INFLUENCE OF BRAND IMAGE, VALUE, AND PERCEPTION ON TOURIST SATISFACTION WITH PU LUONG TOURIST DESTINATION, THANH HOA PROVINCE, VIETNAM

Dr. Ngo Chi Thanh
ngochithanh@hdu.edu.vn
MSc. Le Thi Binh
lethibinhkt@hdu.edu.vn
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Le Hoang Ba Huyen
lehoangbahuyen@hdu.edu.vn
Hong Duc University, Thanh Hoa, Vietnam

Abstract

The brand of a tourism destination can be deemed as a success factor that attracts tourists to a potential tourism destination, and drive tourists' internal travel motives through conveying values, inducing expectations about the satisfaction of possible needs and wants. The study's objective is to determine and identify the influence of brand image, brand value, and brand perception on tourist satisfaction for Pu Luong, Thanh Hoa province. Qualitative and quantitative research methods are used through the collecting and processing of data form 500 tourists of Pu Luong, Thanh Hoa province. Data were collected, processed and analyzed using SPSS 20 and AMOS 20 software. The SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) model developed from the study's findings is consistent with reality, indicating that all factors influence tourist satisfaction with the destination's brand, with a brand image having the most positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction. Based on the study's findings, the authors made some suggestions to improve tourist satisfaction for Pu Luong, Thanh Hoa province.

Keywords: Brand image, brand value, brand perception, brand satisfaction.

1. Introduction

Pu Luong Nature Reserve is located in Thanh Hoa province, just about 130 kilometers far from Thanh Hoa City to the north-west and 210 km from Hanoi, belongs to both Ba Thuoc and Quan Hoa district. Pu Luong is a backpacking, self-sufficient backpacking, and inexpensive mountain resort tourism destination that is starting to make a name for itself. The scenery and wild beauty of Pu Luong, especially the terraced rice fields and primeval forests, awes most tourists. Pu Luong, in particular, is close to well-known tourist attractions such as Lac Village (Mai Chau), Ca Than stream (Cam Luong, Cam Thuy, Thanh Hoa), Cuc Phuong forest (Ninh Binh), Citadel of Ho Dynasty cultural heritage (Thanh Hoa), and others. As a consequence, it has "inadvertently" established a tourist-friendly

closed tour of fun and experience. The destination has beauty and wild landscapes concealed in the mist like a hanging garden in different locations, such as: Son Ba Muoi (Lung Cao Commune), Pu Luong peak, Kho Muong, Ban Don with Pu Luong Retreat resort, Uoi Village, Tien Moi Village, Hieu waterfall area in Co Lung Commune, and so on have attracted hundreds of thousands of tourists. Many domestic and international tourists who enjoy trekking and backpacking come to visit, experience and relax at this tourism destination.

The acceptance of a tourist's brand is often a priority for tourism managers and businesses. Establishing a partnership between tourists and destination brands is critical for enhancing long-term relationships with tourists by ensuring their satisfaction, which results in their loyalty to the tourism destination. Currently, the evaluation and level of satisfaction for Pu Luong, Thanh Hoa province has significantly changed. More and more information about destinations is provided for tourists such as: topography, climate, nature, scenery, a specialty of the destination, types of accommodation, food services, etc. Furthermore, demand for travel has increased dramatically in recent years, especially for ecotourism destinations.

As a result, the current challenge for managers, local authorities, tourism companies, and others is to determine what needs to be done to improve tourist satisfaction and loyalty to the image of a local tourism destination or area. The objective of the study is to determine the relationship and evaluate the impact of four factors: brand image, brand perception, brand value, and brand satisfaction of tourists for Pu Luong, Thanh Hoa Province. Following that, recommendations are proposed to increase tourist satisfaction with this tourism destination.

2. Method

2.1. Theoretical basis and research model

2.1.1. Brand image

Keller (1998) believed that brand image can be defined as a subjective perception phenomenon, that is reflected through the emotions of buyers towards products, based on their memories. The brand image helps businesses improve their brand competitiveness in the market. According to Bian and Moutinho (2011), the brand image refers to the association and perception of a brand through tourists' memories. Sharing the same point of view, Aghekyan et al. (2012) said that brand image plays a critical role in purchase intention. Products with a strong brand image and attributes will increase tourist satisfaction and contribute to the formation of more favorable and positive attitudes.

