

# Universities and Cities:

## The Role of Vietnam Higher Education Institutions in City Branding

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### 1. Introduction

The symbiotic relationship between universities and cities is mentioned in the book of Bender (1988) with the long history from the medieval origins to early modern revitalization, the metropolitan university, and then the modern ones. He emphasizes that both creations (universities and cities) belong to medieval Europe (remarked by the appearance of universities at Bologna, Paris, and Oxford around the 1200s). They are closely associated with cultural advancement. In other words, universities provide the principle of coherence for urban culture. Even a city with scholastic and humanistic culture can be built outside of universities (like the case of Florence), its achievements are nourished and preserved by the higher learning institutions. Besides, universities that the first modern civic ones located at Leiden, Geneva, and Edinburgh can rely on the strength and stimulation of cities. Similarly, New York University, which follows the utilitarian principle like London University (Bender, 1988), is initially considered the University of its host city. The graduates have been prepared for public life before being metropolitans. Additionally, the institute emerged as the dynamic points—an urban/academic origin product, organized political movement (Jay, 1988). Scholars at universities (typical one is the University of Chicago) also can obtain most of the world to memorize their host cities.

Not only having roots from cities, but universities also contribute adequately to the sustainable development of cities where they locate. According to Kresl (2015), US universities of which the initial purpose is focusing on scholarly life were established in small towns in rural environments (Harvard, Cambridge, Columbia). An attractive town for business is characterized by the quality of life and local schools, low living cost, the opportunity to collaborate with faculty members and student interns. In general, their success comes from the university-business community-government partnership. It can be said that universities contribute to the local economy through local projects, human resource offerings, entrepreneurship, and business incubation centers. Also being framed by sustainable development, university campuses are considered living laboratories with community engagement through experimentation (König & Evans, 2013). In this approach, the authors focus on the importance of social learning.

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Although universities take the critical role as cultural creators and preservers, their potential for partnerships with cities has not been exploited appropriately (Klaic, 2012). Universities must change their patterns of collaboration because of confronting increased pressure for local engagement in the global context. Among the changes, knowledge exchange, student enterprise, and physical campus development are the salient ones (Charles, Kitagawa, & Uyarra, 2014). Besides, universities participate in enlarging the choices of cultural content and public service media, organizing cultural festivals, and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms (UNESCO, 2017). This study, therefore, considers whether Vietnam Higher Education Institutions (VHEIs) are in line with this trend or not. It tries to figure out which activities and characteristics of universities can be the contributors of city branding. Given that culture is the soul of a city image that reflects the success of city branding, universities—the cultural triggers—take the role as essential catalysts in city branding. By analyzing twenty top Vietnam universities in three regions, the research offers a new approach in place branding in Vietnam associated with higher education. It also gives some implications to brand a specific city based on the resource dependence principle.

## 2. Vietnam Higher Education Institutions (VHEIs) in the Global Context

On the basis of 6Ps criteria (Place, Programming, Prosperity, Product, People, Promotion), Resonance Consultancy Ltd. ranks world's best city brands on six aspects (The Resonance, 2017, 2018, 2019). Among the top cities, London remains its position as the "Capital of Capitals" with notable characteristics that are more than 40 higher education institutions located in the town. Tokyo, the salient representative of Asia, has overtaken the others to become the fourth top city. Focusing on sustainable development, Tokyo aims to reduce citywide greenhouse emissions. This challenging mission needs the role of universities mentioned in the above section. Unfortunately, except Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) with strong pillars on People, Prosperity, and Product ranked as the 97th city in top 100 in 2017, no Vietnam cities appear in the lists. This result urges us to rethink about educational institutions, especially universities where culture resides.

