



Hospitality and tourism development through coffee shop experiences in a leading coffee-producing nation

Oanh Thi Kim Vu^a, Abel Duarte Alonso^{b,*}, Wil Martens^c, Lan Do Thi Ha^a, Thanh Duc Tran^d, Trung Thanh Nguyen^e

^a School of Business and Management, RMIT University Vietnam, 521 Kim Ma, Ba Dinh, Hanoi, Viet Nam

^b School of Business and Management, RMIT University Vietnam, 702 Nguyen Van Linh Blvd., District 7, HCMC 700000, Viet Nam

^c College of Management, National Sun Yat-sen University, Kaohsiung, Taiwan

^d Faculty of Tourism, Phenikaa University, Yen Nghia Ward, Ha Dong District, Hanoi, Viet Nam

^e Faculty of Tourism, Hanoi Open University, Viet Nam

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ABSTRACT

The present study empirically explores the potential development of coffee shop tourism in Vietnam, a leading coffee producer and home to a vibrant coffee shop scene, focusing on the supply side. Semi-structured, face-to-face, and online interviews were conducted with 47 coffee shop owners/managers, complemented by observations and archival information. The analysis identifies various insightful dimensions. One of these, the 'resource-based, image-related potential', underscores the importance of intangible elements, including Vietnam's existing coffee culture, and the experiential element supporting the potential for the nation's coffee shop industry to become a tourist drawcard. The 'resource-based involvement' dimension highlights the need for stakeholder-based actions for the industry to develop further, while the 'upstream-based issues' dimension suggests factors currently preventing coffee shop tourism from achieving its full potential. The study discusses several theoretical and practical implications that emerge from the findings; in addition, a conceptual framework is developed.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

As one of the world's most popular beverages (Caprioli et al., 2015), coffee consumption continues to increase globally, from 147 million 60-kg bags in 2012/2013 to 166.6 million in 2020/2021 (Statista, 2022a). Beyond its tangible element, coffee consumption is considered a socialisation tool (Yigit and Perçin, 2021). Indeed, given its unique taste and smell, coffee is an intrinsic part of many individuals' routines, contributing to keeping social life animated and alive, as well as to special moments (Yigit and Perçin, 2021).

Consumption of beverages in all forms, together with eating and food, are essential elements of tourists' experiences (Hall, 2019). Associated with this point, in recent years, coffee consumption has elevated further to become a tourism experience (Chen, 2022). Wang et al. (2019), conceptualise coffee tourism "as a form of commodity tourism that provides opportunities for tourists to engage in coffee experiences

of all aspects in places that contain unique nature and/or culture associated with coffee" (p. 148). Therefore, coffee tourism is part of an emergent gastronomic culture, where destinations' heritage and legacy convey valuable aspects that fulfil visitors' experience (Chen, 2022). This phenomenon is also the result of an increasing interest in knowledge around coffee consumption (Chen, 2022). Consequently, the value and quality of coffee have been driven upward; more importantly, however, is that a niche market for coffee tourism has emerged (Chen, 2022). In this context, opportunities have arisen for travellers to explore both coffee-growing regions, and their associated valuable cultural narratives (Chen, 2022).

In a similar vein, strong linkages exist between coffee tourism and the coffee shop experience. For instance, Choi et al. (2017) reflect upon the learning sessions available during the coffeehouse experience, including as a gathering place where individuals can exchange their knowledge and experience. Moreover, these exchanges can enhance the perceptions of the coffee house as a special and exciting place (Choi et al., 2017).

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: oanh.vuthikim@rmit.edu.vn (O.T.K. Vu), abel.alonso@rmit.edu.vn (A.D. Alonso), wilmartens@cm.nsysu.edu.tw (W. Martens), lan.dothiha@rmit.edu.vn (L.D.T. Ha), thanh.tranduc@phenikaa-uni.edu.vn (T.D. Tran), ntt31051992@gmail.com (T.T. Nguyen).

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1.2. Research gaps

As a relatively new phenomenon, significant research gaps remain in the domain of coffee-related experiences and coffee tourism. First, coffee tourism is still an underdeveloped scholarly subject (Dinis et al., 2021). Few attempts have been made to present primary data to enhance the understanding of potential opportunities through coffee tourism experiences (Bowen, 2021). Second, a recent literature review on coffee and tea tourism (Chen et al., 2021a,b) highlights an underdeveloped research landscape concerning these two leisure activities, as well as “a lack of sustained theory to inform future research and practice” (p. 303). Third, there is scant research on the potential of coffee tourism in coffee producing regions, for instance, activities centred on coffee farms and their producers (Casalegno et al., 2020). Addressing this research gap could help ascertain the likelihood of such potential and enhance coffee producing nations’ brand perceptions (Casalegno et al., 2020).

