40%), as a couple (35%), solo (15%), or with an organized tour group (10%). Over half were first-time visitors to Vietnam (60%), while the rest had visited to 2-3 times (30%) or more than three times before (10%). Their main purpose of visit was leisure or holidays (70%), business (15%), friends/relatives (10%), and other reasons (5%). The 20 key persons and stakeholders interviewed included government officials from the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism (25%), provincial tourism authorities (25%), executives of travel agencies and tour operators (20%), hotel managers (15%), representatives from tourism associations (10%), and academic researchers in the tourism field (5%). They had an average of 15 years of experience in the tourism industry and related government agencies. Sixty% of the interviewees were male and 40% were female, aged between 35-60 years old. An online survey was distributed to tourists via email and popular travel forums such as TripAdvisor, Lonely Planet, and tourist groups focusing on Vietnam on Facebook and Reddit to ensure access to a diverse pool of respondents with varied travel backgrounds and motivations. In-depth interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via video calls with key stakeholders. This mixed-method approach provides comprehensive quantitative and qualitative insights into the perceptions of the Vietnamese government's efforts to promote tourism. A total sample size of 240, including 220 tourist surveys and 20 interviews, was methodologically and practically justified to capture diverse perspectives from both the demand and supply sides and to offer robust and generalizable insights into Vietnam's tourism promotion strategies and challenges.

2.2.2. Scales and Research model

The scales were developed through focus group discussions with 20 participants, including government tourism agency managers, experienced tourism business managers, and literature review. Five independent variables were identified: marketing strategy (MS), distributed resources (DR), tourism policies (TP), collaboration in marketing (CM), and responsible tourism practices (RT), along with one dependent variable: the perceived role of the government in promoting Vietnamese tourism (RG). Each construct was measured on a 5-point Likert scale (Table 1).

The research model (Figure 1) posits direct positive relationships between the independent variables (MS, DR, TP, CM, and RT) and the dependent variable (RG), suggesting that each independent variable enhances tourists' perceptions of the Vietnamese government's role in promoting tourism.

3. Research methods

This study utilized Generalized Structured Component Analysis (GSCA) with GSCA Pro 1.2.1. Data were collected through an online survey on Google Forms targeting international tourists who had visited Vietnam over the past three years. The survey was distributed via email and key travel forums,

Table 1. Variables

Variables	Contents of the scale	Encode
Marketing strategy (MS)	Analyze trends	MS1
	Identify target markets	MS2
	Launch marketing campaigns	MS3
	Convey marketing messages	MS4
Distribute resources (DR)	Invest in advertising campaigns	DR1
	Develop infrastructure	DR2
	Provide training programs	DR3
Formulation and execution of tourism policies (TP)	Simplify visa procedures	TP1
	Ensure safety for guests	TP2
	Ensure security in tourism	TP3
Collaborate in marketing (CM)	Highlight Vietnams' distinctive attractions and rich cultural legacy	CM1
	Introducing ancient temples	CM2
	Introducing Traditional Festivals	CM3
	Introducing exceptional culinary delights	CM4
Promoting responsible tourism practices (RT)	Preserving community-based tourism (RT1),	RT1
	Support community-based tourism initiatives (RT2),	RT2
	Prioritizing sustainability (RT3).	RT3
Role of government (RG)	Offers fascinating attractions and experiences	RG1
	Effectively amplify the impact of marketing efforts and entice travelers	RG2
	Enhance the tourism experience by implementing policies and regulations compatible	RG3
	Cooperation between regions in the tourism industry has created an effective marketing strategy	RG4
	Promote responsible tourism practices	RG5

