

ENHANCING THE BRAND VALUE OF VIETNAMESE BÁNH MÌ IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OF HO CHI MINH CITY

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Received: 2 May 2025; Revised: 18 May 2025; Accepted: 31 May 2025

ABSTRACT

From a humble and widely popular street food, bánh mì has gained international recognition, becoming a favorite among foreign visitors and receiving high praise from esteemed global culinary organizations. However, Ho Chi Minh City's tourism sector has yet to fully capitalize on the potential of this culinary asset for tourism development. This study examines the current state then outlines strategic directions, and proposes several solutions to enhance the brand value of Vietnamese bánh mì in tourism development of Ho Chi Minh City. To achieve these research objectives, the author employs various methodologies, including literature review and textual analysis, comparative analysis, and field investigation. The findings offer significant insights for policymakers, tourism stakeholders and culinary businesses engaged in developing food tourism in Ho Chi Minh City. By examining key factors that influence the brand value of Vietnamese bánh mì, such as product quality, marketing strategies, workforce and infrastructure, the study proposes a comprehensive framework to enhance bánh mì's position as a distinctive cultural brand and sustainable tourism asset.

Keywords: Culinary, Vietnamese Bánh Mi, Tourism, Ho Chi Minh City Tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Bánh mì was introduced to Vietnam in the 19th century as a humble, everyday food. Despite its modest origins, it has grown to become an iconic dish that is frequently mentioned by the international community when referring to Vietnamese cuisine. Its global appeal has significantly contributed to enhancing the position of Vietnamese cuisine on the world culinary map.

Alongside dishes such as phở bò (beef noodle soup) and bún chả (grilled pork with noodles), bánh mì is among the Vietnamese delicacies that attract international diners and has repeatedly been recognized by global media. CNN (USA) once published an article praising bánh mì as “the world’s best sandwich.” Traveller, a reputable travel website in Australia, ranked Vietnamese bánh mì among the top ten most delicious sandwiches in the world. More recently, the South China Morning Post published an article analyzing the appeal of this humble dish.

Oxford, one of the world’s most prestigious English dictionaries, annually adds widely used terms from various countries. Currently, among the three Vietnamese words included in the Oxford Dictionary, two are food-related: “phở” and “bánh mì” (the third being “áo dài”).

This inclusion is a point of pride not only for the Vietnamese language but also for the nation's culinary heritage, as being recognized as proper nouns means that these dishes are now acknowledged and named by a global audience.

Cuisine is classified as a form of cultural tourism resource. As a component of Vietnamese cuisine, bánh mì, despite receiving high acclaim, has yet to be effectively leveraged in tourism development.

Bánh mì's significance in Vietnamese culinary culture has been widely acknowledged, yet its role as a tourism asset remains underexplored, especially regarding its brand value in the tourism sector. This paper addresses this research gap by analyzing the brand value factors of bánh mì and evaluating their impact on tourism development in Ho Chi Minh City. Enhancing bánh mì's brand value is vital for improving the city's competitiveness in culinary tourism and attracting more international visitors. For these reasons, we have selected the topic "Promoting the Brand Value of Vietnamese Bánh Mì in Tourism Development of Ho Chi Minh City" as a contribution to the international academic conference on "The Future of Agriculture and Food Industries – Trends and Challenges." Through this paper, we aim to share several ideas on enhancing the brand value of Vietnamese bánh mì, thereby contributing to the growth of tourism in Ho Chi Minh City.

2. RESEARCH OVERVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Bánh mì is one of Vietnam's most iconic street foods. Street food refers to meals that are prepared and served for immediate consumption, typically at lower prices than those offered in restaurants. These foods are known for their convenience and affordability, catering to a broad demographic, particularly students, workers, civil servants, and individuals with low to middle incomes. In recent years, the topic of street food has attracted increasing academic interest. To fully harness the brand value of Vietnamese bánh mì for tourism development, there is a need for more applied research focused on this unique cultural and culinary resource.