The evidence of the economic effect on the local development of higher education is shown in many countries. In the book of Lane and Johnstone (2012), colleges and universities are considered economic engines and anchor institutions because they supply the workforce and act as incubators. The typical project mentioned in the Center for Environmental Solvents and Processes has brought to North Carolina's economy at approximately \$13.51 million per year within ten years. The economic impact of universities is proved by INDECON (2019) in the case of Ireland—the EU's most highly educated Member State. Irish universities have generated 21,801 full-time jobs (15,724 directories employed) and attracted 2 million visitors in 2017. They contributed to the Irish economy €8,891 million in 2017–2018. In Finland, the economic contribution of Finish universities is €14.2 billion and 136,000 jobs (2016), equivalent to 6.6% of economic output and 5.5% of total employment respectively (BiGGAR Economics, 2017). Similarly, the report of Kelly, McNicoll, and White (2014) in the case of the UK focuses on the role of universities as enterprises. Notably, England has total revenue of £23.3 billion (83% of all UK higher education). In total, UK universities create £ 95 billion for the national economy (equivalent to 1.2% GDP) (Bothwell, 2017).

With the dataset of 15000 universities in over 1500 regions from 78 countries, Valero and Van Reenen (2019) estimate that a 10% increase in a region's number of universities per capita is associated with 0.4% higher future GDP per capita in the host region. This contribution is not only about university expenditure, but



Sources: Aggregated from map data of Google (2019)

**Figure 1** Universities in Vietnam

also about human resources, and innovative offerings.

In the globalization context, higher education in developing countries like Vietnam must improve qualitative targets instead of mainly focusing on quantitative goals (H. T. K. Le, 2014). The data from the General Statistics Office of Vietnam also shows this priority. Notably, the numbers of schools have decreased (down to 235 VHEIs in 2017 as compared with 445 VHEIs in 2015), in which the percentage of non-public ones has been improved (28% in 2017 as compared with 20% in 2015). Certainly, VHEIs provide the primary labor force for society, but they have not met its requirement (Nguyen, 2014). Therefore, the quality of human resource can be one of the concerns of investors when choosing a locality to establish their business. Typically, Danang, a pioneer in city branding, has been struggling in attracting this important stakeholder. It can be observed that being well-known as an ideal tourist destination is not enough for Danang's sustainable development. Universities in Danang and Central Vietnam have not promoted their roles in producing a qualified workforce appropriately.

Figure 1 shows that universities in Vietnam are located mainly in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh. They are two core localities of North Vietnam and South Vietnam before 1975 with the very first universities, including the University of Hanoi (1907) and the University of Saigon (1955). Like the creations of universities in the world, many VHEIs enclose the names of the host cities in their name (the University of Hue, the University of Dalat (1957), the University of Can Tho (1966)). Although Danang is considered a socioeconomic center in the Central and Highlands Vietnam, the density of higher education institutions in Danang is much sparser than in the remaining ones. Most universities that appear on Danang map are members of the University of Danang known as the regional university.

Along with boosting the regional roles of VHEIs, the notable trend nowadays is internationalization. Some government documents reflect it including Resolution No. 14/2005/NQ-CP, Decision No. 711/QĐ-TTg (2012), Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW (2013), Decision No. 2448/QĐ-TTg (2013), Decree 73/2012/NĐ-CP (V. A. Le, 2018). This trend is represented through the mobility of students and faculty at the institutional and national levels. Among international cooperation efforts, Joint Programs, a transnational higher education model, that Ngo (2015) considers its role similar to the Special Free Economic Zones in the economy has been bringing economic benefits for providers and receivers. Nevertheless, one of the concerns about Vietnam higher education is trying to do too much and too quickly without proper standards of quality (Hayden & Lam, 2007, 2015).

Although Vietnam universities show limitations in several aspects mentioned earlier, they take an



Source: [baodulich.net.vn](http://baodulich.net.vn)

**Figure 2** Temple of Literature, Quoc Tu Giam (Vietnam 1st University)

important role in research, intellectual property creation, and socioeconomic development contribution (Harman, Hayden, & Pham, 2010). Besides, the Vietnam higher education system had been influenced by foreign incursions, in which typical ones are Confucianism that the material culture is the Temple of Literature in Hanoi (Chinese influence) (see Figure 2), medicine and pharmacy, teacher training (French colonial), agriculture and forestry, civil engineering, fine arts, Soviet models, Western models (post-war influence of socialist countries, France, and the US) (Welch, 2010). Hence, VHEIs are not only the places for keeping cultural achievements but also form the image of their host cities (Hanoi—capital of thousand years of civilization, Ho Chi Minh—ongoing dynamic and enchanting city).

