

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN DESTINATION MARKETING: A NETWORK ANALYSIS OF TWO DESTINATIONS IN VIETNAM

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to identify the stakeholders involved in tourism destination marketing networks. The involvement and collaboration of multiple individuals and organisations is widely recognised in destination marketing to promote a destination. Internal stakeholders of a destination and their collaboration are frequently studied in destination marketing research, but little attention is paid to the involvement of external stakeholders.

Design/Methodology/Approach – Quantitative social network analysis is an important approach to understanding stakeholder connections and roles in tourism destinations. In this paper, this analysis was conducted using primary data collected from social network surveys in Da Nang and Hue, two local destinations in central Vietnam. Sixty-nine questionnaires were collected in Da Nang, and 60 questionnaires in Hue. The network data were each analysed separately using UCINET software.

Findings – The results show the involvement of different stakeholders in marketing activities in these local destinations. Most of the marketing networks of Da Nang and Hue consist of business units. While the Da Nang marketing network focuses on critical stakeholders and fundamental business firms with strong financial resources and big brands, the Hue marketing network includes more diverse stakeholders and more significant participation of small and medium local firms.

Originality of research – This research found the participation of national and international stakeholders located outside the two destinations studied in their marketing network. Their involvement was identified through their collaborative relationships with the DMOs and internal stakeholders of the two destinations to promote the destinations nationally and internationally.

Keywords destination marketing, marketing network, social network analysis, Vietnam

INTRODUCTION

Network interactions between organisations and individuals within and outside a tourism destination are recognised as an essential condition for the effectiveness of destination marketing (Aarstad, Ness and Haugland 2015; Del Chiappa and Presenza 2013; Morrison 2013). Tourism scholars realise a tourism destination as a social network of various stakeholders from many sectors at the local, national, and international level (Del Chiappa and Presenza 2013; Nguyen, Young, Johnson and Wearing 2019; Van der Zee, Gerrets and Vanneste 2017). Almost all activities related to tourism development, management and marketing in a destination involve multiple stakeholders who interact and communicate with each other. Thus, network analysis is highly appreciated in tourism destination studies regarding destination management, marketing, and

governance (Baggio, Scott and Cooper 2010; Brás, Costa and Buhalis 2010; Scott, Baggio and Cooper 2008; Van der Zee et al. 2017).

In tourism literature, a network approach is applied to understand the structure of tourism destinations and the roles of tourism stakeholders in marketing activities (Brás et al. 2010; Del Chiappa and Presenza 2013; Nogueira and Pinho, 2015; Presenza and Cipollina 2010). These studies focus on knowledge and information transfer and exchange, which demonstrates the significance of networks in promoting cooperation, innovation, and destination competitiveness. They also found a significant involvement of tourism stakeholders located within destinations. However, the involvement of stakeholders from other destinations has been inadequately investigated. In practice, external stakeholders contribute to promoting destinations and attracting residents from various areas to visit the destinations. Given this research gap, this study aims to address two questions

1. What internal and external stakeholders are involved in the marketing network of tourism destinations?
2. What are their positions (contributions) in the destination marketing network?

By answering these questions, this research identifies the involvement of stakeholders located beyond the physical borders of a tourist area in marketing this area as a tourism destination. Stakeholder involvement was examined through their connections with the stakeholders located within the destination. Thus, quantitative network research was conducted to explore and visualise linkages (cooperation) between stakeholders into graphs of destination marketing networks. Based on the network indices, the stakeholders involved and their position in the marketing network of tourism destinations were identified. The network data was collected at Da Nang and Hue, two destinations located in the central region of Vietnam.