Vietnamese bánh mì has been widely celebrated by numerous renowned international organizations and media outlets as a must-try dish for visitors to Vietnam, including National Geographic, Condé Nast Traveler Magazine, Huffington Post, the World Records Union (WorldKings), the World Top Institute, Traveller, and CNN, among others. The image of former U.S. President Barack Obama enjoying a Vietnamese bánh mì once went viral on social media. Similarly, Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, accompanied by Vietnamese-Australian celebrity chef Luke Nguyen, was seen savoring bánh mì at a street-side vendor in Da Nang. In addition, many South Korean celebrities have publicly expressed their fondness for this humble dish, including Yuri (SNSD), singer Lee Seung Hoon, and the girl group Red Velvet. The Guardian (UK) once wrote: "Here's a little-known secret—the best sandwich in the world isn't found in Rome, Copenhagen, or New York City, but on the streets of Vietnam." During his lifetime, renowned chef Anthony Bourdain, one of the most influential figures in the global food scene, referred to Bánh Mì Phượng as "the best bánh mì in the world" [1].

Currently, two scientific conferences on bánh mì have been organized by the Ho Chi Minh City Tourism Association and the Ho Chi Minh City Department of Tourism as part of the Vietnamese Bánh Mì Festival in 2023 and 2025. These conferences brought together numerous respected scholars and researchers, with presentations focused on two main themes: "The Development Journey of Vietnamese Bánh Mì" and "Vietnamese Bánh Mì – Global Value, Global Reach." The contributions presented at these conferences highlighted bánh mì as a representative dish that contributes not only to socio-economic development but also to the promotion of Vietnamese culinary culture. In addition, several studies have directly

addressed the role of bánh mì in the development of culinary tourism and leveraging its value in enhancing tourism experiences. These include:

The online newspaper Dân Trí published an article titled “Saigon Bánh Mì – The ‘King’ of Foods During COVID-19” by Pham Nguyen Phu Tho (2020), which affirmed bánh mì as a “king of foods.” Bánh mì has been internationally recognized as a distinctive element of Vietnamese culinary culture, notably through the inclusion of the word “bánh mì”—in its original Vietnamese form—in the Oxford English Dictionary (March 24, 2011), and the event of bánh mì featured as a Google Doodle across 12 countries. In response, the Ho Chi Minh City Department of Tourism organized programs to highlight these events and to promote the cultural values embedded in Vietnamese bánh mì, particularly bánh mì Sài Gòn, to both domestic and international audiences [2].

In her 2020 article titled “Exploring the Culinary Essence of Saigon – A Convergence of Diverse Cultures,” author Diệu Trần highlighted the diversity of the culinary landscape in Ho Chi Minh City, introducing various locations where visitors can experience authentic local flavors. Among the featured dishes was bánh mì - a signature Vietnamese street food that has earned widespread international recognition [3].

Brand value is shaped by multiple factors including product quality, cultural identity, consumer perception and effective marketing strategies. The literature on culinary tourism suggests that establishing a strong brand requires understanding consumer expectations and delivering authentic, consistent experiences. Previous studies on food branding emphasize the importance of integrating cultural heritage with modern marketing techniques to enhance destination appeal. However, specific research on bánh mì’s brand value in tourism is limited, highlighting the need for this study.

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper employs several research methods, including document collection, synthesis and analysis, comparative analysis, and field investigation. In addition, the research team adopts an interdisciplinary approach—an increasingly common and essential perspective in applied studies, particularly those directly related to the field of tourism.

Document Collection, Synthesis, and Analysis Method: The purpose of this method is to gather relevant materials concerning the history, geography, and people of Ho Chi Minh City, as well as the introduction of bánh mì into Vietnam. It also includes collecting reviews and assessments from tourists and culinary websites regarding Vietnamese bánh mì, which provides a foundation for addressing the key issues of the research. The materials collected by the research team include various specialized books, articles, and documents from local government agencies at different levels.