On the other hand, in the Direction 2268/CT-BGDĐT (2019), the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) emphasizes that at least 20% budget must be earned for education. In this educational budget, the ratio for localities is 89% (of which 9% for higher education) in the 2013–2017 period (Viet Chung, 2018). As stated in a conference about the state budget for education host by the Academy of Finance, in reality, higher education only receives 4% because of concerning many ministries and localities. Except two national universities belong to the government, the numbers of universities that are in charge by MOET, other ministries, and localities are 48, 80, and 23, respectively in 2016 (Thuy Le, 2018). In spite of the inequality in budget allocation, it cannot be denied that the Vietnam government has been boosting the role of universities through university autonomy.

According to Evans and Rorris (2010), higher education is considered a tool to optimize Vietnam socioeconomic progress. The authors state that large cities also own strong higher education institutions. Besides, funding pressures are the reason for reducing public spending in training, which leads to the term “socializing” education. VHEIs with a substantial degree of autonomy have more capacity of receiving financial support from provinces by meet the local demands. In the case of Central Vietnam, two educational elements have impacts on economic growth. In detail, the GDP of localities will increase by 0.17% and 0.1% if

1% of years of schooling and educational budget spending are increased, respectively (Pham & Luong, 2018). It means that higher education can contribute to economic progress through the increasing years of schooling. In other words, the role of VHEIs in Vietnam socioeconomic development is represented in producing an educated labor force. VHEIs also contribute to some extents of innovation or research, although their role in this field is weaker than teaching (Tran, 2006).

In spite of the importance of universities in regional and local developments, the role of VHEIs is usually mentioned as an actor for building a society of lifelong learning, innovation and entrepreneurship. It is necessary to analyze their role deeply in the current context that any locality makes efforts to attract resources for sustainable growth.

### **3. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework**

According to Bradley, Hall, and Harrison (2002), there are two approaches in studies about place promotion including the linkage to the political economy and the practical aspects applied by urban marketers. As stated by Brandt and de Mortanges (2011), the latter is widely spread with marketing tools and strategies while the former is mentioned by researchers such as Gotham (2001), Larsen (2005), and Nelson et al. (2004). Universities today contribute to the place promotion in both above trends.

#### ***Universities contribution to the prestige of host cities***

At first, universities have an undeniable impact on local economic development, and therefore indirectly contribute to promoting host places as entrepreneurial hubs, job markets, and education hubs. An OECD project related to 12 countries of Arbo and Benneworth (2007) places higher education and the region in a relationship, in which its roles are related to innovation systems, lifelong learning, and governance. Uyarra (2010) summarizes these roles attached to five university models, including knowledge “factory,” relational university, entrepreneurial university, systemic university, and engaged university. Among them, the critical ones are scientific knowledge producers, knowledge sharing via studies, commercial exploitation, innovation system studies, and developmental role as innovation supporters. The necessary integration of university activities into regional innovation systems is emphasized in the study of Kitagawa (2004). To meet the societal requirements, universities engage much more with regions and localities (Harloe & Perry, 2004). Their engagement exists as different tiers: single (entrepreneurial encourager/science and technology transfer), multi (regional consortia, cultural network, local promotion, telematics network), traditional (strategic planning and knowledge transfer, sustainable development, education and training), and new technologically oriented (city regeneration, widening access to non-traditional students) (Boucher, Conway, & Van Der Meer, 2003). Besides, Shaw and Allison (1999) state that localities can benefit from higher education institutions through population growth, housing demand, and job market, and are able to become the learning regions. Similar kinds of economic impact are quantified in many studies (Ambargis, McComb, & Robbins, 2011; Bleaney, Binks, Greenaway, Reed, & Whynes, 1992; Bonander, Jakobsson, Podestà, & Svensson, 2016; Cheah & Yu, 2016; Elliott, Levin, & Meisel, 1988; Garrido-Yserte & Gallo-Rivera, 2008; Guerrero, Cunningham, & Urbano, 2015).

#### ***University branding and city branding***

Many universities use the advantages of the host cities to attract students through their marketing activities.