1.3. The study’s objectives

Extending from the above discourse, the present research has two key objectives. First, it will investigate the potential growth of Vietnam’s coffee shop industry to draw visitors from home and abroad; this nation is the world’s second-largest coffee producer (Statista, 2022b). More specifically, by gathering views of owners/managers of 47 coffee shops predominantly located in the city of Hanoi, the study will examine: a) the extent to which Vietnam’s coffee shop scene could become a visitor destination, b) how this potential could be fulfilled, and c) what barriers are preventing such development.

Related to these themes, Bui and Nguyen (2022) contend that “Vietnam’s potential coffee shop market has not yet been investigated” (p. 35). Indeed, Chen et al.’s literature review had not identified any articles on coffee tourism in Vietnam by 2020. Similarly, despite the importance of coffee as an export product, studies discussing the potential of Vietnam’s coffee shop scene as a tourism drawcard remains unexplored. With its population nearing 100 million inhabitants (Statista, 2022c), its emerging economy status (Dinh et al., 2018), and with the presence of over 30,000 coffee shops (Vietnam Coffee and Cocoa Association, VICOFA, 2021), researching this theme could be insightful and beneficial to coffee, coffee shop, and coffee tourism stakeholders. The present study will therefore further contribute to increasing scholarly discourse in the domain of coffee shops and coffee tourism, where currently the literature remains scant (e.g., Bowen, 2021; Casalegno et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2021a,b; Dinis et al., 2021).

Second, and conceptually, the study will contribute to theory development. Indeed, one of the characteristics of the chosen inductive analysis includes the potential for the development of a theoretical model (Thomas, 2006). In addition, the study considers principles of rigour in qualitative research (Gioia et al., 2012), and develops various dimensions, further demonstrating theoretical advancement. To support the study’s conceptual framework, the foundations of the resource-based view, or RBV (e.g., Barney, 1991) will be considered.

2. Literature review

2.1. The RBV

The RBV provides a sound conceptual foundation to extend the understanding of the significance of resources in a firm’s setting and beyond. This understanding also includes illuminating the relationship between a firm’s resources, resource deployment, resource combinations, market entry, and industry evolution (Furr and Eisenhardt, 2021). As with different theories, several pioneering and seminal works contributed to the development of the RBV. A first notion of the RBV rests on the premise that “firms in an industry must be heterogeneous in terms of resources they control” (Barney, 1991, p. 104), which would enable first-mover advantage. A second notion is that firm resources

should be immobile so that a strategic advantage exists against other firms, notably, through lack of mobility and ensuing barriers to entry (Barney, 1991). A third notion is that sustained competitive advantage originates from the capabilities and resources that a firm controls (Barney, 1991). These elements, which can be perceived as bundles of intangible and tangible assets, include a firm’s organisational routines and processes, managerial skills, and acquired knowledge and information (Barney et al., 2001). As verbalised in the following paragraphs, they are referred to as VRIN resources, enabling firms to maximise existing opportunities that otherwise are inaccessible to firms (Nason and Wiklund, 2018).

2.2. Valuable resources

A firm’s resources, not possessed by numerous competitors or potential competitors, enable its management to envisage or implement strategies that will enhance its effectiveness and efficiency, thus, becoming a source of competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). For Bowman and Ambrosini (2007), a valuable resource is expected to create a rent stream based on a product market; therefore, a valuable resource must be involved or contribute towards the creation of a service/product, where customers perceive value. Importantly, research by Nason and Wiklund (2018) found a statistically significant relationship between valuable resources and firm growth.

2.3. Rare resources

Again, these resources that are not replicated or possessed by a large number of competitors allow firms to implement value-creating strategies that are not implemented by numerous other firms simultaneously (Barney, 1991). Together with valuable resources, rare resources contribute to generating competitive advantage (Bowman and Ambrosini, 2007); moreover, rareness is assumed to be a prerequisite for competitive advantage (Huemer and Wang, 2021).

Gibson et al. (2021) propose an illustration of communities as valuable and rare resources, notably, by accessing a diverse range of customers or employees, and reputational benefits, with the unlikelihood of being replicated by other firms.