Field Investigation Method: The purpose of this method is to assess the current status of bánh mì businesses catering to tourism in Ho Chi Minh City. The author conducted interviews with vendors, tourists, and consulted with experts in the fields of gastronomy and tourism during the period of the Vietnamese Bánh Mì Festival (March 21–24, 2025) in Ho Chi Minh City. Through this field research, the author gained insights into the current state of bánh mì businesses and their contributions to tourism development in Ho Chi Minh City.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1. Current status of Vietnamese Bánh Mì businesses catering to tourists in Ho Chi Minh City

Bánh mì first appeared in Vietnam in 1859 when the French military captured Gia Định. The bread at that time was inspired by the French baguette—characterized by a dense core and a less crispy crust than it has today. In its early form, bánh mì was consumed in the European style, spread with butter or milk, or torn apart to dip into soup. In 1958, the first Vietnamese bánh mì shop, named Hòa Mã, opened in Saigon. The bread was sliced in half and filled with various ingredients such as meat, Vietnamese pork sausage (chả lụa), and pate, making it convenient for customers to carry. In the 1970s, the introduction of brick ovens allowed for mass production of bánh mì. From Saigon, bánh mì was adapted and customized by people from all three regions of Vietnam to suit local tastes. It quickly spread across the country, becoming a beloved "national" fast food due to its variety, convenience, and most importantly, its affordability. The different types of bánh mì are defined by the variety of fillings used inside:

- Bánh mì thịt: The most common version in Ho Chi Minh City consists of meat, pork sausage, butter, pate, cilantro, vegetables, pickled vegetables, and chili.

- Bánh mì que: A baguette-shaped version contains meat and vegetables

Some famous bánh mì shops in Vietnam include Bánh Mì Phượng, Bánh Mì Madam Khanh, Bánh Mì Hòa Mã, and Bánh Mì Huỳnh Hoa. Internationally, there are establishments such as "Banh Mi Bay" in the UK, "Ô Bánh Mì" in Malaysia, Bánh Mì Saigon in New York, and Bun Mee in San Francisco.

Bánh mì is a dish that plays a significant role in shaping Vietnamese culinary culture, incorporating the best elements from global cuisine. It is no longer simply the French baguette; when it was introduced to Vietnam, it was adapted to suit local tastes, becoming a dish that reflects Vietnamese identity. Bánh mì is a humble food, and even the way it is eaten remains simple and unpretentious. Few dishes are as delicious, affordable, diverse, and convenient as bánh mì. At the 2018 Miss Universe competition, the international fan community was captivated by the image of Miss H'Hen Niê wearing a unique national costume inspired by bánh mì, which left a lasting impression and contributed to enhancing the country's image.

The baguette was adapted by Vietnamese chefs in the 19th century. Instead of using expensive foie gras (goose liver pate), they opted for chicken or pork, which was more affordable, easier to prepare, and better suited to the local taste. The French typically ate baguettes with cold ingredients served on the side. However, in the early 1950s, the Vietnamese innovated by creating the sandwich-style bánh mì. Rather than keeping the ingredients separate, they placed them inside the baguette, which can be considered the early form of the delicious Vietnamese bánh mì we know today.

In Ho Chi Minh City, bánh mì can be found at nearly every dining location, from street vendors to small shops along the roads. Even high-end restaurants have placed this dish at the top of their menus. This humble dish, closely tied to the Vietnamese people for centuries, is now recognized globally. However, most bánh mì establishments still primarily cater to the local population and have yet to be effectively leveraged to serve the tourism sector.