2.1.2. Brand value

While there are numerous opinions and assessments of brand value worldwide, brand value is generally analyzed and evaluated through the perspective of consumers. Among

them, Aaker's (1991) definition is widely used and widely accepted by scholars and administrators when conducting research and analyzing brand value. Whereby, "The brand value is derived from high levels of customer loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and strong associations with the brand and other assets such as patents, certified trademarks, and channel relationships".

According to the research of Hoang Thi Phuong Thao and Thai Tu Uyen (2016), there are five components that affect overall brand equity: brand awareness, brand image, perceived quality, brand loyalty and brand association. The research of Nguyen Van Thuy and Ngo Thi Xuan Binh's (2018) shows that brand value is influenced by brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand association. Cronin et al. (2000) demonstrated there is a strong link between brand equity and brand satisfaction.

2.1.3. Brand Perception

Matzler et al. (2008) said that brand perception is considered a certain category of the association between tourists and the brand. Brand perception refers to a psychological response that elicits specific emotions in the tourist. Brand perception is a consumer's persistent preference for or dislike of a brand (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1980) as well as the consumer's overall assessment of the brand. The outstanding benefit or brand image serves as the basis for evaluating brand perceived attitudes. Consumers will determine the utility of the outstanding benefit or brand image and then constitute a general attitude toward the brand as a result of the comprehensive assessment which reflects consumer attitudes toward brand attributes (MacKenzie and Spreng, 1992). A customer's positive attitude towards a brand can increase their likelihood of using that brand (Kotler and Keller, 2011).

2.1.4. Brand satisfaction

Moliner et al. (2015) claim that making customer brand satisfaction has become one of the most important priorities in marketing management. Puška et al. (2015) said that satisfaction is evaluated through the prior customer experience of a product or service. Brand satisfaction plays a vital role in maintaining brand value and retaining customers. Buyers will be satisfied if the product meets their expectations. If the product meets the customer's expectations, they will be satisfied with the brand and thus the brand itself is being strengthened. Satisfaction with a brand influences a customer's decision to purchase from that brand.

2.1.5. The correlation between brand image and brand satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is contingent upon a product or service experience and service's quality and perceived value (Anderson et al., 1994). Numerous authors assert that brand image is a function of the cumulative effects of satisfied or dissatisfied customers based on specific transactions. (Bolton and Drew et al., 1991; Johnson and Fronell, 1991).

The brand image also contributes to the formation of attitudes, beliefs, satisfaction, and behavior of consumers. Brand images are regarded as useful recommendations for both existing and potential customers. It is also believed to influence how consumers evaluate customer satisfaction because it is formed and developed in their minds through communication and experience. When customers are satisfied with the services they receive, their attitude toward the brand will be improved, which affects customer satisfaction (Andreassen and Lindestad, 1998).

In the study of Aydin and Ozer (2005), customer loyalty is stated to be determined by brand image, service quality, reputation, and switching costs. Additionally, Chao et al. (2015) considered the brand image to be a significant factor affecting customer satisfaction.

2.1.6. The correlation between brand image and brand perception

Brand image plays an important role in the formation of senses of quality (Cretu and Brodie, 2007; Veloutsou and Daskou, 2004). Images reflect personal feelings about the brand. Therefore, the quality of feelings about the brand has related to brand reputation (Selnes, 1993). In some cases, many customers only choose a product or service because of the brand, so brand reputation only measures the product level, and in some other cases many customers only identify the products and services through brand image (Veloutsou and Daskou, 2004). Brand image also creates solid expectations in evaluation criterias of product and service (Selnes, 1993). According to Mishra et al. (2016), positive brand perceptions have an effect on tourist satisfaction. On the other hand, its adverse consequences result in tourist dissatisfaction. According to the opinions of Sweeney and Swait (2008), brand image act as the first tool to implement marketing activities and form brand perceptions.

