

# Thailand Tourism Advertising – Lessons of Experiences for Vietnam Amidst International International Integration

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## ABSTRACT

In the era of globalization, tourism has become an important economic sector, contributing to the economic development of many countries around the world. Vietnam, with its abundant tourism potential, is gradually asserting its position on the world tourism map. However, in order to attract foreign tourists and enhance tourism advertising activities, Vietnam can learn from the advertising experiences of Thailand. This article, using a literature review, observation, and participation method, will analyze the development and success of Thailand's tourism industry, including advertising, and provide some important lessons that Vietnam can apply in the context of international economic integration.

**Keywords:** *Thailand tourism, tourism advertising, tourism culture*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The advertisement of tourism has become a crucial factor in attracting visitors and promoting the development of the tourism industry. Ho Chi Minh City is the largest cultural and economic center of Vietnam, as well as the largest educational hub in the country, where various ethnicities and foreign communities gather for investment, work, study, and living. Ho Chi Minh City also attracts many tourists for sightseeing, networking, work-related activities, and experiencing tourism services, and entertainment, including medical tourism. One of the distinctive features contributing to the appearance of a thriving and bustling urban area is the large-sized advertisements and billboards in both indoor and outdoor public spaces.

In recent times, tourism advertising in Ho Chi Minh City has implemented various forms and channels, including television, radio, newspapers, and magazines to convey messages about tourism. Currently, online advertising methods and social media are becoming popular with the use of websites, mobile applications, and social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Online advertisements often combine images, videos, and engaging content to capture tourists' attention. Events and tourism exhibitions are also organized to promote and introduce tourist destinations. These events attract the participation of tourism companies, hotels, restaurants, and other tourism service providers to showcase products and share information with visitors. Traditional methods such as street advertising and billboards are also employed. Large, illuminated billboards with attractive messages attract the attention of pedestrians and tourists, especially in main routes, shopping areas, and tourist districts like District 1 and District 5 with high efficiency (V. Le, 2020).

Despite the professional and diverse approaches to tourism advertising in Ho Chi Minh City compared to other localities in the country, the number of tourists returning to the city, and Vietnam in general, is relatively low. According to Dr. Nuno F. Ribeiro from RMIT University Vietnam, the return rate is approximately 8-10%, a very small percentage compared to Vietnam's tourism potential (Hai Minh, 2023). The spending of tourists in Ho Chi Minh City and other tourist destinations in Vietnam is also limited. According to a recent survey by the Ho Chi Minh City Department of Tourism, the average expenditure of international tourists in the city is 3 million VND per person per day. In comparison, domestic tourists spend 1.6 million VND per person per day. Vietnam's traffic of tourists and their expenditure are respective lower than that of Thailand by 50% and 40% (Tien Phong Online News, 2023).

## 1. RESEARCH METHODS:

Comparing to other countries in the region, Thailand has successfully built its tourism brand, positioning itself prominently on the world tourism map as a top destination. With captivating natural landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and unique cuisine, Thailand has attracted millions of tourists worldwide. In 2020, Thailand welcomed over 30 million international visitors, contributing significantly to the country's economy. After the COVID-19 pandemic, Thailand implemented impressive tourism recovery strategies, and according to Thai economic reports, the tourism industry is expected to achieve a 4% growth in 2023 thanks to tourism services. Thailand's success is not only attributed to its beautiful scenery and diverse cultural heritage but also to smartly and effectively designed tourism advertising strategies that convey special messages and the unique value of Thai offered to tourists.

As Vietnam is taking various measures to recover its economy post-pandemic, implementing plans to achieve the goals of the ASEAN Community 2025 and executing the Tourism Marketing Strategy of Vietnam until 2030 (Ha Thanh, 2023) to develop tourism as well as to utilize tourism as a fulcrum of economic development, learning and applying lessons from ASEAN countries, especially Thailand, can be highly significant. By adopting effective tourism advertising strategies, Vietnam can quickly enhance its attractiveness and attract a large number of tourists, contributing to economic development and promoting the country's image globally.

This article, using a literature review, observation, and participation method, will analyze the development and success of Thailand's tourism industry, including advertising, and provide some important lessons that Vietnam can apply in the context of international economic integration. Based on an in-depth study of the tourism culture in Thailand, we will analyze Thailand's tourism advertising and the successful factors that the smokeless industry has brought, thereby proposing some lessons that Vietnam can apply to improve the effectiveness of tourism advertising and develop the tourism industry in the context of international economic integration, aiming for sustainable development.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

### 3.1. *Overview of Thai tourism and advertising in Thai tourism.*

Thailand has rapidly developed its tourism industry and become one of the top destinations in Southeast Asia. From 2015 to 2019, the number of international tourists to Thailand doubled from 19.9 million to 39.8 million. The revenue from tourism increased from USD 64 billion in 2015 to USD 103 billion in 2019. Despite being severely affected by the impacts of the pandemic in the years 2020-2022, Thailand has achieved promising results through economic recovery strategies, with tourism being considered a key economic sector. This success is also attributed to Thailand's well-structured tourism advertising strategy. Thailand has implemented a creative and effective tourism advertising strategy to attract international tourists. The "Amazing Thailand" campaign is considered one of Thailand's most successful advertising campaigns. The "Amazing Thailand" advertising campaign utilizes creative and effective media, ranging from video advertisements to animated images and digital television, to convey an attractive and distinctive message about Thailand. In 2023, Thailand focused on developing tourism under the theme "Thailand Tourism Year 2023: New Wonderful Chapters." The goal was to welcome at least 20 million tourists to Thailand by introducing diverse tourism products and services, while also promoting sustainability through the use of the 5F "Soft Power" platform (including Food, Festival, Film, Fight, and Fashion) along with creating sustainable standards (D. Huyen-Truong Thuy, 2023).

Concurrently, Thailand has developed a variety of tourism products, such as adventure tourism, eco-tourism, cultural tourism, agricultural tourism, and virtual tourism. Thanks to this diversity and impressive advertising methods, Thailand has captured the interest of international tourists with various needs and preferences. Thailand leverages social media and travel websites to promote its destinations and tourism activities. Using platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter has allowed Thailand to reach and directly interact with international tourists. Additionally, through collaboration with numerous international partners in the tourism industry, Thailand has exchanged experiences, gained potential customers, and enhanced tourism promotion.

### 3.2. *Some suggestions to enhance the effectiveness of tourism advertising for Vietnam based on the experience of Thailand.*

Vietnam is recognized as a country with great potential for tourism development (Diep Anh, 2022). With diverse natural landscapes ranging from mountains, seas, and river deltas to majestic highland forests, Vietnam attracts tourists with unique destinations such as the ancient town of Hoi An, Ha Long Bay. Additionally, Vietnam boasts a rich cultural heritage, unique traditional festivals, and enticing cuisine, with friendly and hospitable Vietnamese people. However, to fully exploit the potential of the tourism industry, tourism advertising needs to be carried out systematically and effectively. Here are some advertising strategies that Vietnam can adopt based on Thailand's experience: (1) Utilize diverse media: Vietnam can leverage various media channels such as television, radio, print media, travel magazines, and social media for tourism advertising. Television and radio advertising can reach a large audience, while social media can directly engage with target customers and foster deeper interaction.

(2) Harness beautiful images and videos: High-quality images and videos are crucial for attracting the attention of customers in the tourism sector. Vietnam should utilize its beautiful and unique landscapes to create appealing and emotionally captivating images and videos that showcase the tourism value of its destinations. (3) Combine cultural messages and experiences: Vietnam can create advertising messages that combine distinctive cultural features with the tourism experience. With a rich cultural heritage and unique traditions, Vietnam can highlight its uniqueness through tourism advertising, generating curiosity and interest from tourists. (4) Collaborate with tourism partners and investors: Tourism partners can provide information and support for tour packages, activities, and accommodations. Meanwhile, investors can contribute financially and support the international promotion of Vietnam's tourism. In the context of integration and development, ASEAN countries share many similarities, and Vietnam needs to identify its unique strengths and competitive advantages. Once identified, a creative and unique advertising message should be developed to attract international tourists. Whether the existing slogan "Vietnam - Timeless Charm" needs to be changed should be determined through thorough data collection, analysis, customer psychology evaluation, and comparison with successful tourism slogans of other ASEAN countries that are already successful with their media campaign advertising for their tourism motto. These mottos bring a great opportunity of economic gains. Upon what they have earned, images, messages, themes, and topics will be modified and renewed.