The following part of the paper is constructed around four sections. The literature review section outlines the theoretical issues of tourism destination marketing network, destination stakeholders, and social network analysis. The methodology section provides an introduction of the practical context of Da Nang and Hue, describes and clarifies the methodology approach of the research. The discussion then moves on to the finding section, in which the marketing network of each destination is described, compared and discussed. Finally, the paper is concluded with theoretical contributions, practical implications, limitations and recommendations for future research.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

A tourism destination is a geographic territory such as a country, a region, an island or town, a rural area, a city, a resort or a range of experience (Hall 2000; Page and Connell 2006). They are separated from other areas by physical boundaries. Each destination has its administrative management (UNWTO 2007) and a system of different products, services, and tourism experience that locally provide for tourists (Buhalis 2000). From a marketing perspective, a tourism destination is regarded as agglomerations of facilities and services that are conducted to satisfy and serve customers (Cooper, Stephen, Fletcher, Gilbert and Fyall 2005). Tourism providers attempt to understand customer

behaviours, culture, and characteristics, then design and deliver exclusive products to satisfy customer desire, as “a destination can also be a perceptual concept, which can be interpreted subjectively by consumers, depending on their travel itinerary, cultural background, purpose of visit, educational level and experience” (Buhalis 2000, 97).

Stakeholders of a tourism destination can be approached from a narrow or broad view. In this paper, we recognise that for the success of destination marketing, there needs a broad involvement of stakeholders from multiple levels and across the tourism sector (Morrison 2013). Thus, stakeholders of a tourism destination are those individuals, groups and organisations who can affect or are affected by tourism development at the destination (Freeman 1984; Nguyen et al. 2019). Tourism scholars on destination studies recognise the co-location, proximity, and interconnectedness of a variety of international, national, regional, and local individuals, groups, and organisations and the complexity of their relationships and interactions (Baggio et al. 2010; Merinero-Rodríguez and Pulido-Fernández 2016; Van der Zee and Vanneste 2015). Agglomerations of tourism destination stakeholders, including private sectors, government agencies, non-profit organisations, other individuals and entities related to tourism, have given the rise of destination management organisations (DMOs). These organisations play the role of coordinators and work based on networks of inter-organisational relationships (Morrison 2013; Sheehan, Ritchie and Hudson 2007).

1.1. Destination Marketing Network

Destination marketing is one of the functions of DMOs, aiming to get people visiting destinations through marketing and promotion programmes (Sheehan et al. 2007; UNWTO, 2007). An essential condition for the effectiveness of destination marketing is a broad and intensive involvement of organisations and individuals within and outside the destination, who are connected and coordinated by DMOs (Morrison 2013). Partnerships and collaborations between DMOs and other organisations and between organisations are essential for effectiveness and efficacy in destination branding strategy and positioning (Del Chiappa and Presenza 2013; Sheehan et al. 2007; Wang 2008). Stakeholder involvement and collaborative relationships bring significant benefits for a destination, such as budget, shared information, more excellent expertise, increased marketing appeal, and shared facilities (Aarstad et al. 2015; Morrison 2013).

The interdependence of various stakeholders and the fragmented resources of a tourism destination make tourism destination marketing a more complex task (Lemmetynen and Go 2009). Potential partners for DMOs in destination marketing are tourists, other DMOs, tourism business organisations (hotels, attractions, airlines, travel agencies, tour operators), non-tourism organisations (banks, automobiles, consumer goods, food and manufactures), digital alliances (social media, websites), residents, and social organisations (Morrison 2013). Moreover, a tourism destination is a social network of interactions and connections between various stakeholders from the international, national, regional, and local level (Presenza and Cipollina 2010). Therefore, a network approach fits with tourism destination studies, including destination marketing, management, and governance (Nguyen et al. 2019; Scott et al. 2008). Networks are beneficial for DMOs in implementing their functions, as network interactions contribute to gathering intelligence in a destination, opportunities and ideas and facilitate the

identification of resources needed for the opportunity to be realised (Sheehan et al. 2007). Networking can facilitate mobilising information and resources and cooperative processes among tourism organisations (Bramwell and Sharman 1999; Buhalis 2000; Jamal and Getz 1995; Scott et al. 2008).