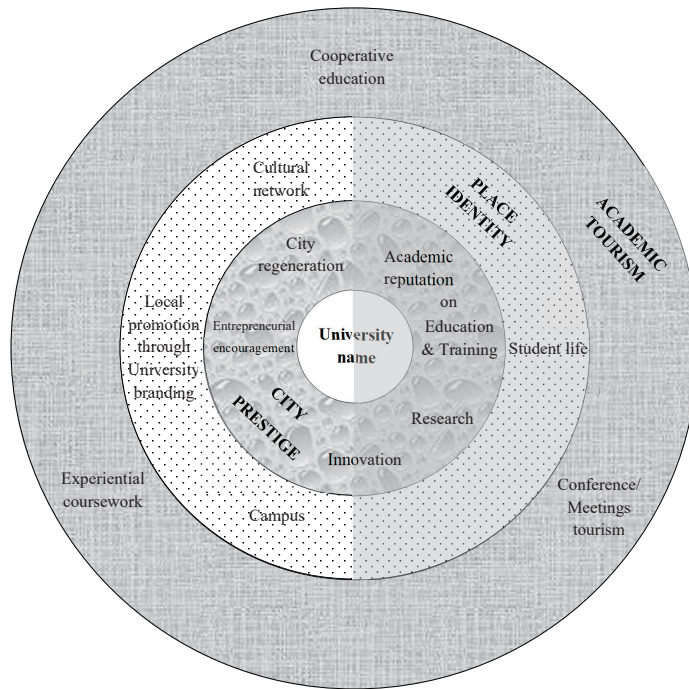
This promotion, in return, contribute to defining the image of localities as well. As mentioned by Briggs (2006), location is one of the top reasons for higher education choice, but its importance decreases toward universities with strong academic reputation. It means that a university can enhance the image of the host city via its prestige. Consequently, student life can form an urban lifestyle brand that cities rely on to boost their image (Chatterton, 2010). In other words, university students can be city residents and have dominant influences on community characters that form university towns (Goddard & Vallance, 2013). Besides, Roostika (2017) in the case of Yogyakarta (Indonesian cultural and student city) finds the relationship between university image and city image, which leads to students' satisfaction on destination. The evidence from three most prosperous towns in place marketing of Poland—Poznan, Wroclaw, and Krakow—proves that they are beneficial from the functional connection with marketing activities of the most prominent local universities (Glinka, 2017). The study explores that different stakeholders have an intersection of city expectation related to higher education, remarked by the role of universities. Additionally, Popescu (2012) appreciates education as the predominance in cities' statement with the primary mission is human capital development. The author considers the congruence between city branding and higher education branding influenced by internationalized pressures. Again, Rekettye and Pozsgai (2015) define one of the critical differentiating features of ECC (European Capital of Culture) universities is the place which is the antecedent of their cooperation with the host city in branding. The authors mention the fact that the name of places contained in some best universities name (Massachusetts, Cambridge, London, Oxford, Chicago, and Princeton, California) as co-branding or cross-marketing.

Besides, university prestige can be the pull element of their host cities. First and apparently, students and scholars select a higher education destination because of the fame of institutions. Second, the university campus can be the contribution of urban landscapes (Way, 2016). With the case of the University of Washington (West Campus), the author proves that the university campus has become a creative hub that connects the city to its neighborhood. The campus is also a public space in the town in the case of Eastern Mediterranean University (Rashidi, 2013). In this approach, the author mentions the concept of college town and the inner-city campus in which a city is also campus and reversely. Particularly, the university campus and city have a physical relationship and social interaction. Their interactions through university spatial development are also proved by five cases (QUT, MIT, Harvard, Twente and Newcastle universities) (Benneworth, Charles, & Madanipour, 2010).