In Vietnam, each region has its own way of preparing bánh mì. In Hanoi, many long-established shops still serve the traditional French-style bánh mì with ham. In Hoi An and many shops in Ho Chi Minh City, the fillings are typically made with hot, freshly cooked meat. In countries with large Vietnamese communities such as the United States and Australia, bánh mì has spread widely. "Around the university area in Wisconsin (USA), many fast-food trucks appear, the majority of which are Vietnamese bánh mì carts. It's easy to find a Vietnamese-flavored grilled meat bánh mì for just 1 USD," said Chef Phan, recalling his experience eating bánh mì in the U.S. to the South China Morning Post. In South Korea, several bánh mì shops have popped up. The famous Bánh Mì Phượng from Hoi An (Quang Nam) has even reached Seoul, South Korea, where it has been warmly received by local diners. A chef at a Vietnamese

restaurant in China shared that their restaurant sells nearly 100 bánh mì daily, with many customers referring to them as traditional Vietnamese bánh mì. In Ho Chi Minh City, several upscale restaurants have elevated this humble dish into a gourmet experience. Chef Peter Cường Franklin has crafted bánh mì priced at 100 USD using luxurious ingredients. The upgraded sandwich features fillings such as truffle mushrooms, tender pork, and foie gras. Regardless of flavor, the charm of bánh mì lies in its adaptability across various social classes and occasions. Bánh mì can be a quick meal for hardworking street vendors in Ho Chi Minh City, a snack for tourists strolling through the ancient streets of Hoi An, or a refined dish at a high-end restaurant banquet. As such, what was once a simple dish has embedded itself in the consciousness of the Vietnamese people and become their top choice for a daily meal.

4.2. Solutions to enhance the brand value of the Vietnamese Bánh Mì in Tourism Development of Ho Chi Minh City

In recent years, culinary elements have been incorporated into many tourism promotion and marketing events both domestically and internationally, such as at trade fairs and tourism festivals. However, to fully leverage the advantages of street food in Ho Chi Minh City and food tourism in the development of Vietnamese tourism, the tourism industry as well as local authorities need to have specific plans for the development of street food tourism and use culinary experiences as a tool to promote Ho Chi Minh City's tourism activities in the coming years. Some specific directions are as follows:

In the Ho Chi Minh City Tourism Development Planning Strategy for the period 2015 – 2020 (part of the Ho Chi Minh City Tourism Development Planning Scheme to 2020 and Vision to 2030), the following objectives were set: Strengthen the leadership of the city's Committee over the tourism sector in a synchronized, modern, and in-depth manner, while enhancing the awareness of the city authorities at multiple levels, functional sectors, and the public regarding the economic and social significance of the tourism industry. Improve the image of "Ho Chi Minh City - A friendly, attractive, and safe destination" to create a strong transformation in the quality of services and tourism products, ensuring a safe and welcoming tourism environment for visitors [4].

“Leveraging culinary tourism as the way to affirm the role of cuisine in general, and street food in particular. In the near future, the city will develop and promote unique tourism products, leveraging its strengths in tourism, including the development of culinary tourism products aimed at international visitors, combining sightseeing with local culinary learning and cooking in tourism villages and tourist areas; exploring and learning about local food both within and outside the city” (according to Mr. Bui Ta Hoang Vu, Director of the Ho Chi Minh City Department of Tourism). The Department of Tourism will regularly organize food festivals and culinary fairs to introduce the city's distinctive dishes and culinary culture to tourists, especially international visitors [5].

This study concentrates on the current factors impacting bánh mì's brand value in the context of tourism. Product quality remains variable across vendors, with inconsistencies in taste, ingredient freshness and hygiene standards negatively affecting tourist satisfaction. While bánh mì is widely perceived as a cultural symbol of Vietnam, some tourists noted that variations in preparation, particularly in upscale or tourist-targeted venues, reduce its authenticity. Furthermore, promotion efforts are fragmented and lack coordinated branding campaigns aimed at international tourists. Customer service quality varies significantly, influencing overall culinary experience and brand impression. The lack of designated, well-managed culinary zones also limits the ability to showcase bánh mì in a safe and appealing setting. Critical challenges include the absence of unified standards for quality and hygiene, insufficient staff training and limited collaboration between the tourism and culinary sectors

in promotion efforts. However, opportunities exist in leveraging festivals, media exposure and partnerships with travel agencies to enhance bánh mì's visibility and in adopting zoning strategies to create attractive food tourism clusters.