Network approaches have been employed in tourism marketing to understand interactions and connections between stakeholders and the roles of each stakeholder in marketing activities and marketing network (Aarstad et al. 2015; Del Chiappa and Presenza 2013; Nogueira and Pinho 2015; Presenza and Cipollina 2010). In these studies, a mathematically informed network theory such as social network analysis is employed to explore the structure of tourism destination networks, including management network, marketing network, and human resources management network. The role and position of tourism stakeholders in these networks are exposed differently in each network. For example, based on network indices, Presenza and Cipollina (2010) suggest that in marketing activity, the most important stakeholder is the tourism bureau, while the least preferred ones are tour operators, travel agencies, and tourism consortiums. This study also asserts that the local government and travel agencies are situated at an intermediate position in the preference scale of hospitality firms. Aarstad et al. (2015) provide evidence that the network position of a firm in co-branding strategy has an essential and unique role in the success of destination branding, as it affects the likelihood of co-branding. Therefore, Marzano (2008, 142) suggests using a network analysis perspective to gain “an understanding of how the centrality of one or more stakeholders within the destination enhances or reduces the ability” of successful destination branding. Del Chiappa and Presenza (2013) suggest that using network analysis to access inter-organisational relationships in a tourism destination could help destination managers improve their knowledge of the influence of these relationships in destination branding and positioning. However, although network analysis has been applied significantly in tourism research, it has been little applied in destination marketing research. Moreover, destination marketing research often draws on networks of stakeholders originated from and/or located within the borders of a tourism destination. There is even an argument that destination marketing involves a collective effort of organisations and businesses in a geographically limited area (Wang 2008).

1.2. Social network analysis

Social network analysis is a mathematical-informed network theory that focuses on the relationships among the entities of a system (Borgatti, Everett, and Johnson 2018). A social network is “a specific set of linkages among a defined set of persons, with the additional property that the characteristics of these linkages as a whole may be used to interpret the social behaviour of the persons involved” (Mitchell 1969, 2). Presenza and Cipollina (2010, 20) define a social network as “a group of collaborating entities that are related to one another”. The entities participating in the network are called actors representing as nodes in the network structure (Presenza and Cipollina 2010). Network actors are individuals, organisations or collective units, and the linkages between them are relational ties (Borgatti et al. 2018; Wasserman and Faust 1994). There might be more than one tie between two actors. A social network can involve two actors (dyadic network), three actors (triadic network), or many actors (sub-group and group network). The ties between two actors can be straight lines or indirect lines via other actors, which

is the basis for developments from dyadic to triadic and group networks (Wasserman and Faust 1994).

Social network analysis can help understand the impact of a social structure and its regularities impact on behaviours of entities (Otte and Rousseau 2002). Because relations between entities are “a fundamental component of network theories” (Nogueira and Pinho 2015, 327), network analysis can help visualise nodes and links between nodes into graphic models. Thus, network analysis provides a way to simplify complex relationships between entities by mapping and visualising positions and connections between them into different graphs. These benefits of network analysis facilitate a better understanding of relationships and the influence of each actor on other actors (Nguyen et al. 2019). Thus, network analysis provides a robust approach to tourism destination management and marketing, which assists in exploring stakeholder participation, collaboration, and interactions in tourism development (Albrecht 2013; Nguyen et al. 2019; Baggio and Cooper 2010). Accordingly, this paper uses network analysis techniques to graph linkages between tourism stakeholders, which helps to identify a network of individuals/organisations who work to promote tourism destinations.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative network approach to explore the structure of destination marketing network (Shih 2006; Borgatti et al. 2018; Nogueira and Pinho 2015). From the network structure, the involvement of external stakeholders in marketing a destination was identified. Being Vietnamese based on Vietnam tourism academic, the authors conveniently selected two Vietnamese destinations: Da Nang City and Hue Province, to conduct a social network survey. Da Nang and Hue are located adjacently in the central region of Vietnam. They are two of the most well-known tourist destinations in Vietnam, attracting a large number of domestic and international tourists.

Da Nang, the third-largest city of Vietnam, is the centre of economics, politics, and socio-culture of central Vietnam. Da Nang tourism product system includes recreation tourism products, MICE, shopping, cultural, ecological, and handicraft village tourism (Van Son 2017). Da Nang is an important transportation hub for tourists to visit the central region. Hue Province (Thua Thien Hue Province), located in the North of Da Nang, is the most important cultural heritage tourism site of Vietnam. In 1993, Hue was awarded the UNESCO World Heritage Site. Since 1995, Hue tourism has been expanded significantly and become a key tourism centre of the country. Hue Province possesses a range of natural and human-made resources to develop tourism, but cultural heritage is the most prominent element of the Hue tourist attraction. While Da Nang is in the development stage with the rapid growth of tourist arrival, Hue tourism is saturated with a slow tourist growth. In the 2013-2019 period, the number of tourists visiting Da Nang and Hue increased by an average of over 20% and 10% per year, respectively. Da Nang and Hue are frequently listed in the top 10 destinations of Vietnam by international organisations such as TripAdvisor, United States’ New York Times and Airbnb. The appearance in these travel lists can be seen as an achievement of the promotion and marketing activities of these destinations.

2.1. Data Collection

A questionnaire-based network survey was used to collect data related to stakeholder interactions in the marketing activities of each destination (Durbary 2018; Borgatti et al. 2018; Nogueira and Pinho 2015). The interactions used to identify linkages (connections) between network actors were collaborative relationships (Scott and Carrington, 2014). The collaboration was recorded through joint activities between individuals and organisations in destination promotion and advertisement events (Sheehan et al. 2007). A social network questionnaire was developed for each case. The questionnaire included questions about the involvement of stakeholders in collaboration activities related to destination marketing. This questionnaire was referenced and designed based on the questionnaires used in previous tourism studies employing social network analysis (Del Chiappa and Presenza 2013; Nogueira and Pinho 2015; Presenza and Cipollina 2010; Scott et al. 2008).

Participants are managers from tourism organisations in Da Nang and Hue. Multi-cluster sampling was adopted, including purposive sampling methods (Hair, Money, Samouel, and Pake 2007). Purposive sampling helps select participants that best match the research objectives (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2003). The sampling was processed with the support from document analysis of industrial and governmental reports related to marketing activities collected directly from the DMOs of Da Nang and Hue. The sampling process began with the identification of over 1000 tourism organisations in Da Nang and around 800 tourism organisations in Hue, yet not all these organisations participated in destination marketing. The second step was to filter these organisations into stakeholder clusters separately in Da Nang and Hue. Each stakeholder cluster included a list of organisations, making up a list of 96 stakeholders in Da Nang and 102 stakeholders in Hue. They were appeared in the documents as participating in marketing Da Nang/Hue as a tourism destination.

The questionnaire was designed and delivered to 198 participants from 96 stakeholders in Da Nang and 102 stakeholders in Hue in two forms: online form and paper form. Online surveys have essential advantages in approaching target participants who can use and work with the Internet (Brunt, Horner and Semley 2017). In this research, the Qualtrics package, an online and analytical tool, was used to design and distribute the questionnaire. In addition to the online survey, a paper form survey was used and sent directly to participants at their organisation address. An envelope was attached to the questionnaire to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. This envelope was provided by a postal service that collected a fee from the researchers, and no information about senders was required. After four months of data collection, 129 responses returned (69 in Da Nang and 60 in Hue).

2.2. Data Analysis

The data analysis began with data deduction that eliminated 16 invalid questionnaires collected in Da Nang and 15 invalid questionnaires collected in Hue. Thus, 53 Da Nang questionnaires and 45 Hue questionnaires were imported into the excel sheet for each destination. This step revealed that in Da Nang, 53 respondents referred to 32 other individuals and organisations. In Hue, 45 respondents referred to 50 other organisations

and individuals. Then, these excel sheets were imported separately in the UCINET that is a computer package of social network analysis (Scott and Carrington 2014; Borgatti, Everett and Freeman, 2002). Three network indices, which are most frequently used in quantitative network research (Borgatti et al., 2018; Nogueira and Pinho, 2015), were measured: network size, density, and centrality. The network size is the number of stakeholders involved in networks. Density reflects the ratio between the number of actual links and possible links in a network (Borgatti et al. 2018). Centrality refers to the position of actors within networks, which is measured by degree, betweenness and closeness centrality (Otte and Rousseau 2002).

It is important to note that although this research conducted a quantitative network method, it did not test hypotheses like usual quantitative research. Thus, although there were a significant number of collected questionnaires that were not analysed due to the missing data, the network analysis of this research still provided the result to evidence the involvement, connections and cooperation of involved stakeholders in the marketing network of the two studied destinations.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Network size and Involved Actors

In both Da Nang and Hue, various marketing activities were recorded with collaborations between a wide range of tourism stakeholders. These activities were operated by the DMOs such as the Da Nang Department of Tourism, the Hue Department of Tourism and Vietnam National Tourism Administration, or by the involved organisations.