(5) Invest in media and creative advertising platforms: Vietnam needs to increase investment in various media channels and develop creative advertising platforms. Using technology and modern media such as video, animated images, digital television, and social media can help create unique advertisements that capture the attention of international tourists. (6) Build international partnerships and cooperation: Strengthening cooperation with international partners in the tourism industry will allow Vietnam to learn and exchange experiences from countries with developed tourism. Through international cooperation, Vietnam can enhance promotion and reach a large number of international tourists. (7) Utilize digital resources and social media: Harnessing social media and travel websites is crucial, as they have become powerful advertising tools in the tourism industry. Vietnam needs to develop and manage websites and social media platforms dedicated to tourism to introduce unique destinations, activities, and travel experiences, creating engaging and interactive content to attract the attention of international tourists.

(8) Content marketing and travel videos are still considered an effective method to convey travel messages and establish connections with potential customers. The National Tourism Administration, the Tourism Association, and travel companies should create high-quality content such as articles, blogs, videos, and podcasts about travel destinations, culture, cuisine, and recreational activities in Vietnam. Additionally, it is essential to utilize video platforms like YouTube, Vimeo, and TikTok to share engaging travel videos that capture the attention of international tourists. Furthermore, incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) in creating virtual travel products is also recommended. (9) Innovation in design and travel experience through the development of unique tourism products: Developing unique and distinctive tourism products to attract new international tourists and welcome those who have visited Vietnam before.

(10) Consideration of effective advertising placements: Based on observations in Thailand, we found that effective advertising placements are crucial. Billboards need to be put in open spaces that can attract people's attention and easily come to one's sight. Specifically:

- Airports: Advertising at airports is an effective way to reach tourists as they arrive in a city or country. With a large influx of international tourists to Thailand, airport advertising helps create a first impression and spark curiosity about destinations and travel experiences. International airports in Vietnam, such as Tan Son Nhat Airport and Noi Bai Airport, should also adopt this approach.

- City centers: Placing ads in central areas of the city ensures access to a large number of international tourists. Main streets, squares, shopping centers, and entertainment areas are suitable locations to advertise, capturing the attention of tourists and introducing local tourist activities.
- Public transportation: Advertising on public transportation such as buses, subways, trains, and taxis is an effective way to promote tourism. Placing ads on these vehicles reaches a daily commuter audience, increasing brand awareness and visibility.
- Tourist information centers: Advertising at tourist information centers, rental points, and locations welcoming international tourists. These centers are often the first destination for tourists in a new country, making advertising here highly effective.

Additionally, the effectiveness of an advertising campaign depends on content, creativity, and targeting the right audience. Planning tourism advertising needs consideration of local factors, target markets, and the uniqueness of the tourism product. Regarding advertising content, those related to festivals can be highly effective in promoting tourism. Festivals are a distinctive and attractive cultural element of each country, and utilizing them in advertising campaigns can capture the interest of tourists and spark curiosity to explore. Advertising products about festivals should emphasize the unique experience they offer: Festivals provide a unique experience that cannot be found elsewhere. Additionally, it's essential to establish cultural and historical connections: Festivals often have deep ties to the culture and history of a country. Through advertising, the locals can tell the story of the festival, and introduce its origin, cultural values, and history. This helps customers understand more about the festival's characteristics and creates a connection with the country and its people. Given the agricultural nature of the country, we can combine these elements into a creative tourism advertising product on traditional platforms.

(11) Size and color of tourism advertising boards: Despite the importance of these two elements in how they attract people's attention, there is no one-size-fits-all for tourism advertising. Instead, the size and color of advertising boards should be adjusted to fit the goals, message, and uniqueness of the advertising campaign.

- Size: This varies depends on the location of the boards. The size must be large enough to attract attention and convey the message clearly and visibly to customers.
- Color: The colors used in tourism advertising should generally match the context and the message being conveyed. Bright, vibrant colors are often used to express cultural features, uniqueness, and the excitement of the country.
- Unique design: The success of Thailand's tourism advertising is also attributed to its unique and impressive design. Using design elements such as bold images, creative fonts, attractive graphics, and special typography can create a unique and memorable tourism advertising campaign.

(12) 3D and virtual tourism: Thailand has been making great strides in 3D and virtual advertising. In 2021, Thailand employed virtual reality tours for 4 destinations including Bangkok, Phuket, Chiang Mai, and Surat Thani (TTG Asia, 2021). Through virtual reality, tourists can gain a lifelike experience and be allowed to interact with the simulated tourist attractions. Vietnam should learn how to take advantage of this technological advancement to raise the interest of travelers from afar and encourage them to travel to real places in the future.

(13) However, to achieve success in tourism advertising, the most crucial factor is 5F marketing strategy in 2023: Food, Fashion, Fight (MUAY Thai), Film, Festival (VOV, 23/05/2023) is also built on:

- Cultural diversity: Thailand has a rich cultural heritage with diverse religions, customs, traditions, and unique festivals. to focus on the message and the unique value that we want to bring to tourists. In this context, the experience of festivals, unique culture, beautiful landscapes, and culinary specialties are important factors that should be highlighted in advertising to attract customers and instill confidence in the tourism experience in Thailand, which Vietnam can learn from. The Tourists visiting Thailand have the opportunity to experience and learn about these diverse cultural aspects. Vietnam also has a rich cultural heritage with various ethnic groups, traditions, and special festivals. Honoring and promoting the cultural diversity of Vietnam can create a special and appealing point for international tourists.

- Beautiful natural landscapes: Vietnam also has many equally beautiful natural attractions, such as Ha Long Bay, Da Nang, Nha Trang, and Phu Quoc. Advertising and preserving the natural landscapes of Vietnam can attract nature and environment-loving tourists.
- Unique cuisine: Alike Thailand, Vietnam also boasts a rich and distinctive culinary scene, featuring dishes such as pho, banh mi, nem, and specialties from various regions. Promoting Vietnam's unique and high-quality cuisine can generate interest and awaken the taste buds of tourists.
- Professional customer service: Thailand has developed a tourism industry with professional and friendly customer service. The dedicated and attentive hospitality of staff in welcoming and guiding tourists is noteworthy. Vietnam needs to enhance the quality of customer service, creating a friendly and welcoming environment for tourists to have the best experience when visiting the country.
- Pioneering in tourism business: Thailand has succeeded in developing a diverse tourism model, ranging from resort tourism to adventure tourism, medical tourism, and cultural tourism. Vietnam can learn from diversifying its tourism products and creating unique tour packages to meet the diverse needs of tourists.

(14) Personalization of tourism experiences: Thailand last year started promoting plans of collaborating with multiple partners in different service sectors to personalize travelers's experiences with different themes and needs such as health and wellness, sports tourism, and responsible tourism. They also develop different tourist packages for new segments of tourists such as digital nomads and remote workers/teleworkers (TAT Newsroom, 2022). Vietnam can learn how to diversify tourists' experiences starting by updating and enhancing hotel services to accommodate different needs and preferences. Promoting divergent forms of traveling and experiencing should also be a priority.

(15) Finally, according to us, age and ethnic characteristics of different countries can help in designing effective tourism advertising products. This is especially important when wanting to reach and appeal to specific customer groups because:

- Different age groups often have different travel interests and needs. For example, young people may be interested in adventurous experiences, entertainment tourism, and vibrancy, while older individuals may prioritize relaxing and peaceful vacations. Dividing by age thus can create advertising products and tour packages that suit the interests and needs of each customer group.
- Enhancing cultural experiences: Ethnic characteristics can also influence customers' travel interests and experiences. Ethnic groups have unique cultural heritage, customs, traditions, and festivals. By understanding and analyzing ethnic characteristics, we can design advertising and tour packages to create a rich, deep, and unique travel experience for customers.
- Optimizing marketing strategies: Dividing customers by age and ethnic characteristics also helps optimize your marketing strategy. We can choose appropriate communication channels and messages to reach each target audience group. Additionally, grasping the interests and trends of each group helps us create engaging and relevant advertising content.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Thai tourism advertising has achieved remarkable success for the country, especially during the economic recovery period after the pandemic. This will help Vietnam "learn from the experience of those who have gone before" in guiding the development of the tourism industry in the coming time. By learning from the advertising experience of Thai tourism, Vietnam needs to identify its characteristics and competitive advantages, invest in creative communication and advertising platforms, build partnerships and international cooperation to enhance the ability to attract international tourists, pay attention to the placement of advertising billboards to attract the attention of tourists, research age-based needs and ethnic characteristics, etc. By applying lessons learned from Thai tourism advertising, Vietnam can enhance the effectiveness of tourism promotion, contributing to the economic development of the country, especially economic recovery after the pandemic, towards sustainable and green development.

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