Solutions for Developing Technical and Physical Infrastructure

First, it is necessary to establish designated zones for culinary experiences and street food, including bánh mì, in Ho Chi Minh City. In recent years, the People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City has shown increasing interest in street food culture by initiating the planning and organization of food fairs. However, most street food areas still operate spontaneously, with limited management and, in some cases, negatively impact the urban aesthetic. Therefore, it is essential to harmoniously integrate pedestrian spaces, shopping areas, and culinary experiences. To ensure effective and coordinated development, designated street food zones should adhere to the following characteristics:

- Only signature and iconic dishes, those widely favored or recognized, especially by international visitors, should be featured. Food vendors must be provided with adequate infrastructure, starting with the availability of nearby parking spaces for visitors. The area should be well-ventilated, secure, and the parking fees should follow standardized pricing to avoid tourist exploitation, which may lead to dissatisfaction. Street lighting systems also require attention to ensure sufficient illumination, allowing safe and easy movement for guests. Moreover, participating food stalls should be eligible for government incentives, as their contribution to the street food zone supports the preservation of cultural heritage and promotes tourism development in Ho Chi Minh City in particular, and in Vietnam more broadly.
- A comprehensive architectural master plan is essential. All food stalls must comply with regulations concerning height and color schemes to maintain visual harmony. Irregular or unregulated constructions that encroach on public space and affect the urban aesthetic should be avoided. Advertising signage should also be regulated, with unified placement and design that complements the surrounding landscape.
- Visitor safety must be ensured within the culinary zone, particularly in areas where bánh mì and other street foods are served. Tourists not only come to eat but also seek a relaxing, enjoyable experience. If safety concerns arise, their culinary journey will feel incomplete, and the overall tourism experience will be negatively impacted.
- It is crucial to develop integrated gastronomic precincts that combine street food culture with urban tourism infrastructure. These precincts should be strategically located near major tourist attractions and transportation hubs, with clearly defined operational standards that include not only cleanliness and safety but also environmental sustainability. Infrastructure enhancements should prioritize the creation of welcoming public spaces featuring adequate seating, ambient lighting, and waste recycling facilities, ensuring both visitors and vendors enjoy a comfortable and responsible environment.

Solution for Human Resources

To improve the effectiveness of the food and beverage business in general, and specifically bánh mì businesses, in addition to improving the quality of the food, restaurants, eateries, and bakeries must place greater emphasis on customer service. The staff are the messengers conveying the cultural message to each tourist, directly introducing the dishes to them.

The style of service is what sets a business apart. To achieve excellent service, in addition to the inherent qualities of each staff member, professional training and a systematic approach are required. This cannot be easily achieved but must be gained through work experience and interaction with real-world situations, ultimately becoming a skill.

Staff must know how to create a comfortable dining environment for customers, as this greatly impacts the enjoyment of the food. If the atmosphere is tense due to long waiting times or unprofessional service, it will cause discomfort for the customers, even when enjoying simple dishes like bánh mì.

To develop the tourism workforce and improve the quality of tourism services, it is necessary to focus on retraining and training new labor teams to address both immediate and long-term needs. This can be done through on-site training, formal training both domestically and abroad. Furthermore, food and beverage businesses can enhance their staff's professional skills through training programs, partnerships with training institutions, and organizing regular training courses. These programs can address service issues, service quality, and skills to satisfy tourists. Additionally, bánh mì businesses can conduct on-the-job training where experienced staff mentor new or lower-level employees. Training materials may adhere to the Vietnamese Tourism Occupational Skills Standards (VTOS), which are coordinated by the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism and the European Union. Alternatively, bánh mì businesses could send staff to learn at large hotels if necessary.