### ***Academic tourism***

Another way that place universities in relationship with their host cities is academic tourism or educational tourism. Breen (2012) who used to lead undergraduates of an American university on summer programs to Australia explores that in this "privileged migration for educational purposes," local culture is the key actor compared to the global approach. In this case, academic tourism that applies experiential education belongs to cooperative education or job training programs between Northeastern University and the international partners. Emphasizing the concerns with international education, McGladdery and Lubbe (2017) consider the potential of educational tourism not only in the tourism market but also in other sectors. They redefine educational tourism from Ritchie, Carr, and Cooper (2003) as informal and formal levels in which students are academic tourists who are the stakeholder of place branding among many countries (Anglo-American, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Finland, USA, Canada). According to McNulty, Sibeck, Hogenauer, and Vance (2011), experiential coursework in educational tourism can be categorized into different types, including international internships, study abroad,





Source: Aggregated by the author from the literature review

**Figure 3** Conceptual Framework of University Role in City Branding

cross-cultural virtual teams, and short-term programs. In a study on adult learning, Pitman, Broomhall, McEwan, and Majcoha (2010) research the participation of scholars from Australian universities as tour leaders, program or course material designers, and organizers for university students. Learning experiences bring a sense of place to the learners (Ibid). This sense can contribute to defining the city image in the students' mind. Furthermore, students' cultural understanding of the host country is enhanced (Quezada, 2004).

Another form of academic tourism is conference tourism. Although professional trips made by airplane can lead to environmental issues, they contribute to mark the host cities as the event destinations (Høyer & Naess, 2001). Similarly, cities can rebrand to overcome their past images through meetings tourism (Bradley et al., 2002).

Overall, universities have a contribution on city image formation through their academic reputation (education and training), research, innovation, entrepreneurial encouragement, commercial exploitation, student life, campuses, branding strategies, and educational tourism. Notably, universities, which are put concerning tourism, are considered the agents of place identity (Albino, 2015).

### **Conceptual framework**

On the basis of the literature, the role of universities in city branding in the Vietnam context is considered at three levels, including city prestige formation, place identity formation, and destination image formation through academic tourism encouragement. Figure 3 illustrates the conceptual framework. The darker part

represents the traditional functions of higher education. At first, universities can enclose their host cities' names to their brand name. Thereafter, they can contribute to forming cities as hubs for education, technology, entrepreneurship, or cultural experience, even tourism through academic and curricular activities. Notably, a university campus can be the element for social interaction by becoming a public space.

#### 4. Methodology

This study applies a qualitative method to analyze secondary data from the top 20 Vietnam universities websites. The total number of research objects is 51 universities, including university members (Table 1).

The data was retrieved from 2017 to the end of July 2019. With statistical analysis based on the presence or absence of contents mentioned in the conceptual framework, the research determines how each university contributes to city branding on each aspect.

#### 5. Results

The finding shows the role of Vietnam universities in human capital development, job markets enrichment, tourist attraction, destination image formation, spreading the sense of community and humanity, producing scientific knowledge, and preserving cultural heritage for their host cities.

Table 2 shows that almost top Vietnam universities conduct their essential functions. These functions are education and training, research, innovation, entrepreneurial encouragement, cooperation (international and national levels) through student exchange, or academic tourism. Student life, which forms the urban lifestyle, is also boosted through activities on culture, sport, art performance, and community contribution. Given that these all activities aim to green behaviors and ecological preservation, they contribute a lot to the sustainable image formation of localities.

Entrepreneurial encouragement is the notable role of VHEIs that is manifested via specific form—commercial exploitation. This trend reflects universities' effort in preparing the necessary knowledge and skills for their students to enter the labor market after graduation. It mainly focuses on fields like design, fashion, and marketing (refer to Figure 4).

Besides, universities inherit local resources to promote their campuses as cultural attractions. Figure 5 represents the campuses of Vietnam National University, Hanoi and Dalat University, Dalat. VNU campus is the cultural heritage from French colonial while DLU campus is the typical one of a dreaming city with green spaces on hills. Additionally, Ton Duc Thang University and Hoa Sen University have built their campuses and made them become the memorable spaces for experiencing student life. Similar to the world trend, they can be the public spaces for sightseeing.

Interestingly, VHEIs in the Middle tend to use local images to promote their conferences or enclose to souvenirs for their partners. Three cities, including Hue, Danang, and Nha Trang, are prestigious tourist destinations. Hence, it will be a waste if universities do not take advantages of their attractions. Notably, in the case of Danang, the image of Han River with bridges across is used again and again. Even the number of VHEIs in Ho Chi Minh City that uses a similar way is equal to Danang; the usage is minimal. Among them, the University of Danang is the most enthusiastic one in promoting the host city image.