Da Nang marketing network resulted from the social network survey composed of 85 stakeholders, in which there were 53 respondents (stakeholders) and 32 stakeholders referred by the 53 respondents. Thus, network indices of 53 respondent actors include both in- and out-network values, while network indices of 32 referred actors have only in-network values. Compared to the Da Nang marketing network, the size of the Hue marketing network resulted from social network analysis is slightly bigger as the Hue marketing network consists of 95 stakeholders, including 45 respondents and 50 stakeholders referred by 45 respondents. Thus, 45 respondent stakeholders include both in- and out- network indices; and 50 referred actors have only in-network indices.

Figure 1 illustrates the types of stakeholders involved in the Da Nang marketing network. Over half of the 85 stakeholders is from tourism business sectors (accommodations, tour operators, private DMOs, transportations, entertainment businesses, and marketing businesses). Figure 2 illustrates the types of stakeholders involved in the Hue marketing network. The government body and business sectors contributed a significant part to the Hue marketing network. Similar to the Da Nang marketing network, over a half of the involved actors of the Hue marketing network is from business sectors, including hospitality businesses, tour operators, transportation, and destination business. It is unsurprising when both destinations involved the actors from marketing businesses and media in the networks.

Figure 1: Stakeholders involved in marketing Da Nang as a tourism destination

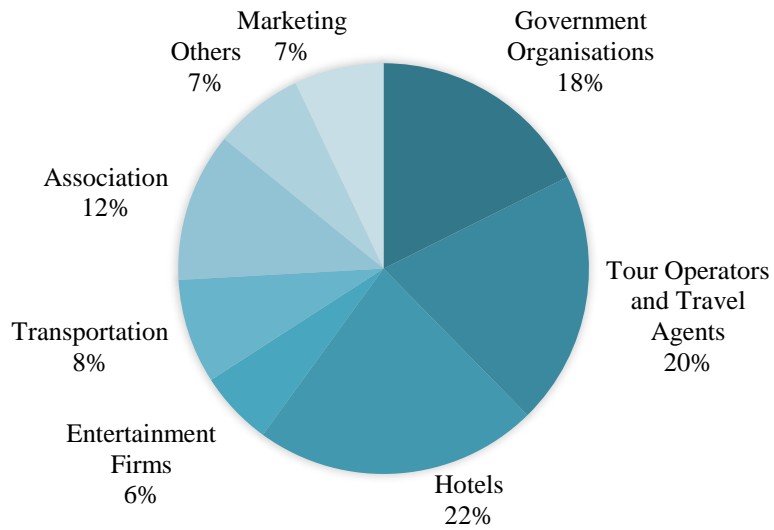
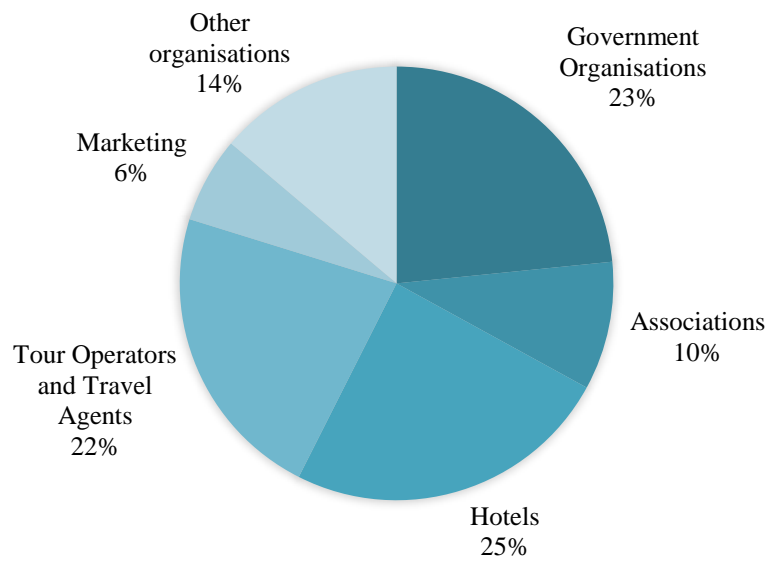


Figure 2: Stakeholders involved in marketing Hue as a tourism destination



3.2. Critical and central actors in destination marketing networks

To identify the position of the stakeholders involved in the networks, the centrality of network actors, including degree, closeness, and betweenness, was considered (Scott and Carrington 2014). Degree centrality reflects the total number of links that an actor has, which is divided into in-degree (inbound links) and out-degree (outbound links) centrality (Otte and Rousseau 2002). The higher the degree centrality of an actor is, the more central position that actor holds in its network (Borgatti et al. 2018). Closeness centrality refers to the total distance of an actor from other actors, which means that the smaller number of closeness is, the more central the actor is, and vice versa (Wasserman and Faust 1994). Betweenness centrality reflects the number of times a node needs a given node to reach another node (Borgatti et al. 2018). Table 1 and Table 2 provide the centrality indices of the central stakeholders in the Da Nang marketing network and the Hue marketing network based on the centrality indices of the involved stakeholders.

Table 1: Centrality of Central Stakeholders in Da Nang marketing network

Stakeholders	Out-Deg	In-Deg	Out-Close	In-Close	Betweenness
Da Nang Department of Tourism (DNDT)	138.000	101.000	94.000	212.000	2197.550
Da Nang City tourism association (DNNTA)	125.000	68.000	108.000	223.000	884.517
A Da Nang tour operator (VTM)	83.000	49.000	125.000	230.000	426.366
Son Tra Eco-Tourism Sea Board (STET)	67.000	24.000	143.000	254.000	39.910
Da Nang Travel Association (DNTVA)	38.000	30.000	140.000	243.000	171.615
Da Nang Hotel Association (DNHA)	34.000	32.000	138.000	240.000	158.300
Da Nang People's Committee (DNPCM)	38.000	34.000	153.000	249.000	36.147
A national Tour Operator (VTV)	24.000	17.000	154.000	255.000	10.816
A national Corporation (SG)	26.000	14.000	156.000	255.000	6.898
A national transportation (VA)	19.000	23.000	156.000	249.000	18.015

Table 2: Centrality of Central Stakeholders in Hue marketing network

Stakeholders	Out-Deg	In-deg	Out-Close	In-Close	Betweenness
Hue Department of Tourism (HDT)	160.000	132.000	102.000	244.000	800.780
Hue Tourism Association (HTA)	144.000	119.000	105.000	245.000	586.682
Hue Monument Conservation Center (HMCC)	99.000	93.000	128.000	245.000	167.089

Stakeholders	Out-Deg	In-deg	Out-Close	In-Close	Betweenness
A luxury hotel (CTR)	96.000	53.000	130.000	252.000	67.853
A national tourism operator (VTV)	94.000	50.000	138.000	251.000	65.142
A private DMO (DADMO)	122.000	32.000	130.000	261.000	56.927
A luxury hotel (MDT)	93.000	43.000	130.000	255.000	58.157
A luxury hotel (MDHO)	89.000	56.000	135.000	251.000	57.561
Hue Culture and Sport Department (HDCS)	76.000	75.000	144.000	246.000	121.043
Hue Hotel Association (HHA)	71.000	85.000	143.000	248.000	53.193

In both destinations, the Department of Tourism and the Tourism Association are the most central and critical stakeholders in the marketing network. Their positional network indices of degree and betweenness are the highest, and the network indices of closeness are the lowest. Thus, they are not only central stakeholders (high degree index and low closeness index) but also bridging stakeholders (high betweenness index). This result means that they held connections with a wide range of stakeholders, including core and periphery stakeholders in marketing activities. The Department of Tourism (DNDD and HDT) held the most critical and central position in the marketing network of each destination. These findings are consistent with the vital role of these DMOs in the state management of tourism destinations (Sheehan et al. 2007). The second critical stakeholders are the Tourism Association. Although the Associations have a lower degree centrality (than the Department of Tourism), these Associations connected many tourism actors in the marketing network of each destination.

Several business actors are the most critical actors of the marketing network of each destination. In Da Nang, VTM and SG are two tourism business stakeholders found to be critical in the destination marketing network. VTM is a Da Nang tourism business; SG is a national hospitality and entertainment group that invested fundamentally in tourism facilities and infrastructure in Da Nang. SG arranged events and festivals to attract tourists and promote Da Nang image and participate in other marketing activities held by national and provincial government officials in tourism. In Hue, the most significant contribution of the business sector was from the local hospitality businesses, which explains why the marketing activities in Hue are rich in local cultural values.

The analysis also found less involvement of the local residents in both destinations. Only a high school was recorded in Da Nang, but its connection in the marketing network was minimal (degree = 1).

3.3. Density of Networks

The Da Nang marketing network and Hue marketing network are visualised in Figure 3 and Figure 4, respectively, based on the centrality value. The size of boxes/circles illustrates the centrality of each network actor. The larger the box/circle, the more central the organisation is, and vice versa. A glance at the visual graph of two networks reveals

a more convergence of the actors in the Hue marketing network and a divergence of the actors in the Da Nang marketing network. This is illustrated by the density index of each network.

Figure 3: Da Nang Marketing Network Graph

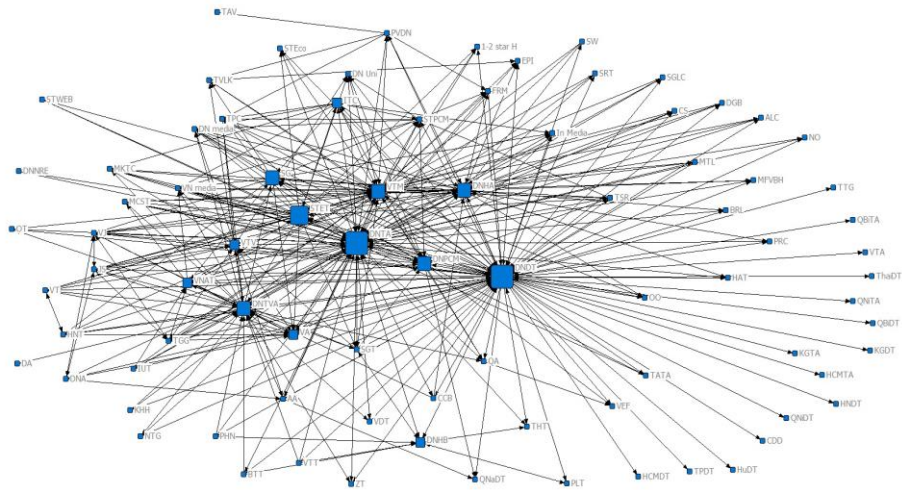
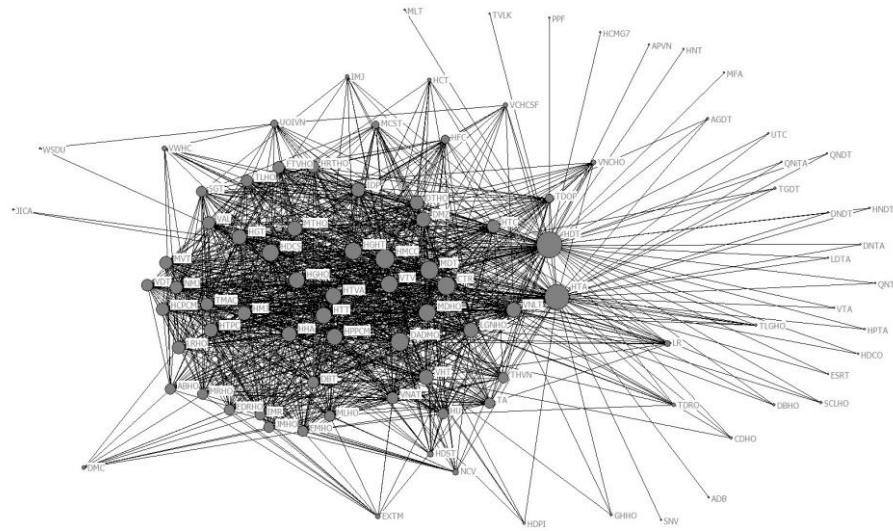


Figure 4: Hue Marketing Network Graph



The density of the Da Nang marketing network is 12,4%, which is less than half of the density of the Hue marketing network (29,3%). As a result, the Hue marketing network is more condensed than the Da Nang marketing network. Indeed, Da Nang destination marketing concentrated on the key stakeholders such as the DMOs and a small number of prominent national tourism firms. Meanwhile, the Hue destination marketing involved a significant number of small and medium tourism firms. This result is consistent with the economic context of these destinations. Da Nang attempted to foster economic development by attracting large and robust financial business firms to develop tourism facilities and infrastructure. In contrast, due to the regulation of heritage preservation law, the Hue government limited the investment in large tourism facilities, such as hotels and entertainment areas. Therefore, the majority of tourism business sectors of Hue is small and medium businesses.

3.4. Involvement of stakeholders beyond the border of the destinations

The results of network analysis reveal that various national stakeholders were involved in both the Da Nang marketing network and Hue marketing network. All national stakeholders are the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism, the National Administration of Tourism, Tourism Department and the Tourism Association of other provinces and cities, such as Quang Nam, Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh, Quang Binh. These organisations collaborated with Da Nang and Hue in marketing and promotion activities. Particularly, Hue and Da Nang also worked together in a number of promotion events in an attempt to promote the central region as the Essence of Vietnam (Nhat Ha 2017; Thanh Tâm 2017). Moreover, specific to the Hue marketing network, because Hue is a UNESCO heritage site, this province's destination marketing also involved the national cultural and historical organisations and art performance organisations.

Furthermore, international organisations were involved in the marketing network of both destinations. They were linked and involved in the Da Nang and Hue marketing network by the Da Nang Department of Tourism and the Hue Department of Tourism. For example, the Da Nang destination marketing network involved the tourism department from Thailand, China, Indonesia, World Tourism Organisation, and international media. Similarly, the Hue marketing network also involved the DMOs and organisations from Thailand, Korea, Japan. However, the Hue marketing network included a more significant involvement of cultural and historical organisations such as UNESCO. Although the international actors were the least critical stakeholders in both networks, their involvement contributed to promoting Da Nang and Hue destination in the country and international markets.

CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to identify a network of individuals and organisations involved in Da Nang and Hue destination marketing to reveal the contribution of multiple stakeholders in marketing a destination. The findings confirmed a central and critical role of the Department of Tourism, a destination management organisation of each destination, and their ability to connect a broad range of organisations/individuals in the destination marketing network (Sheehan et al. 2007). In these marketing networks, stakeholders

were not only from the studied destinations and tourism industry but also from other sectors, provinces, and countries (Morrison 2013). They were involved in marketing activities under the coordination and connection of the Department of Tourism, Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, and local government. Half of these networks were from business sectors, including hospitality firms, tour operators, transportation firms, media, and marketing and advertising companies. The results of this research support the argument that “the destination management organisation must create a strategy for tourism promotion, match resources (from the destination management organisation and other entities) to the strategy, and implement it through the tourism stakeholder network (Sheehan et al., 2007, 72). Notably, both destinations involved the DMOs and tourism organisations from other provinces and countries to promote tourism and attract visitors to each destination. This result contributed to tourism research on inter-destination collaboration by providing evidence of the involvement of stakeholders from different destinations in promoting a destination (Żemła, 2014).

The findings of this study also indicated that the involvement of residents was minimal, which is also found in Nogueira and Pinho (2015). Although local residents are one of the most important stakeholders of a destination (Baggio et al. 2010), they are often one of the stakeholders least linked with tourism destination governance and development processes (Bornhorst, Ritchie and Sheehan, 2010). Moreover, to implement marketing and promotion activities for destinations, a large budget is required; hence, DMOs often encourage the involvement of the business sectors who have financial resources, ideas, knowledge, and experience in marketing and promotion activities.

In conclusion, this paper provided evidence of collaborative marketing networks at tourism destinations. It is undeniable that networking occurs in all tourism activities and development in tourism destinations due to the characteristics of tourism destinations and the tourism industry. Conversely, networking benefits information and knowledge sharing and transfer, communication, cooperation, and innovation; subsequently, networking contributes to the achievement of tourism development, marketing, and management. Destination management organisations and tourism managers can implement marketing activities through collaborations and interactions between stakeholders. Conversely, these collaborations can increase network interactions between stakeholders, which help to increase the commitment of stakeholders towards tourism planning and destination brand strategy and shape a strategic consensus.

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