Improving the quality of the workforce involves regularly organizing training sessions on skills and professional knowledge (such as communication, foreign languages, culinary culture, etc.); ensuring compliance with hygiene and food safety standards; and honing skills in food preparation and presentation. Regular health checks and issuing health certificates for staff directly involved in bánh mì production should also be conducted.

In parallel with improving the staff's skills, it is essential to raise their awareness and responsibility through strict monitoring of compliance with business regulations and codes of conduct. Clear and timely reward and punishment systems should be implemented to encourage good performance and deter violations.

The development of human resources must go beyond standard training by establishing continuous professional development programs tailored for bánh mì vendors and staff. Such programs should incorporate modules on cross-cultural communication, advanced food safety protocols, and customer engagement skills, empowering vendors to cater effectively to a diverse international clientele. Collaborations with culinary institutes and tourism colleges should also be formalized to offer accredited certifications that recognize expertise and professionalism in bánh mì preparation and service.

Solutions for Products

A long-term plan should be established to support the sustainable development of street food in general and bánh mì businesses in particular, in close alignment with tourism activities. This involves the comprehensive and detailed zoning of street food areas—drawing from the experiences of cities such as Bangkok (Thailand), Seoul (South Korea), and Manila (Philippines)—focusing on districts with a high concentration of tourist attractions and accommodations. These areas should offer traditional dishes and beverages adapted to suit the preferences of international visitors.

Investment should be directed toward expanding the existing safe street food model, initially piloted in Ward 12 (District 4) and Tan Thanh Ward (Tan Phu District), which involved 195 establishments and 286 participants. Priority should be given to central areas with high foot traffic from international tourists, such as Co Giang Food Street (District 1),

Ban Co Market dining area (District 3), Ho Con Rua area (District 3), Alley 284 Le Van Sy (District 3), Alley 14 Tran Binh Trong (District 5), Nguyen Thuong Hien Food Street, and the Vinhomes Grand Park night food market.

When organizing and designating bánh mì vendors in alleys and streets near public areas (e.g., bus stations, train stations, tourist sites, exhibition centers), food safety inspectors should be deployed to ensure the hygiene and safety of ingredients. Vendors must be located away from potential sources of contamination. Food preparation and storage equipment must comply with hygiene standards. All food products and additives must be clearly labeled and traceable of its origin according to regulation.

Bánh mì can be offered as a convenient breakfast option in various tour programs. For instance, educational or experiential tours for student groups can include bánh mì as a nutritious, cost-effective, and time-efficient breakfast solution. For tours with early departure times, bánh mì serves as a practical alternative when restaurants are not yet open. Similarly, during peak tourist seasons when dining establishments are often overcrowded, bánh mì can replace traditional breakfasts to save time and avoid long waits.

Product innovation should be pursued with sensitivity to cultural heritage. Efforts to diversify bánh mì offerings could include the introduction of seasonal ingredients, fusion variations that respect traditional flavors, and personalized customization options for tourists. Moreover, experiential initiatives such as guided bánh mì tours, hands-on workshops, and storytelling sessions about bánh mì's history and cultural significance can deepen visitor engagement and foster emotional connections to the brand.

Solutions for Promotion Advertising

In order for bánh mì and other famous dishes to become distinctive tourism products that attract visitors like in Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia in the near future, the tourism industry needs to enhance the promotion of culinary products through domestic and international restaurant networks to introduce Vietnamese cuisine. Restaurants should establish partnerships with each other and with travel agencies to develop collaborative plans between bánh mì businesses and tourism enterprises to invest in discovery and experience tours. (Travel companies like Saigontourist, Vietravel, TST have implemented such initiatives, but the results have not been as expected due to a lack of close and clear cooperation on legal responsibilities.) Promotional activities can be conducted through the following channels:

Promotion through festivals and fairs

Promotion is a crucial strategy in tourism development. However, most travel books focus only on introducing historical, cultural values, and people, with limited mentions of culinary experiences, only writing about already known dishes. Therefore, enhancing promotion, particularly through festivals and food fairs, is necessary. Through such fairs, visitors will gain a comprehensive view of various dishes, including bánh mì. They will have the opportunity to taste the food on-site and will be encouraged to share their experiences with friends and family.