Other issues need to be learnt are famous people (VNU, RMIT, UDN, HUTECH), public spaces design/preservation (HUEUNI, UDN, DUYTAN, HSU), intellectual properties respect (HMULAW), environmental



**Table 1 Selected Top Universities in Three Regions of Vietnam**

Regions	University name (Code)	Website	University members' websites
Hanoi	Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU)	<a href="https://www.vnu.edu.vn/">https://www.vnu.edu.vn/</a>	<a href="http://ussh.vnu.edu.vn">http://ussh.vnu.edu.vn</a> <a href="http://www.hus.vnu.edu.vn/">http://www.hus.vnu.edu.vn/</a> <a href="http://uet.vnu.edu.vn/">http://uet.vnu.edu.vn/</a> <a href="http://ulis.vnu.edu.vn/">http://ulis.vnu.edu.vn/</a> <a href="http://www.ueb.vnu.edu.vn/">http://www.ueb.vnu.edu.vn/</a> <a href="http://www.education.vnu.edu.vn/">http://www.education.vnu.edu.vn/</a> <a href="http://vju.vnu.edu.vn/">http://vju.vnu.edu.vn/</a>
	Hanoi University of Science and Technology (HUST)	<a href="https://www.hust.edu.vn/">https://www.hust.edu.vn/</a>	
	Hanoi National University of Education (HNUE)	<a href="http://hnue.edu.vn/">http://hnue.edu.vn/</a>	
	Hanoi Medical University (HMU)	<a href="https://www.hmu.edu.vn/">https://www.hmu.edu.vn/</a>	
Central Vietnam	RMIT University (RMIT)	<a href="http://www.rmit.edu.vn/vi">http://www.rmit.edu.vn/vi</a>	
	Hue University (HUEUNI)	<a href="http://hueuni.edu.vn/">http://hueuni.edu.vn/</a>	<a href="http://hued.hueuni.edu.vn/">http://hued.hueuni.edu.vn/</a>
			<a href="http://husc.hueuni.edu.vn/">http://husc.hueuni.edu.vn/</a>
			<a href="http://dtdh-ydh.edu.vn/">http://dtdh-ydh.edu.vn/</a>
			<a href="https://huaf.hueuni.edu.vn/">https://huaf.hueuni.edu.vn/</a>
			<a href="http://hufa.hueuni.edu.vn/">http://hufa.hueuni.edu.vn/</a>
			<a href="http://hce.hueuni.edu.vn/">http://hce.hueuni.edu.vn/</a>
			<a href="https://huefl.hueuni.edu.vn/">https://huefl.hueuni.edu.vn/</a>
			<a href="http://hul.hueuni.edu.vn/">http://hul.hueuni.edu.vn/</a>
			<a href="http://hat.hueuni.edu.vn/">http://hat.hueuni.edu.vn/</a>
The University of Danang (UDN)	<a href="http://www.udn.vn/">http://www.udn.vn/</a>	<a href="http://fpe.hueuni.edu.vn/">http://fpe.hueuni.edu.vn/</a>	
		<a href="http://huis.hueuni.edu.vn/">http://huis.hueuni.edu.vn/</a>	
		<a href="http://huib.hueuni.edu.vn/">http://huib.hueuni.edu.vn/</a>	
		<a href="http://iren.hueuni.edu.vn/">http://iren.hueuni.edu.vn/</a>	
		<a href="http://2rie.hueuni.edu.vn/">http://2rie.hueuni.edu.vn/</a>	
		<a href="http://dut.udn.vn/">http://dut.udn.vn/</a>	
		<a href="https://due.udn.vn">https://due.udn.vn</a>	
		<a href="http://ued.udn.vn/">http://ued.udn.vn/</a>	
		<a href="http://ufl.udn.vn/vie/">http://ufl.udn.vn/vie/</a>	
		<a href="http://vnuk.udn.vn/">http://vnuk.udn.vn/</a>	
<a href="http://ute.udn.vn/">http://ute.udn.vn/</a>			
<a href="http://cit.udn.vn/">http://cit.udn.vn/</a>			
<a href="http://sict.udn.vn/">http://sict.udn.vn/</a>			
<a href="http://smp.udn.vn/">http://smp.udn.vn/</a>			
Duy Tan University (DUYTAN)	<a href="https://duytan.edu.vn/">https://duytan.edu.vn/</a>		
Nha Trang University (NTU)	<a href="http://www.ntu.edu.vn/">http://www.ntu.edu.vn/</a>		
Southern Vietnam	Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh city (VNUHCM)	<a href="https://vnuhcm.edu.vn/">https://vnuhcm.edu.vn/</a>	<a href="http://hcmussh.edu.vn/">http://hcmussh.edu.vn/</a> <a href="https://www.hcmus.edu.vn/">https://www.hcmus.edu.vn/</a> <a href="https://hcmiu.edu.vn/en/">https://hcmiu.edu.vn/en/</a> <a href="https://www.uit.edu.vn/">https://www.uit.edu.vn/</a>
	Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology (HCMUT)	<a href="http://www.hemut.edu.vn/vi">http://www.hemut.edu.vn/vi</a>	
	Nong Lam University – HCMC (HCMUAF)	<a href="http://www.hemuaf.edu.vn/">http://www.hemuaf.edu.vn/</a>	
	Ton Duc Thang University (TDTU)	<a href="https://tdtu.edu.vn/">https://tdtu.edu.vn/</a>	
	University of Medicine and Pharmacy at HCMC (YDS)	<a href="http://www.yds.edu.vn/yds2/">http://www.yds.edu.vn/yds2/</a>	
	HUTECH University of Technology (HUTECH)	<a href="https://www.hutech.edu.vn/">https://www.hutech.edu.vn/</a>	
	HCMC University of Technology and Education (HCMUTE)	<a href="https://hcmute.edu.vn/">https://hcmute.edu.vn/</a>	
	Hoa Sen University (HSU)	<a href="https://www.hoasen.edu.vn/vi">https://www.hoasen.edu.vn/vi</a>	
	Ho Chi Minh City University of Law (HCMLAW)	<a href="http://www.hcmulaw.edu.vn/">http://www.hcmulaw.edu.vn/</a>	
	Dalat University (DLU)	<a href="http://www.dlu.edu.vn/">http://www.dlu.edu.vn/</a>	
Can Tho University (CTU)	<a href="https://www.ctu.edu.vn/">https://www.ctu.edu.vn/</a>		