Figure 1. Research model
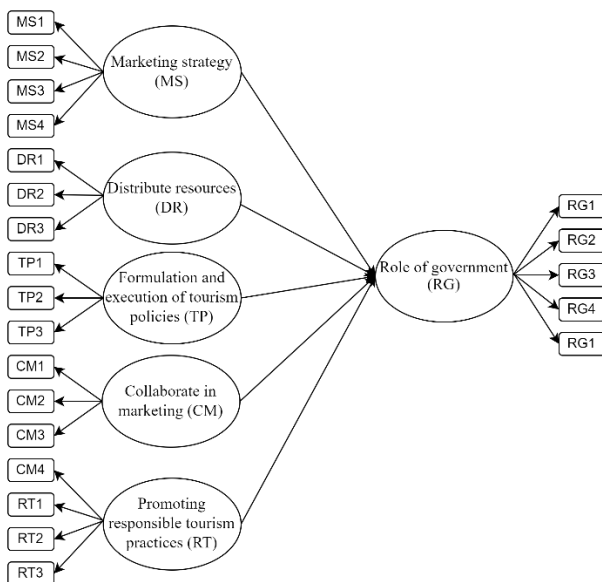
including TripAdvisor, Lonely Planet, and Vietnam-focused travel groups on Facebook and Reddit. From June to September, 2023, 240 valid responses were obtained. The survey assessed tourists' views on the Vietnamese government's tourism promotion efforts by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism in five areas: marketing strategies, resource distribution, tourism policies, marketing collaboration, and responsible tourism promotion, using a 5-point Likert scale. The reliability of the measurement scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency and Dillon-Goldstein's rho for composite reliability (Hwang et al., 2017). Convergent validity was determined using Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with values above 0.5 indicating strong convergence (Hwang et al., 2017). Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, ensuring that a construct's AVE square root surpassed its correlation coefficients with other constructs (Hwang et al., 2017). The overall model fit was measured using several indicators (Hwang et al., 2017): FIT index (proportion of variance explained by the model), fit index scale (ratio of explained variance to total variance), modified fit index (adjusted for the number of observed variables and parameters), Goodness-of-Fit Index (proportion of variance and covariance explained by the model),

Table 2. Scale Outer Loadings

	Estimate	SE	95% CI			Estimate	SE	95% CI	
MS					CM				
MS1	0.877	0.02	0.841	0.918	CM1	0.893	0.016	0.859	0.923
MS2	0.859	0.02	0.825	0.897	CM2	0.871	0.015	0.843	0.901
MS3	0.819	0.029	0.755	0.868	CM3	0.829	0.026	0.759	0.863
MS4	0.808	0.029	0.737	0.851	CM4	0.826	0.026	0.764	0.866
DR					RT				
DR1	0.92	0.015	0.884	0.944	RT1	0.906	0.017	0.872	0.943
DR2	0.874	0.016	0.842	0.903	RT2	0.872	0.017	0.838	0.897
DR3	0.879	0.019	0.84	0.909	RT3	0.816	0.029	0.753	0.858
TP					RG				
TP1	0.915	0.013	0.885	0.935	RG1	0.96	0.005	0.948	0.967
TP2	0.851	0.023	0.801	0.891	RG2	0.771	0.022	0.717	0.813
TP3	0.883	0.02	0.841	0.92	RG3	0.781	0.029	0.72	0.824
					RG4	0.803	0.025	0.75	0.858
					RG5	0.735	0.03	0.68	0.796

Table 3. Scale validity

	MS	DR	TP	CM	RT	RG
PVE	0.708	0.794	0.78	0.731	0.749	0.662
Alpha	0.862	0.87	0.859	0.877	0.832	0.872
Rho	0.906	0.921	0.914	0.916	0.899	0.907

Table 4. Overall Model Fit

FIT	AFIT	FITs	FITm	GFI	SRMR
0.601	0.597	0.532	0.729	0.987	0.04

and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (average difference between observed and predicted correlations).

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Quality of observed variables

The study found that most observed variables had high outer loadings (Table 2), indicating their significant contribution to the latent variables. For example, the "Marketing Strategy" (MS) scale had outer loadings between 0.808 and 0.877, while the "Distributed Resources" (DR) scale showed outer loadings between 0.874 and 0.920.

4.1.2. Reliability scale

The reliability of the scales (Table 3) was confirmed with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.862 to 0.877, indicating high internal consistency. The composite reliability (Rho) values ranged from 0.899 to 0.921, further confirming the reliability of the scale.

4.1.3. Overall Model Fit

The model fit indices (Table 4) indicated a generally good fit; the FIT index was 0.601, AFIT was 0.597, and GFI was 0.987, suggesting that the model accurately represented the observed data.

4.1.4. Path analysis

Path analysis (Table 5) revealed moderate-to-strong positive relationships between the independent and dependent variables (RG). The path coefficients for MS→RG (0.426), DR→RG (0.396), TP→RG (0.352),

Table 5. Path coefficient of the model

	Estimate	SE	95%CI		F^2
MS→RG	0.426	0.032	0.373	0.503	0.222
DR→RG	0.396	0.032	0.333	0.454	0.186
TP→RG	0.352	0.034	0.297	0.425	0.141
CM→RG	0.487	0.034	0.423	0.550	0.312
RT→RG	0.325	0.033	0.263	0.389	0.118

CM→RG (0.487), and RT→RG (0.325) indicate moderate to strong positive relationships with RG. The F^2 values suggest that CM explained the highest variance in RG (31.2%), followed by MS (22.2%), DR (18.6%), TP (14.1%), and RT (11.8%). These results demonstrate the strength and direction of the relationships between the predictor variables and RG and the variance in RG explained by each predictor.

Path analysis revealed moderate to strong positive relationships between the independent and dependent variables (RG). For instance, Collaboration in Marketing (CM) has the highest impact on RG, with a path coefficient of 0.487, followed by Marketing Strategy (MS) at 0.426.

4.2. Discussion

This study examines the government's influence on Vietnam's tourism reputation through marketing, resource allocation, policies, industry collaboration, and sustainability. Despite 18 million international visitors in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a 79% decrease by 2020. The findings aid stakeholders in enhancing marketing, resource allocation, policies, collaboration, and sustainable tourism, enriching the literature on government roles in tourism marketing and providing a framework for comparative analysis amid global challenges.

Unlike previous studies, which often isolate aspects such as marketing strategy (Quian, 2010), tourism policy (Kaini et al., 2022), and industry partnerships (Belias et al., 2022), this study comprehensively addresses five key factors: marketing strategies, resource allocation, tourism policies, marketing cooperation, and responsible tourism promotion. The findings highlight the significance of these factors, which have often been underemphasized in prior research. Employing stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), this study explores the government's management of stakeholder relationships in marketing tourism in Vietnam, supporting Sheehan and Ritchie (2005) and Byrd (2007),

regarding the necessity of stakeholder involvement in sustainable tourism. It expands the scope by examining stakeholder engagement in policymaking, industry collaboration, and marketing initiatives, providing a comprehensive view of government-stakeholder collaboration to enhance destination image and drive tourism growth.

The limitations include a sample restricted to international tourists in Ho Chi Minh City, potential bias from convenience sampling, and the cross-sectional nature of the study. Future research could broaden the geographic scope, utilize probabilistic sampling methods, and conduct longitudinal studies to capture the evolving tourist perceptions of government tourism promotion efforts.

This study identifies limitations in the marketing of Vietnamese tourist destinations by state management agencies. These include inconsistent implementation of marketing strategies, limited and suboptimal resource allocation, unappealing tourism policies, inadequate coordination between state agencies and tourism stakeholders, and insufficient promotion of responsible and sustainable tourism. Addressing these weaknesses is necessary to enhance destination marketing efficiency, attract international tourists, and promote sustainable tourism. This study provides practical suggestions for policymakers and stakeholders to improve the marketing of tourist destinations in Vietnam.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

This study examines the role of governmental bodies in promoting Vietnam as a global tourism destination, focusing on five key responsibilities: strategizing, allocating resources, implementing policies, collaborating with industry, and promoting responsible tourism. The findings indicate that all five factors play a significant role in shaping international tourists' perceptions of Vietnam. This study suggests that governments should enhance collaboration, adopt integrated marketing strategies, allocate resources

effectively, improve policies, and promote responsible tourism. These insights are valuable for policymakers and stakeholders in Vietnam and other countries seeking to enhance their tourism industry. Despite these limitations, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on government involvement in tourism marketing by providing an in-depth analysis of Vietnam's specific context. These results underscore the importance of government strategies, policies, and coordinated efforts to shape the image of attractive destinations and promote sustainable tourism growth. Based on the research findings, the key stakeholders were as follows:

Government policymakers: Insights inform the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism and relevant agencies about refining marketing strategies, resource allocation, policies, collaboration, and responsible tourism.

Tourism businesses: Travel agencies, tour operators, hotels, and service providers can align their offerings with government strategies and collaborate to enhance the visitor experience.

International tourism organizations: Entities such as the United Nations World Tourism Organization and Pacific Asia Travel Association can comprehend government-led tourism marketing in Vietnam and offer targeted recommendations and support.

Researchers and academics: Scholars can build upon this study to investigate government roles in destination marketing, conduct comparative analyses, or explore Vietnam's tourism promotion in detail.

Media and travel publications: Journalists, bloggers, and influencers can use these insights to inform content on Vietnam's tourism offerings, government initiatives, and visitor experiences, potentially attracting more tourists.

Potential tourists: Travelers can understand the government's efforts to ensure a safe, enjoyable, and sustainable tourism experience that influences their decision to visit Vietnam.

Dissemination through academic journals, industry reports, conferences, webinars, and media coverage can reach these stakeholders and enhance decision-making, strategic planning, and collaboration in Vietnam's tourism sector. These insights may also be applied to other countries seeking to strengthen their tourism industries through government-led efforts.

Recommendations include developing marketing strategies that highlight Vietnam's unique attractions, allocating resources for campaigns and infrastructure, simplifying procedures to improve accessibility, collaborating with industry partners for tailored experiences, and promoting environmentally and culturally responsible tourism practices. These actions aimed to enhance Vietnam's competitiveness and sustainability in the tourism sector.

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