Promotion through media channels

It is essential to build websites about bánh mì in multiple languages to introduce it not only to Vietnamese people but also to international friends. In addition to creating websites, there should be articles highlighting the uniqueness of bánh mì, showcasing its value and the distinct identity of Vietnam that sets it apart from other countries. Along with research, promotional activities using images should also be intensified to bring visitors closer to bánh mì in Vietnam.

Managers should bring bánh mì closer to overseas Vietnamese and international tourists through tourism and culinary programs on the international television channel, VTV4 - Vietnam Television, which provides comprehensive information about tourism, cuisine, landmarks, and the people of Vietnam.

Promotion through tourism industry professionals

Ho Chi Minh City's tourism industry should offer classes introducing bánh mì to tour guides so they can better understand the special features of this dish. This is the fastest way to introduce bánh mì to tourists, helping them appreciate the appeal of this dish. Additionally, restaurants and eateries in central districts should collaborate with travel businesses to promote and introduce their products through their channels. The culinary products, including bánh mì, will be presented by tour operators alongside related tourism products, creating a stimulating experience and making it easier for visitors to access the product.

Marketing strategies require the orchestration of a coherent brand narrative that positions bánh mì not merely as food but as an emblem of Vietnamese culture and hospitality. This should involve multi-platform campaigns utilizing social media influencers, virtual reality food experiences, and collaborations with international food festivals and travel expos. The creation of dedicated digital platforms offering multilingual content, interactive maps of bánh mì locations, and user-generated reviews will facilitate informed and engaging tourist experiences.

Solutions for managing food quality and safety

To ensure the safety of tourists consuming food products, such as bánh mì, during their visit to Ho Chi Minh City, it is essential to strengthen the management of food hygiene and safety. Fundamentally, these management measures must be implemented in a coordinated and comprehensive manner to be truly effective. Any inconsistency or lack of diligence at any stage in the management process can compromise the ultimate goal: safeguarding the health of tourists.

Food safety involves multiple stages and stakeholders, including those in agriculture sector. The food poisoning incident related to Bánh Mì Phượng in Hoi An in September 2023, which led to the hospitalization of 150 people due to ingredients contaminated with *Bacillus cereus* and *Salmonella*, illustrates the serious risks involved. Therefore, in addition to mandatory and regulatory measures, it is crucial to focus on raising awareness and educating bánh mì vendors, tourism enterprises, and tourists themselves about food hygiene and safety. Selecting safe and high-quality ingredients is critical. The use of spoiled or contaminated raw materials not only endangers consumer health but also erodes trust and affects business performance. Hence, strict standards must be obligated at every stage, from sourcing ingredients to final production.

Within the tourism sector, awareness campaigns should primarily target managers and service staff working in culinary establishments, as they play a central role in maintaining food safety. The broader socio-economic development of the country and of Ho Chi Minh City significantly influences public awareness regarding hygiene and safety practices in hospitality and food services. Moreover, international support and scientific and technological advancements also play a vital role in enhancing public understanding and commitment to environmental hygiene and food safety measures in the bánh mì business sector.

Maintaining rigorous standards for food quality and safety demands a dynamic monitoring system combining routine inspections with real-time feedback mechanisms accessible to tourists. Implementing a transparent certification scheme, visible through badges or digital verification, will build consumer trust. Concurrently, educational outreach targeting

both vendors and visitors should promote awareness of hygienic practices and the importance of supporting ethically operated food businesses, ensuring sustainable development of the bánh mì tourism brand.

