

# Vietnam National Instagram Content Analysis

Nathan Walker

Geography 365: Tourism Geographies

Dr. Ezra Zeitler

Spring 2020

## **I. Introduction**

Among American society, information on Vietnam is not common knowledge other than the highly controversial Vietnam War. Vietnam is often forgotten in the social sphere in the wake of the more developed countries like China and Japan. In reality, Vietnam has much to offer the world other than being the site of a war that many historians believe never should have happened. Filled with luscious jungle and massive urban centers like Ho Chi Minh City, the country is home to diverse environments, both natural and human constructed. The country can use these assets to boost the economy through advertising Vietnam as a tourism hotspot, further diversifying the economy and assisting the country in continuing to develop. Vietnam saw an increase of nearly 20 percent in annual arrivals from 2018 to 2019, and this trend will likely continue (International Visitors to Viet Nam in December and 12 Months of 2018). With this growth in tourism, it is essential that the organization evolves with technology. A social media presence promotes tourism and is capable of presenting a variety of images. Analyzing these images can provide valuable insight on improving the social media site, which can be done through content analysis. Content analysis is the method researchers approach analyzing Instagram and other social media pages in order to determine trends or lack thereof. All tourist images have “two types of content: manifest and latent” (Hany and Stepchenkova 2015). Both manifest and latent analysis are included in the study.

## **II. Methodology**

A total of 30 images were chosen from the Vietnam Instagram page. To obtain a comprehensive sample of only recent posts, a systemic sampling method was used. A random number generator from one to three was used to determine the starting point of the second most recent post and proceeding by every third post. This was a conscious decision to highlight

current trends in the Vietnam Instagram page, rather than trends that likely are less likely to be noticed by visitors as newer pictures continually replace their older counterparts on the page. The images were sampled February 28, 2020, at 7:38 PM. If a video was chosen, it would be excluded and moved on to the next third image.

Once sampled, the images were analyzed through three major categories consisting of the number of individuals, the landscape of the image, and an additional major category for other variables. These categories were loosely based on Hany and Stepchenkova's (2015) decisions in their study. The individuals category was broken down into three subcategories, no individuals, a single individual, or a group of individuals consisting of two or more. The landscape category consisted of the subcategories urban, rural, or coastal landscapes. Additionally, images were checked for the presence of food in frame, and if the individuals in the image were performing a physically active skill or not. Once the images were categorized, the results were input into a table and calculated for their occurrences as percentages out of the whole sample. Finally, the images were evaluated for general noticeable trends and the impressions had on tourists.

### **III. Manifest Analysis of Imagery**

The images were evaluated based on the categories mentioned previously, and are defined as follows:

#### **Number of Individuals:**

- *No Individual:* If an image had no visible humans in sight, and instead focused on physical features or objects then the image was classified as having no individual. This includes images where an individual may be present but was either too small to be seen in frame or the individual was hidden behind an object.

- *Single Individual:* If an image had one human in frame, then the image was classified as a single individual.
- *Group of Individuals:* If an image contained two or more individuals, then the image was classified as such. It did not matter if the individuals were off in the distance, in the main focus, or off to the side of the frame, it was classified as long as individuals were somewhere in frame.

### **Landscape:**

- *Natural:* Every image contains a landscape. An image falls into the natural category if the focus of the landscape was primarily natural physical features instead of urban environments or villages. Buildings could be in the image only if the physical landscape took up the majority of the frame. For the purpose of the study, this does not include coastlines, only focusing on continental features.
- *Urban:* If an image featured a city, village, or town, then it was categorized as an urban image. This would include features inside shops and restaurants, since it is implied that attractions such as these are located in cities.
- *Coastline:* The coastline category could be considered a subcategory of the natural landscape category. If an image showed a resort, islands, cliffside cruises or other oceanic attractions, the primary focus of the image was decided to be the coast and categorized appropriately, since Vietnam has a popular beach scene.

### **Other Categories:**

- *Food and Drink:* If an image featured food or drink in frame, it was categorized in an attempt to gauge the sociocultural aspect of the Instagram page.

- *Active*: If individuals were seen swimming, hiking, biking, or other such activities then the image was classified as having a physical activity in the shot. Images including forms of automatic transport or walking were excluded from this category.

Category	Count	Percentage
No Individual	11	36.67%
Single Individual	6	20.00%
Group of Individuals	13	43.33%
Natural Landscape	8	27.78%
Urban Landscape	12	40.00%
Coastal Landscape	10	33.33%
Food/Drink	1	3.33%
Active	11	36.67%

Table 1: Images observed in the study and the counts for each category, along with percentages

The counts reveal several insights into the Instagram page. There was only one shot containing food or drink, and even then it was of carried fruits rather than cultural food and drink being enjoyed. The sample also contained almost equal amounts of images containing no individuals, one individual, and a group of individuals. The different landscape categories also had similar counts, as long as the coastal landscapes are considered their own category instead of as a subset of natural landscapes. Overall, it is apparent in the landscape categories and numbers of individuals that effort could have been made to diversify the images.