2.1.7. The relationship between brand image and brand value

Research of Cretu and Brodie (2005) shows that brand image has a strong influence on service perception quality, and more broadly on brand value and loyalty. Gounaris and Stathakopoulos (2004) also specified that, if the perception of the brand value is high, the customer satisfaction also will become high.

In the field of tourism, Lertputtarak (2012) emphasized that destination's image plays two important roles in behavior: (1) influence the process of selecting destination and (2) influence the conditions behind the decision-making behavior. Som and Badarneh (2011) also found that perceived value positively affects tourist satisfaction and visistor's intention to revisit. Moreover, both perceived value and satisfaction have a significantly direct and positive impact on purchase intention (Waheed & Hassan, 2016). Therefore, it can be found that tourist satisfaction has a significant influence on visistor's intention to revisit (Puspitasari et al., 2018).

According to the previous studies, it has been proved that a positive brand image will have a strong influence on customer satisfaction; additionally, brand image has an effect on brand value and customer perception. On the basis of consultation with experts and some previous studies, the author proposes a research model of the influence of destination brand image, value, and perception on tourist satisfaction for Pu Luong, Thanh Hoa Province as shown in Figure 1.

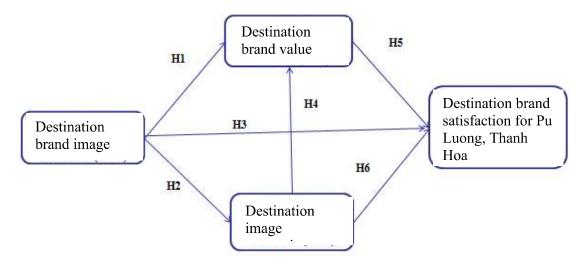


Figure 1. Proposed research model

(Source: proposed by the author)

Corresponding research hypotheses:

- H1: Brand image has a positive influence on the brand satisfaction for Pu Luong, Thanh Hoa province.
- H2: Brand image has a positive influence on the brand value of Pu Luong, Thanh Hoa province.
- H3: Brand image has a positive influence on brand perception of Pu Luong, Thanh Hoa province.
- H4: Brand perception has a positive influence on the brand value of Pu Luong, Thanh Hoa province.
- H5: Brand value has a positive influence on brand satisfaction for Pu Luong tourism destination, Thanh Hoa province.
- H6: Brand perception has a positive influence on brand satisfaction for Pu Luong, Thanh Hoa province.

2.2. Method

Research design

The study was conducted through questionnaire with tourists at Pu Luong, Thanh Hoa province using the non-probability sampling methods and evaluation of scholars (Black, 2010) The survey was from October to the end of December 2020. We used a 5-point likert scale with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. All scale factors are unidirectional. All scale factors are unidirectional.

Sample size

Hari et al. (1998) suggested that if the sample size is around 100, then the standard factor loading must be greater than 0.5 (Bollen, 1989) recommended a ratio of 5:1 for selecting the sample size over the number of parameters in the multivariate analysis Besides, the author's research model identified 19 observed variables by using the 5-point likert scale. The number of samples initially calculated was 19*5 = 95 samples. The research's sample size is 500 tourists, which ensures the requirement and achieve generalization, represents for the survey; this results in a total of 385 valid survey questionnaires collected and processed

Analytical methods

The author performed EFA (Exploratory Factor Analysis, CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis), SEM (Structural equation modeling) by using software SPSS.20 combined with AMOS.20. Testing is done through the following steps:

- Preliminary estimate of the scale and reliability of the measured variable by Cronbach's alpha coefficients and factor loading coefficients by Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)
- The CFA method is used to confirm the univariate, multivariate, convergent and discriminant value of the concepts.
- Drawn from the CFA results, building and testing the suitability of the research model through the SEM structural model, evaluate the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variables. The source of the component variable scale is shown in Table 2:

Table 2. The source of the component variables scale in the research model

Elements	Symbols	Number of	Reference source
		observed	
		variables	
Brand		5 variables	Based on the research of Matzler et al.
	IMA	(IMA1 to IMA5)	(2008), Cho and Fiore (2015) and
Image			qualitative research
Brand	VAL	5 variables	Giovanis and Athanasopoulou (2017);
Value	VAL	(VAL1 to VAL5)	Waheed and Hassan, 2016
Brand	PER	5 variables	Cretu and Brodie, 2007; Veloutsou and
Perception	FER	(PER1 to PER5)	Daskou, 2004
Satisfied		4 variables	Based on the research of Som and
destination's brand	SAT		Badarneh (2011); Puspitasari et al.,
destination's brand		(SAT1 to SAT4)	2018 and qualitative research

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive statistics of the study sample

The study's sample is 500 tourists, resulting in the collection and processing of 385 valid survey questionnaires Demographic information of the observed sample is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Description of the characteristics of the study sample

Content	Frequency	Percent	
Gender			
Male	198	51.4	
Female	187	48.6	
Total	385	100.0	
Age			
Under 18	84	21.8	
19-30 years	148	38.4	
31-50 years	107	27.8	
Above 50 years	46	11.9	
Total	385	100.0	
Income			
Under 5 million	113	29.4	
5-10 million	180	46.8	
11-15 million	57	14.8	
over 15 million	35	9.1	
Total	385	100.0	
Education			
College, high school, or lower	95	24.7	
Bachelor degree	242	62.9	
Post graduate degree		12.5	
Total	385	100.0	

3.2. Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis

Variables with correlation of less than 0.5 with the total variable (Item Total Corelation) are considered garbage variables and are excluded from the model, the scale is accepted when Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is greater than 0/7 (Hair et al., 2014). The results of the first Cronbach's Alpha analysis remove the PER3 variable because the total correlation coefficient is less than 0.5. The results of the second Cronbach's Alpha data processing show that all observed variables have a total correlation greater than 0,5 and Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is greater than 0,7. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the factors Destination brand image (0.902), Destination brand perception (0.877); Destination Brand Value (0.847) and Destination Brand Satisfaction (0.824).

Principal Axis Factoring was used with Promax rotation (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988) and factor loading coefficients ≥ 0.5 (Hair et al., 1998) to incorporate remaining variables into Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) model for the purposes of scale validation. The results show that (Table 4): KMO and Bartlett's test in factor analysis we get: KMO coefficient = 0.845 > 0.5 shows that the data is suitable for Exploratory Factor Analysi. The statistically significant difference of Bartlett's Test (Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05), as a result, the observed variables in the population are correlated. The extracted variance is 68.839, indicating that the analyzed factors' variation can account for 68.839 percent of the variation in the original survey results. The 4th factor's Eigenvalues coefficient is 1.994 > 1, indicating that the study has reached its conclusion. Each observed variable representing all factors has a factor loading coefficient greater than 0.5, indicating that the observed variables have a major impact on the factors that these variables represent.

Table 3. The findings of EFA (exploratory factor analysis).

Pattern Matrixa						
	Factor					
	1	2	3	4		
IMA2	.928					
IMA3	.849					
IMA4	.802					
IMA5	.738					
IMA1	.718					
VAL2		.811				
VAL3		.742				
VAL5		.711				

VAL4		.707		
VAL1		.659		
PER2			.836	
PER5			.833	
PER4			.816	
PER1			.724	
SAT1				.859
SATI2				.779
SAT3				.715
SAT4				.581
KMO				
Eigenvalues	5,718	2,603	2,077	1,994
% of Variance	31,766	14,459	11,538	11,075
Cumulative %	31,766	46,225	57,763	68,839
KMO		.8	45	
	Ap	prox. Chi-So	quare 3730,	435
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		df	135	
		Sig.	.000	

3.3. Critical Frame Analysis (CFA) results for analyzing the saturated model

The saturated model for research concepts is shown in Figure 2. The saturated model is a model of established factors that are freely interrelated. CFA's analysis results demonstrate that: Chisquare/df = 2.519 < 3 (Carmines & McIver, 1981), CFI = 0.946 > 0.9; TLI = 0.936 > 0.9 (Bentler & Bonelt, 1980); GFI = 0.916 > 0.8 và RMSEA= 0.063 < 0.8 (Steiger, 1990). All factor weights of each observed variable are greater than 0.5, so it can be viewed that the model achieves convergence value (Figure 2).

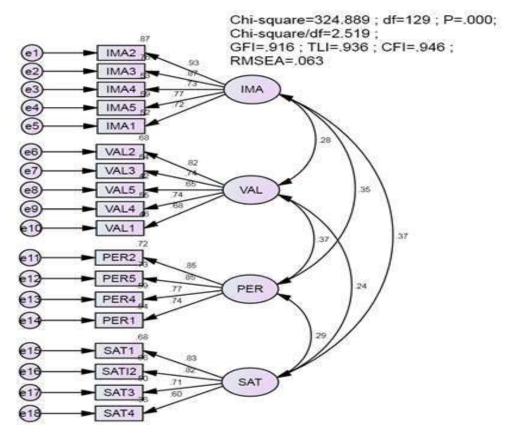


Figure 2: CFA's analysis results for the saturated model

Analysis results indicate that: Correlation coefficients are less than 1, covariance validation and correlation between pairs of variables are statistically significant (p < 0.05, table 5). The outcome of the CFA review for the saturated model

Table 5: Coefficient of correlation, covariance between variables

Relationship		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	
IMA	<>	VAL	.182	.039	4,688	***
IMA	<>	PER	.251	.043	5.784	***
IMA	<>	SAT	.237	.040	5.996	***
VAL	<>	PER	.248	.043	5.774	***
VAL	<>	SAT	.144	.037	3.890	***
PER	<>	SAT	.193	.041	4.693	***

3.4. Research hypothesis's testing

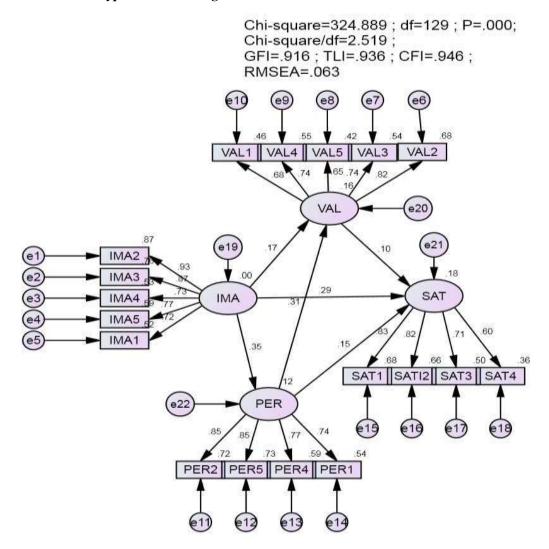


Figure 3. SEM validation results for the final structural model (normalized)

The study used SEM linear structure model to evaluate the suitability of the research model and to validate the correlations in the model. The results show (Table 5): the model has a Chi-square value = 324,889; df = 129; CMIN/df = 2,519 with p = 0.000, GFI = 0.916; TLI = 0.936; CFI = 0.946; RMSEA = 0.063. Furthermore, the model's normalized beta regression coefficients are all positive, with a p-value < 0.05 indicating statistical significance. This demonstrates that the findings of the research hypotheses testing are accepted, as evidenced by the corresponding normalized beta correlation coefficients for hypothesis H1: 0.290; Hypothesis H2: 0.174; Hypothesis H3: 0.347; Hypothesis H4: 0.306; Hypothesis H5: 0.105; Hypothesis H6: 0.152.

Table 6: Result of hypothesis test

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Theoretical conclusion
PER		IMA	.347	.057	6.351	***	H3: Accepted
VAL	<	IMA	.174	.054	2.998	.003	H2: Accepted
VAL	<	PER	.306	.055	5.057	***	H4: Accepted
SAT	<	IMA	.290	.055	4.873	***	H1: Accepted
SAT	<	VAL	.105	.061	1.690	.041	H5: Accepted
SAT	<	PER	.152	.055	2.425	.015	H6: Accepted

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The study's objective is to determine and measure the influence of brand image, brand perception, and brand value on tourist's brand satisfaction for Pu Luong, Thanh Hoa province. The findings indicate that the destination brand image has a greater influence on tourist brand satisfaction than the other two factors, brand value, and brand perception. However, the two factors of brand value and brand perception have a relatively large influence on tourist satisfaction for Phu Luong, Thanh Hoa. Based on the findings, the author makes a number of recommendations to raise tourist brand satisfaction for Pu Luong, Thanh Hoa province, thereby contributing to the development of the Pu Luong, Thanh Hoa province at the following time:

4.1. Choosing and developing the image of Pu Luong as a tourism destination

It is possible to consider positioning Pu Luong as a tourism destination with the type of community-based tourism that preserves the most primitive nature of the culture of Thanh Hoa's mountainous ethnic groups. To create an image of the Pu Luong in the eyes of tourists, first and foremost, an outstanding destination image associated with the core values of the destination's natural and human resources must be created in order to convey to customers a how to persuade through effective communication channels. The image of a destination that tourists recognize is one that is unique in terms of natural and human resources, safe and pleasant environment, and the friendliness of the people. As such, it is suggested that the local government conduct research and select some images to serve as a tourism symbol for Pu Luong. It could be images of Pu Luong's stunning natural beauty (terraced fields, local villages, waterfalls, etc.) or humanistic tourism resources such as festivals, fairs, scenes of cultural and artistic activities in the Thai, Muong communities, etc.

With differences The differences of Pu Luong tourism as above can help orient Pu Luong tourism toward a market share of middle-income tourists and the development of a

"affordable" tourism brand. On that basis, the government orients businesses and property owners in the localityto develop strategies for the price and cost of tourism activities in the area aimed at middle-income residents.

4.2. Building image of local people and cultural identity of Pu Luong

The images of local people and cultural identity are critical components of a destination's tourism brand. Pu Luong is a destination that excels in this area, so the local government needs to continue to implement strategies to promote propaganda and raise awareness about the importance of developing positive images of people and regional cultural identity of Pu Luong. It is recommended to elicit local people's pride in traditional cultural values, sense of responsibility to preserve and introduce those cultural beauties to tourists through combined eco-tourism and community tourism in the form of sightseeing, relaxation, cultural tourism – historical sites, etc.

To accomplish the aforementioned goal, it is necessary to propagate and introduce so that when tourists visit Pu Luong, they want to immerse themselves in community life and sample regional specialties such as Cổ lũng Duck, Green catfish of Mã river, Cần wine, etc. Additionally, the restoration of traditional brocade weaving villages (for example, brocade weaving in Lan Ngoai village, Lung Niem commune) should be prioritized to provide souvenirs for tourists and to meet tourist needs to raise the income of local residents.

4.3. Maintaining an emphasis on developing diverse tourism products with distinct characteristics based on Pu Luong tourism's strengths and potentials

Tourism products are unique and distinctive, reflecting the personality of each destination. Building tourism products is a strategy that requires emphasis and attention to help tourism achieve comprehensive development. For Pu Luong, the current tourism product must forge its own path in order to reaffirm the local tourism industry's position in the current trend of integration.

To compete with other tourism destinations and entice tourists to visit and stay longer, local authorities must implement a strategy of product diversification. In the coming time, the destination's products must be distinct from those of other localities in the region; cooperation programs must be based on the mutual agreement along a chain of links that takes into account the resource characteristics and advantages of each locality.

The study's limitation is that it was conducted exclusively in Pu Luong, Thanh Hoa province, a tourism destination with numerous distinctions from other destinations (climate, nature, ...). As a result, the research findings differ slightly from those of other tourism destinations in the country in general and Thanh Hoa province in particular, and thus generalizability is limited. As a result, extensive research into other provinces and cities is necessary. The research, on the other hand, only looks at the effect of brand image, value,

and perception on tourist satisfaction for Pu Luong, Thanh Hoa province, but not tourist loyalty. Therefore, more research is required into the impact of brand image, value and perception on tourists' satisfaction and brand loyalty to tourism destinations.

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