5. CONCLUSION

Vietnam, as a developing country, has made remarkable strides across various sectors. Vietnamese cuisine, in particular, has been increasingly praised and embraced by international audiences. Culinary is not only a tourism resource but also one of Vietnam's greatest competitive advantages in the global tourism market. International tourists consistently express high appreciation for Vietnamese food. As such, cuisine is a promising asset—both in generating tourism products and in creating a distinctive national tourism brand that can attract foreign visitors and generate substantial economic benefits for the country. Food serves as a powerful medium to promote cultural identity and national image. Bánh mì, a simple and humble dish of the Vietnamese people, is now widely known worldwide and has become a highlight of Vietnamese culinary culture. It is an essential dish when talking about the food of the S-shaped land. Diners always feel excited when mentioning and tasting bánh mì. From a modest local specialty, bánh mì has become a “national” dish that travels the world with the Vietnamese diaspora-bringing pride to Vietnamese cuisine and contributing to the global reputation of the nation's cultural heritage.

The findings indicate a clear need for an integrated branding framework that incorporates the four key elements of branding theory: product, place people, and promotion. By applying these principles, bánh mì can evolve from a popular street food into a recognized tourism brand. It is important to carefully manage potential risks such as over-tourism and commodification to preserve bánh mì's cultural authenticity and to avoid adverse effects on local communities and vendor livelihoods. Lessons from successful culinary tourism models in cities like Bangkok and Seoul suggest that establishing regulated food zones with consistent branding and quality control can substantially enhance visitor experiences and strengthen the brand. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of bánh mì's brand value within the tourism context by identifying the critical factors influencing its success and proposing actionable strategies grounded in empirical research. Enhancing bánh mì's brand value will elevate Ho Chi Minh City's culinary tourism sector, fostering sustainable economic and cultural benefits. Future research should investigate the long-term impacts of these strategies and expand the focus to include other iconic Vietnamese culinary products.

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TÓM TẮT

NÂNG CAO GIÁ TRỊ THƯƠNG HIỆU CỦA BÁNH MÌ VIỆT NAM TRONG PHÁT TRIỂN DU LỊCH TẠI THÀNH PHỐ HỒ CHÍ MINH

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Từ một món ăn đường phố khiêm tốn và phổ biến rộng rãi, bánh mì đã đạt được sự công nhận quốc tế, trở thành món yêu thích của du khách nước ngoài và nhận được sự khen ngợi cao từ các tổ chức ẩm thực danh tiếng toàn cầu. Tuy nhiên, ngành du lịch thành phố Hồ Chí Minh vẫn chưa tận dụng đầy đủ tiềm năng của tài sản ẩm thực này để phát triển du lịch. Nghiên cứu này xem xét tình trạng hiện tại, sau đó đề ra các hướng đi chiến lược và đề xuất một số giải pháp để nâng cao giá trị thương hiệu của bánh mì Việt Nam trong phát triển du lịch thành phố Hồ Chí Minh. Để đạt được các mục tiêu nghiên cứu này, tác giả sử dụng nhiều phương pháp nghiên cứu, bao gồm tổng quan lý thuyết và các nghiên cứu liên quan, phân tích so sánh và điều tra thực tế. Các kết quả nghiên cứu cung cấp những hiểu biết quan trọng cho các nhà hoạch định chính sách, các bên liên quan trong du lịch và các doanh nghiệp ẩm thực tham gia phát triển du lịch ẩm thực tại thành phố Hồ Chí Minh. Bằng cách xem xét các yếu tố quan trọng ảnh hưởng đến giá trị thương hiệu của bánh mì Việt Nam, như chất lượng sản phẩm, chiến lược marketing, nguồn nhân lực và cơ sở hạ tầng, nghiên cứu đề xuất một khung nghiên cứu toàn diện để nâng cao vị thế của bánh mì như một thương hiệu văn hóa đặc sắc và tài sản du lịch bền vững.

Từ khóa: Ẩm thực, Bánh Mì Việt Nam, Du lịch, Du lịch Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh.