Tourist Slogans for Vietnam

A Linguistic study of changes

Ling 263 Dissertation

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Abstract

Much has been learned about the language of advertising over a decade. Words of advertisement convey messages through multiple forms of discourse, one of which is known as slogans. Advertising through slogans is considered a powerful tool of branding of nation when it comes to the case of tourism. A successful slogan can contribute to promote national image and can attract visitors to the country. My paper focuses on the research areas of tourist slogans and nation-branding. The findings in terms of linguistics are applied to the tourist slogans of Vietnam.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Why slogans are important

We are living in the contemporary “consumer society”, in which advertising dominates majority of communication channels. We may encounter advertisements everywhere and at any time without recognizing it as a form of discourse, and as a “system of language use whereby” (Goddard, 2002). The ubiquity of advertising has encouraged several studies about advertising, especially those in linguistics. This paper focuses on slogans as a sub-discipline of advertising language. In general, a slogan is “a short and striking or memorable phrase used in advertising” (“slogan”, Oxford online dictionaries). Because of its characteristic of using metrical rules and catchy sounds, slogans draw attention of hearers and provide them with associative images, resulting in more notable and amusing advertisements. A slogan is diverse in forms, including word play, rhythm and puns, parodies and ironies, etc. This paper examines linguistic structure and semantic content of slogans, which, later, will be applied for tourist slogans of Vietnam.

1.2 Background of Vietnam tourism

First time Vietnam had a tourist slogan and logo dated back in 2000, where the slogan “Vietnam – A Destination for the New Millennium” was promoted together with a logo, which was, indeed, more of a picture. The slogan was expected to last for five years from 2000 to 2005; however, the public controversial copyright issues had prevented it to be displayed a whole period. It was the reason why Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) hastened to find a new slogan to replace. The recklessness resulted in a simple and insipid phrase “Welcome to Vietnam” without any associated logo. During the period of 2006 to 2010, Vietnam’s new slogan was “Vietnam – the hidden charm”.

Vietnam welcomed a great number of visitors during the period of 2000 to 2010, the reason for which was more of the attractiveness of Vietnam landscapes, rather than the effectiveness of advertising strategies. At the time Asian tourism market became saturated, Vietnam appeared as an emerging and fresh destination, which, thus, played an important role in calling on visitors to the country. In 2010, Vietnam welcomed 5.16 million visitors and took the lead in most active tourism markets of the year, which position had been occupied for years by India and Thailand (Chi Anh, 2011).
1.3 Who are the audiences

The function of ads and slogans is to persuade people to engage in their purchasing process, either of products or services. Main audiences are likely to be those who act as “buyers” and “decision-maker”, according to the literature of consumer roles (Arjan, 2010). Nevertheless, the purchasing process is complex, and at once, involves many collateral factors which result in a variety of audience strata to influence the buying decision. Those collateral factors are known as “gatekeeper”, “influencers” and “end users”. Hearers of ads, however, might not necessarily be any specific role in such process. They can be people seeing ads without noticing, intermediates, or “opinion leaders”, who can help transfer information to target markets. These target consumers can be defined by demographic factors (age, gender, region, etc.) or by psychographic factors (personality and lifestyle). Slogans, as a result, should be general enough to cover a wide range of audiences, while being able to maintain specific to some particular groups of customers.

2. Review of the literature on nation branding, and linguistic analysis of slogans

According to Dinnie (2008, p.15), nation-brand is defined as “the unique, multidimensional blend of elements that provides the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences”. Branding of nation is an emerging, exciting, yet controversial concept. The main argument is whether to perceive a country, a state or a nation as a “brand” to advertise. Despite various opposite ideas, the number of countries that implements nation branding method is gradually increasing. Two most common purposes of this strategy are promoting national tourism and stimulating economic investments.

One first essential step in nation branding is to convey the core values of the nation in a comprehensive and succinct way of interpretation. To a smaller extent as in tourism industry, slogans are those conveyors. Yet it will be a shortcoming to not mention pictures and logos as integral parts of a successful tourist advertisement. Clearly, advertising today develops and extends to a constitution of complex ‘interaction of elements”, which includes participants, function, pictures, music, language, and paralanguage (Cook, 2001). Slogans in ads, therefore, no longer stand isolated. According to Myers (1994), advertisements normally involve pictures, because they will help double the power of convincing and persuading audiences. Readers tend to interpret text initially, and associate pictures as a consequence. There exists an undeniable
contribution of visual graphics in advertisements, which suggests that any study of slogans should take into account the integrated effect of these elements together.

3. Data and methodology

This research relies on tourist slogans of Vietnam in different periods, from the year 2000 onward. Generally, Vietnam tourism strategy consists of several five-year short-term strategies, each of which employs a specific slogan. At the beginning, VNAT was in charge of creating and managing slogans. Prior to the year 2000, tourism industry in Vietnam had been seen as a minor economic sector and had been left unattended. Some years later, however, Vietnam changed its economic focus which paid more attention to service industry; tourism thus received a growing attraction in economic investments and public media. As a result, the government focused more on conducting tourist marketing campaigns. In fact, since 2006, the government in conjunction with VNAT as judges has held an annual nationwide slogan contest in order to find the most creative slogan for each five-year strategy. The competition has raised the awareness of citizens and has invited several private advertising businesses to join in.

For the purpose of this study, current slogans were initially analyzed by the structure of discourse, and as well in terms of the semantic content analysis. The semantic analysis concentrated on clarifying two important points. First, the type of hearers these slogans drew attention to; and second, judgments that can be made on this customer group as the target market of Vietnam tourism. Based on the findings, a detailed linguistic study was presented to provide further changes in these slogans. Several new slogans were proposed and tested in a group of twenty fellow students, who either from EU or Asia. These two groups were chosen because they imitated two most common types of tourists coming to Vietnam (Dantri, 2011), which were European and Asian visitors. The aim of this experiment was to find out the impact Vietnam tourist slogans made on potential travellers.

The paper, in some aspects, has limitations. The primary data was collected based on a small-scale study of responses. The English-speaking group sample included mere British students, thus, the study implied a bias towards British English, instead of American English, especially in terms of pronunciation. One another shortcoming was the secondary data which
was obtained mostly on internet. Although the study attempted to catch up with accurate numerate data, restrictions in some secondary sources might affect the precision of information.

4. Vietnam tourist slogans – A linguistic analysis

4.1. Overview

Vietnam tourism evolution has two major phases. The first one from 2000 to 2010 was seen as the introduction stage, where the country just opened the tourist market. The second period began in 2011 and would last until the end of 2020, in which stage Vietnam is planning to achieve a 10 to 15% annual increase in international visitors, and a 15 to 18% annual increase in domestic travellers (Hanoi Tourism, 2011). This period is classified in this paper as the growth stage of Vietnam tourism.

4.1.1. Vietnam tourist slogans in introduction stage from 2000 to 2010

In 2000, the first tourist slogan announced by VNAT was “Việt Nam – Điểm đến của Thiên niên kỷ mới”, and “Vietnam – A Destination for the New Millennium” as an English translation. At that time, the tourism industry of Vietnam was newly born, and mainly aimed at domestic market. The slogan, therefore, was designed for domestic use, rather than promoting the image of Vietnam worldwide. Because of this reason, it was made to completely follow Vietnamese metrical rules. The duty to translate from Vietnamese into English slogan was assigned to VNAT by the government, which was seen as a shortcoming because VNAT’s specialization was tourism, not linguistics. However, rumors of an English translation were unreliable because there were few articles found either on internet or in printed newspapers about it. The slogan, instead, was mentioned and translated unofficially by some travel forums. I myself have never heard of the formal English release.

The negligent informal translation resulted in the lack of rhythm in the English version. Regarding linguistics, the main difference between Vietnamese and English is tone. Vietnamese is considered a single tonal language which uses tones mainly to differentiate or inflect words (Cap, 2011). Each word possesses one tone which will be put in the first vowel. There are six different tones, making up six different words given the same constitution of alphabetical letters. For that reason, Vietnamese metrical rules are not only based on the repetition of consonants and vowels, but they also employ tonal phonemes as a way to create puns and catchy sounds.
Likewise, tone is considered a premise to build rhythm in short striking phrases such like slogans. Vietnamese tones are categorized into two collections, known as high pitch set and low pitch set. The traditional rule of rhythm is alternating between high and low tones, together with the effect of either alliteration or vowel repeat, to create resolution and harmonization in speaking. Likewise, the Vietnamese slogan “Việt Nam – Điểm đến của Thiên niên kỷ mới” was built for rhyme sake. There appears the repetition of the main vowel “e” /e/ found in “Việt”, “Điểm”, “đến”, “Thiên” and “niên”. The pronunciation of “Điểm” / djem/ “đến” /, den/ “thiên” /, tjen/ “niên” /, njen/ together with “Việt” in Việt-Nam /, vjet’na: m/ creates alliteration. The slogan rhymes fully in THIÊN NIÊN /, jen - jen/, which at the same time can be compounded to the term “THIÊN NIÊN KỲ” to portray the meaning of “Millennium”. The slogan also contains alternate pitch range following tonal rule:

“Việt Nam – Điểm đến của Thiên niên kỷ mới”

L/H – L/H/H/H/L/H/H (L and H stand for “Low” and “High” respectively)

The end of high tone normally denotes a sense of excitement. The harmonization in rhymes and tones appeared attractive to Vietnamese people, yet the slogan endured several critiques because of the excess of words, which challenged travellers to keep it in mind.

The English version possesses a refrain in vowel sounds between “destination” /destı’neʃ(ə)n/ and “millennium” /mɪˈlɛnɪəm/, but I doubt very much that it is no more than a literal translation from the Vietnamese version. For example “Điểm đến” means “destination”, “của” is “for”, and “Thiên niên kỷ mới” is exactly translated as “The new Millennium”. The meaning is translated precisely; however, the effect in alliteration, vowel refrain, tones, and puns is somewhat lost. Unfortunately, the length is maintained in both versions. Regarding my experiment, this slogan arrived at the fifth place among eight given slogans.
Despite those shortcomings, the slogan was a breakthrough since there was no English slogan before 2000. It marked a new era for Vietnam in the world, while not so long ago the country was known only by wars. VNAT also made good use of visual effects in this tourist campaign. The slogan came together with picture of a young smiling lady, the blend effect of which guided readers to an interpretation of Vietnam’s freshness, liveliness, youth, and hospitality. Compared with old images of hostile and torment wars in Vietnam, readers eventually arrived at “change” with regard to the metaphoric phrase “New Millennium”. A conclusion was drawn to support this image of “change”: from “war” to “peace”. The ad implied that Vietnam was having a thorough revolution in politics and economics to become independent, dynamic and confident.

The English version – “Vietnam – A Destination for the New Millennium” – was expected to run up to five years, from 2000 to 2005. However, its unclear origin resulted in several copyright disputes, which eventually had the slogan banned in 2003 (Thao Vy, 2010). VNAT, therefore, reluctantly switched to a new slogan – “Welcome to Vietnam”, which was a mere temporary alternative to use in one year left of the timeline. “Welcome to Vietnam” came under bad reputation and stringent censorship from linguists and the media (Tran Tam, 2011) because of the mediocre structure, and hence the flat semantic content. The slogan suffered from the opposite shortcoming to its previous fellow: rather than redundancy, the slogan was short, simple, and monotonous. Moreover, the lack of either refrain or implied figurative message resulted in harsh literary criticism. The Vietnamese version “Chào mừng đến Việt Nam” faced the same problem, and was left unnoticeable by majority of domestic travellers.

In 2005, a large amount of investments was given to the nationwide slogan contest to find out the most deserving slogan. “Vietnam – the hidden charm” won first place in the competition, and was selected as the country’s slogan for the period of 2005 to 2010 – seen as the glorious years of Vietnam tourism development. One point worth noting, from 2005 slogans were made bilingual with concentration on English language (Ngan Luong, 2010). This trend, however, turned out to be the neglect of the Vietnamese version, which meant the country paid less
attention to domestic market. For example, the Vietnamese phrase “Việt Nam – Về đẹp tiệm ăn” is a plain translation from “Vietnam – the hidden charm”. It might be one of those reasons why the slogan was not welcomed much by Vietnamese community (Tran Tam, 2011). Regarding the English slogan, “Vietnam – the hidden charm” implies a pattern of similarity to draw attention, which is found intriguing through the use of repeated sounds of vowel, known as assonance, between the last syllable of the country’s name “Viet – nam” /nɑːm/ and the last word of the slogan, “charm” /ʃɑːm/. According to Myers (1994, p.34), “assonance works only with stressed syllables”. Here, however, assonance is applied, yet rhymes are found on unstressed syllables. It is merely because the fact that “Vietnam” is the name of country, and the different linguistic structure of which prevents the word to sound like English. The intonation, therefore, depends much on speakers. Generally Vietnam is pronounced /ˈVjet nɑːm/ with stress on the first syllable. Likewise, the slogan comes with a stress on “hidden”, rather than “charm”. Many British English speakers might find unseen pun on reading “hidden-charm” in a fast way. The unstressed syllable -DEN /dn/ of “hidden” and the sound of “charm” /ʃɑːm/ create a link “-den –charm” /ˈdn - ʃɑːm/, the sound of which is found similar to “Vietnam” /ˈVjet - nɑːm/. US English speakers, however, pronounces /t/ in “charm” /ʃɑːrm/ so the rhyme does not seem to work in such case.

The slogan also received compliments for the idea of the associated logo. The graphic picture features lotus flower bulb bent as the shape of “S”, which letter refers to Vietnam in the world map (Ngan Luong, 2010). This figurative image of lotus bulb, which is considered the national flower, together with the familiar “S” shape, suggests a link to the country. According to the literature theory of words and images, comparison, in some cases, might create association deviating from the original message (Myers, 1994). Fortunately, to this extent the slogan has limited the sources of references and interpretation, thus, those who are unaware of the link between Vietnam, lotus, and the symbol “S”, can still recognize the message in a positive way. Nevertheless, at that time the slogan associated with some controversial matters (Tran Tam, 2011), most of which were arguments about the vague image of Vietnam. One critic believed “the hidden charm” can inspire emotions
in hearers, draw them into experiencing the country, yet it was not impressive; and failed to portray, utterly and singularly, the distinctive image of Vietnam in the world. Overall, opposite ideas were wholly about the impact of this slogan being far too light, which cannot guarantee a comeback from tourists (Ngan Luong, 2010).

4.1.2. Vietnam tourist slogans in growth stage from 2011 to present

Vietnam entered its growth stage of tourism, at the same time the competition between Asian countries got intense. The issue became enormous, and it was vital to deliver a serious and incisive nation branding strategy. This positioning strategy was supposed to aim at a niche market where competitors had not, or could not, occupy (Myers, 1998). Taken into such consideration, VNAT announced to switch to sea tourism as the main target. Vietnam is given some of the best beaches in the world, and, in fact, majority of visitors come to Vietnam through sea tours. For instance, sea tourism occupies much as 70% of the annual tourism revenue (Trung Chau, 2011). The government, thus, granted a large amount of investments for marketing campaigns in sea tourism. One of the programs, called “Actions for Vietnam Tourism”, was designed to support and stimulate tourist companies to be more proactive in attracting international travellers. The first step of the program, again, was to create an intriguing national slogan that encompassed the changing focus of Vietnam tourism.

After winning a meticulous slogan contest, as part of the “Actions for Vietnam Tourism” operation in 2011, “Vietnam – A different Orient” of Cowan advertising company was announced to run in the 5-year strategy from 2011 to 2015 (Tran Tam, 2011). “Vietnam – A different Orient” received widespread media attention right after the contest. However, it was criticized not deserving despite its triumph in the competition. The slogan is, till now, suffering from the same critique as “Vietnam – The hidden Charm”: it is a mere edited version, which, again, describes the country in an abstract way. Tim Russell, an English linguist living in Vietnam, believes that the slogan gives a sense of “timidity” in introducing Vietnam (Lan Dung, 2011), compared with our neighbors who boast about their countries in more clear, interesting, and incisive ways, such as “amazing”, “incredible”, “unique”, and “ultimate in diversity”...

Philippines employs exclamation “WOW” to over-represent the feeling of surprise, along with exaggerated intonation and facial expression.
“Vietnam – A different Orient”, contrary to its successful fellows, reveals several shortcomings. In terms of vocabulary, “different” gives an equivocal expression because you cannot tell exactly whether “different” is positive or negative. Whereas other Asian neighbors describe themselves the way they want hearers to address. For example, tourists understand that Malaysia is “truly Asia”, Thailand is “amazing”, Singapore is “unique”, yet Vietnam is merely ... “different”. It is, however, undeniable that “different” can create a sense of curiosity, which conveys the same effect as “Vietnam – The hidden charm”. But regarding the objective of VNAT to have a more comprehensive slogan, “Vietnam – A different Orient’ fails to illustrate. The associated logo also receives many critiques. According to Cowan director, the star symbol simulates Vietnam’s national flag (Lan Dung, 2011).

Vietnam flag features red background with yellow star, thus, these two colors are seen as representatives of Vietnam. However, the star symbol in the logo consists more than just the representative colors; instead, it has five different colors ranging from red, green, purple, yellow, and blue. Cowan explains the colorfulness aims at delivering an image of “diversity” of Vietnam, with red being the country, yellow being the prosperous land, purple being the national flower – lotus – and green being forests and fields. The complicated combination of colors, in fact, makes a negative impact on majority of Vietnamese people (Tran Tam, 2011). I personally find the logo incomprehensible. Not until I read the explanation by Cowan did I understand what the logo was trying to indicate. In theory, sometimes advertising appears as one way message without active participation from audiences (Myers, 1998). That is exactly the problem Cowan encounters.
People cannot figure out the simile themselves because the given cues are ambiguous. I find myself struggle to relate purple to lotus since I most know the flower as pink. To foreigners the logo is a mere vivid picture because we cannot expect them, whose one or two trips to Vietnam, to understand such a complex strata of metaphors – five colors and five messages. Moreover, Vietnam invariably associates with red, as seen in our national flag, sport uniforms, and in previous tourist slogans. Cowan wants to break the common reference to portray a sense of “diversity”, nevertheless, they fail to convince readers to accept that new image.

Moreover, the objective of the slogan is inconsistent with the market segment Vietnam is aiming at. According to the latest Tourism Performance report 2010 (Vietnam Tourism, 2011) majority of visitors come to Vietnam are from Asia, rather than Europe or America. Thus, the slogan appears unpersuasive because the message “different orient” tends to attract European and American visitors, who are of other continents and are most likely to enjoy the differences between theirs and the oriental continent’s cultures. Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia are more sensible as they exploit general slogans, which are suitable for both types of visitors. Overall, the phrase “A different orient” creates a mysterious feeling that orients towards first-time visitors who are curious to explore new intriguing destinations. Yet given the new concentration on sea tourism, the target market of Vietnam, however, turns out to be middle aged and retired people whose traveling purpose is relaxation, rather than young people who are drawn to adventures. This old market possibly enjoys landscape sightseeing tours with light activities; those of culinary delights and cultural experiences. They are also the type of travellers who will re-visit in future. Returning visitor category is considered one most profitable segment of tourism businesses; because their aim in leisure tours involves in the selection of best restaurants, most famous resorts and most renowned landmarks to visit. That said, to any extent, the slogan seems to deviate away from the focus of Vietnam tourism.

4.2. Vietnam compared with other Asian countries
Vietnam’s strengths are rich tourism resources, which won recognition by UNESCO World Heritage Committee with over ten renowned Heritage sites, beating up those of other ASEAN – The Association of Southeast Asian Nations – countries, including Thailand (five), Malaysia (three), Philippine(five) and Singapore (none) (World Heritage Convention, 2011). The tourist
attractions in Vietnam comprise a variety of natural, cultural, and mix properties, making the country itself an arresting destination.

Nevertheless, Vietnam’s main weakness is the lack of single visual focus on nation-branding strategy. Other Asian countries, such as Malaysia and Thailand, have programs to build long-term consumer relationship, starting with one unique slogan to form a distinctive perception of their country’s image in the world. In contrast, Vietnam concentrates on short-term strategies which change slogans and logos every period. The continual change signifies that Vietnam still experiences difficulties in choosing an outstanding trait to advertise. While Thailand is pleased with “Amazing”, Philippines is satisfied with “Wow” and Singapore is happy with “Unique”, Vietnam, and its short-term slogan program, seems forgettable to tourists. Branding nation is a paramount issue of Vietnam these days.

Next, Vietnam pays less attention to investment and innovation. Conventional marketing programs, which are cliché-ridden in common steps and mediocre in implementation, have shown to limit the potential extension of the tourism industry. For instance, Vietnam’s rare image update is seen as a shortage of versatility, compared with Singapore and India who regularly change their landscape images. Truly, picture of the girl smiling is nearly the only result I obtain from the internet irrespective of key word change in slogan search. This is a serious shortcoming since there are thousands of beautiful places in Vietnam to advertise. Moreover, innovation and creativity is left unattended in Vietnamese advertisements. For example, India designs photos with letter “I” from “INDIA” being made transparent, in order to be filled up with a bit of landscape in the picture. The idea is no doubt a novelty in landscape posters.
Finally, there are limitations in word choice and in metrical structure of most Vietnamese slogans. People can make up similar slogans by replacing “Vietnam” with other countries’ names, for instance, “Welcome to Thailand” or “Singapore – A Destination for the New Millennium”. Whereas “Incredible India” and “Malaysia – Truly Asia” (/ə/ – /ə/) are perfect examples of alliteration and vowel repeat, which cannot be applied to any other country. Let say, “Vietnam – Truly Asia” or “Incredible Thailand” can never deliver the same amazing effect. Indeed, puns can act as a mean of differentiation in slogans. There seem to be two exceptions, with a little of metrical repeat, in “Vietnam – the hidden charm” and “Vietnam – A different Orient”, which, however, is acceptable yet not great enough in terms of linguistic structure and semantic content to impress visitors. As said, slogans should as well convey objectives of tourism strategies. For example, Malaysia with “Truly Asia” aims to be the center of Asian cultural exchange, commercial activities, shopping malls, and most modern resorts (Tran Tam, 2011); while India wants to show their pride of having 28 UNESCO World Heritage sites (World Heritage Convention, 2011), as described “incredible” in landscapes.

5. A Future direction

5.1. Experiment findings

Based on the analysis, I developed four new slogans, along with four existing slogans, to test on a group of potential visitors. The effect of catchy prints and intention design – font, style and color – was eliminated by providing only plain texts. The purpose was to generate fair results because some old slogans had no print formats, including “Vietnam – A Destination for the New Millennium” and “Welcome to Vietnam”. Furthermore, the experiment aimed at the language of slogans, rather than the total effect generated in conjunction with other modes of communications. Participants were twenty students, ten of whom came from England/EU and the rest were from Asia – three of them are Vietnamese. Students were chosen carefully in terms of demographic category of region – EU/British and Asian – and they were potential because most of them had already heard of, or seen, or would be affected by these slogans to visit Vietnam in future. The research was a small-scale study of responses that was analyzed using market research technique. Each informant was given a questionnaire, which was a list of eight printed slogans (see appendix), and was asked to rank the slogans as their favor distribution. Outcomes were then collected and calculated based on statistical methods. The score ranged from 1 to 8,
with 1 being the lowest and 8 being the highest – in reverse order with ranking. For instance, if “Vietnam – the hidden charm” was ranked 1st it would score 8 points. Points were summed up later to provide corresponding results (see appendix for details of rankings). Much as predicted, “Vietnam – the hidden charm” scored the highest among existing slogans of Vietnam. The latest slogan “Vietnam – A different Orient” and “Vietnam – A Destination for the new Millennium” were fairly indifferent, while “Welcome to Vietnam” received the lowest score. The result of the study partially reflected the current state of Vietnam slogans. In fact, VNAT has recently announced to have canceled the implementation of “Vietnam – A different Orient”, and will keep using “Vietnam – the hidden charm” as long as there will be a more adequate replacement (Hanh, 2011).

Among new slogans, “Savor Vietnam – Flavor of Asia” scored the highest. It also outsored the old slogans, say, even more than “Vietnam – the hidden charm”. The finding, thus, suggested that a change would be necessary. The order of the four new slogans drew a rough conclusion about the taste of two groups of informants. The English-speaking –EU/British group – preferred more concise phrases with simple word of choice. Unlike my prediction, the effect of rhyme, refrain and alliteration was relatively light on these students. For instance, four of eight British students ranked “Savour Vietnam – Flavour of Asia” lower than “Vietnam – The hidden charm” and “Vietnam – Once visited. Never forgotten”. Puns also failed to attract attention of this group. The slogan “Vietnam – Your Vision. Your Dream. Our Nation” with half-rhymes (VISION /ˈvɪʒ(ə)n/ and NATION /ˈneɪʃ(ə)n/), as well as a pun on the name of “Vieṭ Nām”, “Vision”, and “Nation” turned out to be unnoticeable perhaps because the slogan was presented as plain text. Nevertheless, Asian participants were drawn to phrases that contained rhymes and figurative messages, including “Savour Vietnam – Flavour of Asia” and “Vietnam – A Destination for the new Millennium”.

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5.2. A nomination for future change

The success of “Savour Vietnam – Flavour of Asia”, shown in the experiment, suggested a change in slogans for Vietnam. In particular, I would promote an advertising program to run with the slogan “Savour Vietnam – Flavour of Asia”. The emphasis will be put on both slogans and pictures. In such case, pictures will be employed as a peripheral element to support the message of the slogan. As said above, Vietnam lacks a single visual focus; thus, the strategy will assist with the selection of a typical memorable image. The radiant smile has been considered a signature of hospitable Vietnamese people, thus “smiles” will be the visual concentration of this nation-branding strategy. The above picture, which features a girl smiling elegantly in “áo dài” (long dress) and “nón lá” (conical leaf-hat), has been pointed the main poster to display the slogan “Savour Vietnam – Flavour of Asia” in full. The poster will be followed up by a colorful sub-album of spectacular natural landscapes – famous beaches as concentration – and cultural gastronomy in hopes of stimulating the desire to “Savour Vietnam”.

![Poster Image](image1)

![Sub-album Image](image2)
6. Conclusion

The study gives linguistic insights into Vietnam tourist slogans in two periods: from 2000 to 2010 and from 2011 to present. Before 2000, most Asia countries had already started to recognize the importance of global strategy to create bilingual slogans, whereas not until 2003 did Vietnam realize the need to have comprehensive English slogans. The comparison between Vietnam and other Asian countries provides an overview of Vietnam’s current position in the big Asian tourism market. The paper investigates strengths and weaknesses of Vietnam in relation to some direct competitors from South East Asia. The findings suggest changes in nation-branding strategy, especially through the use of innovative English slogans and catchy pictures as an essence of communication to create mood and to draw attention to audiences (Cook, 2002). In providing a more thorough linguistic study of change, the paper presents an experiment, and the result of which has shown multifaceted viewpoints of audiences towards a successful slogan. Based on the experiment, “Savour Vietnam – Flavour of Asia” has been nominated as a promising solution for future change of Vietnam tourist slogans.
References


Appendix

Questionnaire: VIETNAM TOURIST SLOGANS RANKING

Please rank the following slogans from 1 to 8

(1 being the most favorable and 8 being the least)

1. Welcome to Vietnam
2. Vietnam - A Destination for the New Millennium
3. Vietnam - The hidden charm
4. Vietnam - A different Orient
5. Vietnam - Inspire your life's Dreams
7. Vietnam - Once visited. Never forgotten
8. Savour Vietnam - Flavour of Asia

Final ranking based on statistical calculations

1. Savour Vietnam - Flavour of Asia
2. Vietnam - The hidden charm
3. Vietnam - Once visited. Never forgotten
4. Vietnam - A different Orient
5. Vietnam - A Destination for the New Millennium
6. Vietnam - Inspire your life's Dreams
8. Welcome to Vietnam