Source: Selected from Top 100 Vietnam universities ([edu2review.com](http://edu2review.com))

**Table 2 The Importance of Vietnam Universities**

Regions	University	Triggers of city branding									
		Academic reputation	Research	Innovation	Entrepreneurial encouragement	Commercial exploitation	Student life	Campus	University branding	Academic tourism	Others
Hanoi	VNU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	HUST	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	HNUE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	HMU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	RMIT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Central Vietnam	HUEUNI	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	UDN	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	DUYTAN	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Southern Vietnam	NTU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	VNUHCM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	HCMUT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	HCMUAF	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	TDTU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	YDS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	HUTECH	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	HCMUTE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	HSU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	HCMULAW	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	DLU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
CTU	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		

Source: Aggregated from data analysis



Source: A. hoasen.edu.vn, B. hutech.edu.vn, C. udn.vn

**Figure 4 Products and Brand Identity Designed by Students**



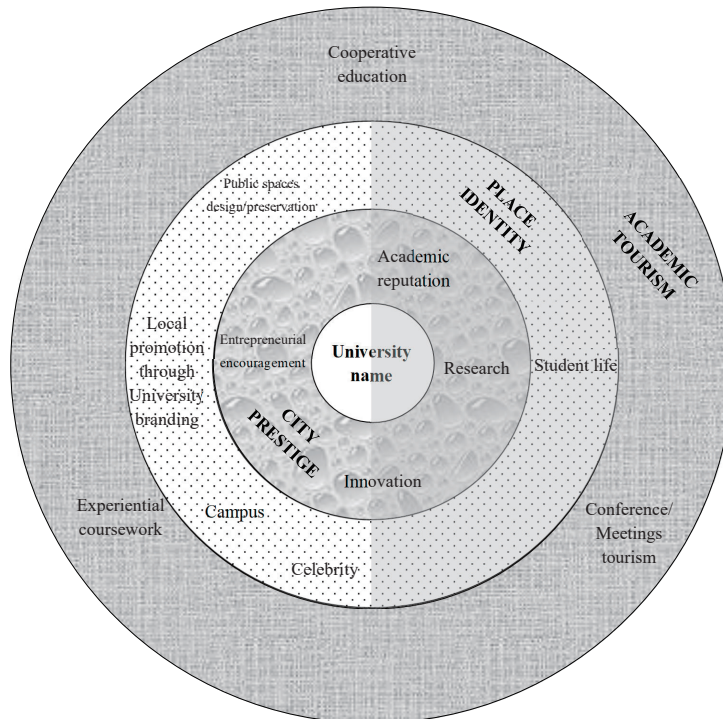
A. Iconic building of VNU (Indochina University in the past)

B. The mural of artist Victor Tardier had been reconstructed in 2006  
Nguy Nhu Kontum Hall

C. Dalat University campus inside

Source: A. B. vnu.edu.vn, C. kenh14.vn

**Figure 5 Famous University Campuses of Vietnam Universities**



Source: Aggregated by the author from the finding

**Figure 6 The Role of Vietnam Universities in City Branding**

consciousness (TDTU, HMUAF, DLU).

Figure 6 shows the role of Vietnam universities. The differences between this empirical result and literature are the absence of city regeneration function and the appearance of the new elements—Public spaces design/preservation and celebrity. Celebrities mentioned here can be scholars, artists, and people who are the winners from beauty/talent contests at the national level. This fact reflects the current trend in Vietnam when the beauty market has reached a saturation point. Vietnam people have no longer focused on the features merely but care much more about intellectual beauty that comes from higher institutions. Certainly, it also creates urban lifestyles and sustainable city development. These types of celebrity can be the place identity. For instance, Foreign Trade University, which is not selected in this study, is considered the cradle of Miss Vietnam. Recently, a junior of University of Economics–The University of Danang (UDN) has become the runner up of Miss Universe Vietnam. It reminds many people about an elegant city with bridges across the Han River. This city is also famous with local friendly and hospital people who welcome any cultural tourist.

## 6. Implications

The study figures out the affective characteristics and activities of VHEIs in place branding, as reviewed in the literature. However, it is challenging to evaluate their influence on city image formation. Most simply,

every aspect can form the brand identity of the place. It means that a city can be famous in specific fields that are trained in its universities. In general, prestigious universities supply high-quality human resources for local economic development. Hence, to attract investors, it is necessary to enhance partnerships between universities and industries. Thereafter, cities can take the role of moderators.

Given that most VHEIs are entrepreneurial encouragers, cities like Hanoi, Danang, and Ho Chi Minh have advantages to become an entrepreneurial hub as the government expected. Nevertheless, a start-up project must be attached to proper fields. Besides, the start-up groups should include students from different universities to supplement one another. Moreover, entrepreneurship in VHEIs is only limited in contests and conferences. Universities and cities can think about a collaboration in which incubation centers reside inside university campuses.

In terms of urban lifestyle formation, students are an essential city stakeholder to spread the sense of community and improve the livability. They can contribute to creating civilized citizens. Consequently, cities will attract authentic visitors, not limited to academic travelers. Co-branding strategies, therefore, can be deployed at different levels (basic, entrepreneurial, knowledge-based, shared resource levels).

Given the limitation on data collection (only through VHEIs' websites), further research can choose a typical city to conduct interviews with university managers. We may also repeat studies with the other localities to make a comparison between them. Depending on the types of universities, cities will select the most appropriate option for their promoting strategies.

## 7. Conclusion

This research is the first one in Vietnam that explores the role of universities in city branding. With content analysis and simple statistics, the study meets its aim. Basically, VHEIs contribute to city branding at three levels, including city prestige, place identity, and tourist destination branding. In addition, a salient aspect mentioned as the promoter is celebrities who work for or used to be/being students of universities. This element has not been considered in any previous research. However, it is suitable for promoting a city image focused on people. Further investigations with comparative analysis can be conducted for specific cases to evaluate the strength of university cities.

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