#### IV. Latent Analysis of Imagery

Several trends become apparent when examining the photos. While the images showed several landscapes and people enjoying them, there appeared to be a lack of images showing things to do other than swimming. Most of the shots in the active category resembled Figure 2., where the focus was more on the landscape than the activity itself. This could be the organization



Figure 2: A shot of swimmers at Ha Long Beach

(Photo 3)



Figure 3: A shot of locals carrying food in Hanoi

(Photo 10)

wanting to accentuate the physical features of Vietnam and depict them as largely undisturbed and unexplored rather than well-traveled trails and more structured forms of tourism. There is also a heavy emphasis on Ha Long Beach shown in Figure 2. As one of the New 7 Wonders of Nature, this amount of representation seems fitting. It is one of the main tourist attractions in Vietnam.

Continuing with the lack of activities, there appears to be few photos of cultural food and drink in the shots. Vietnam has these cultural foods, such as pho, that are becoming increasingly popular with younger generations. It is odd that the only representation of food is Figure 3.

Another surprising factor is the lack of apparent tourists. Most urban images, like Figure 4, are of the city, but with no tourists enjoying them, just Vietnamese. This could be another



Figure 4: A walking street in Ho Chi Minh City

(Photo 15)

attempt, as mentioned before, to cause Vietnam to appear as a destination untouched by tourists. This would make Vietnam more appealing to tourists seeking new places, without chartered tourism and the freedom to explore.

## V. Conclusion

Vietnam is continuing to develop, growing its economy and becoming increasingly interconnected with the rest of the world. As the cost of flights continues to decrease, tourism will continue to increase accordingly.

Vietnam will increasingly find itself in competition with other countries for the attention of tourists. It appears the country's Instagram page has found an appropriate tourism niche for the country for now, as an untouched cultural land full of dense urban cities, rolling hills, jungle, and remote beaches. Images such as those examined in the study are essential for communicating these ideas. However, a country as culturally rich as Vietnam can afford to show off more than just its landscapes. Food and activities are just a few ways that a country can show what it has to



offer, of which, according to the sample, the Instagram page lacks almost entirely or variety respectively. An Instagram page can be a powerful communication tool but also acting as a double-edged sword. A page can cause a country to appear beautiful to some, but bland to others. Tools such as these must be managed appropriately to reap the benefits.



## **VI. Bibliography**

“International Visitors to Viet Nam in December and 12 Months of 2018.” Vietnam National Administration of Tourism. Tourism Information Technology Center, January 3, 2019. <http://vietnamtourism.gov.vn/english/index.php/items/13551>.

Kim, Hany, and Svetlana Stepchenkova. “Effect of Tourist Photographs on Attitudes towards Destination: Manifest and Latent Content.” *Tourism Management* 49 (August 2015): 29–41. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2015.02.004>.

**VII : Appendix**

1. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BjOkDujDA1-/>
2. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BenUwphjahN/>
3. <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bd7V0vpDIJf/>
4. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BcvPAhtjp6q/>
5. <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bbql8CijQ4D/>
6. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BbQuVTAjR1I/>
7. <https://www.instagram.com/p/Ba-UIP7j9ze/>
8. <https://www.instagram.com/p/Ba0DUiYDTYA/>
9. <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bah7YIXD4IG/>
10. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BaOqOFOD4uK/>
11. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BaBeXDhjtAg/>
12. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BZ0621yD3Qh/>
13. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BZifpOsjylr/>
14. [https://www.instagram.com/p/BZVvZ\\_CDONv/](https://www.instagram.com/p/BZVvZ_CDONv/)
15. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BZA5aqKD1L2/>
16. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BYslZLSDQCi/>
17. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BYJDucJDIIM/>
18. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BXz7gqrDHZI/>
19. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BXqMK94jYH3/>
20. [https://www.instagram.com/p/BXXc3t\\_jdPe/](https://www.instagram.com/p/BXXc3t_jdPe/)
21. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BXImQgMjHJK/>
22. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BWuvkYSDNn3/>
23. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BW11LjPDgzt/>
24. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BWUqYb1j0k7/>
25. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BWBvI7XDaYg/>
26. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BV1JoD5D35O/>

27. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BVn4VJMD6w6/>
28. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BVM1mT0jbfe/>
29. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BUriuXVjcWM/>
30. <https://www.instagram.com/p/BUVwMB1DWTY/>