Imperfectly imitable resources can only represent sustained competitive advantage if firms unable to possess these resources cannot acquire them (Barney, 1991). This element of imperfect imitability can originate through, for instance, unique historical conditions, where the firm might possess a valuable organisational culture that developed earlier on in the firm’s history, and through social complexity, or social phenomena that a firm cannot influence or manage systematically (Barney, 1991).

2.4. Non-substitutable

Barney (1991) explains that, in order for a firm to possess a sustained competitive advantage, “no strategically equivalent valuable resources that are themselves either not rare or imitable” must exist” (p. 111). Moreover, if substitute resources are possessed or can be acquired by enough firms, then these firms cannot expect to gain a sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Thus, managers need to gain awareness of the potential effects of substitutes; these could emerge through different or similar resources serving the same purpose (Gibson et al., 2021).

2.5. The RBV and VRIN in hospitality and tourism

The RBV and the VRIN conceptual tools have also been considered in tourism and hospitality studies. In tourism, Seyitoğlu and Ivanov (2020) explain that the RBV enables the identification of gastronomic elements that set a destination apart from its competitors. Duarte Alonso et al. (2018) recognised various fundamental resources that could help position Peru’s gastronomy more strongly. These resources include the

growth of ‘culinary neighbourhoods’, where a variety of restaurants feature Peru’s traditional cuisine, as well as more avant-garde and fusion gastronomy (Duarte Alonso et al., 2018). In addition, the trend of pairing local foods and beverages, and the increasing experimenting among chefs with local dishes and foods that are less known to consumers, as well as the resulting growing interest in Peru’s gastronomy were perceived as key resources (Duarte Alonso et al., 2018).

Duarte Alonso et al. (2018) developed a framework, illustrating relationships between their findings and RBV tenets. Linkages to the RBV emerged in the form of the stages between the uniqueness of the gastronomic product and the delivery of unique gastronomic delights (heterogenous/immobile resources), while the VRIN was revealed through knowledge, experience, effectiveness, and product/service delivery (Duarte Alonso et al., 2018).

An earlier study (Rivas and Mayorga, 2011) revealed the usefulness of the RBV in understanding the ‘multinationalisation’ of Peruvian restaurants, where their management developed and learned organisational capabilities that led to restaurants’ international competitiveness. Rivas and Mayorga (2011) concluded that the RBV model helps explain restaurant firms’ gains based upon their unique capabilities, accumulation of assets, and learning.

The RBV framework has only been embraced in the context of coffee tourism to a limited extent. Indeed, Bowen (2021) refers to the framework to conceptually discuss the potential development of coffee tourism in Colombia, another major coffee producer/exporter. Some illustrations of the RBV include Colombia’s gained status of protected geographical indication (PGI), and the recognition by UNESCO World Heritage (Bowen, 2021), notably, for its Coffee Cultural Landscape (Muñiz Martínez, 2016). Bowen (2021) therefore concludes that, provided there is a strategic vision that supports the building of reputation based upon the coffee attribute, there is potential for places to leverage unique place resources in route to develop competitive advantage.

Vietnam possesses several characteristics that underscore its significant tourism, food, and beverage potential. Apart from its numerous natural attractions, with 18 million international visitors in 2019, Vietnam was ranked 23rd in the world (World Tourism Organisation, WTO, 2021). Vietnam is also the world’s leading producer of the Robusta coffee variety (International Coffee Organization, ICO, 2019).

Coupled with the existence of thousands of coffee shops (VICOF, 2021), Vietnam undoubtedly benefits from resources that could elevate its reputation and growth in the coffee shop tourism area. Indeed, its diversity in products, including its ‘egg coffee’ and numerous other types of coffee-based beverages, a growing expansion into the area of global speciality coffee (Grant, 2021), and the proliferation of both independent and chain coffee shops provide a strong foundation for future development. As Grant (2021) posits, Vietnam is a country “where cafés line streets, alleyways, upper levels of high-rise buildings and the front porches of rural houses” (p. 151). Apart from coffee, Vietnam possesses other key tourism product resources that could complement coffee shop experiences, including eight properties inscribed on the World Heritage List (UNESCO, 2022).

However, other aspects need to be considered in the context of coffee tourism development in Vietnam. For instance, the world-wide growing significance of digitalisation or the ‘digital revolution,’ illustrated by the Industry 4.0 phenomenon, has direct implications for industry, government, and academic environments (Pencarelli, 2020). Industry 4.0 stresses the key role of technologies, including the Internet of Things, with a special focus on manufacturing environments (Beier et al., 2020), which can result in innovations in cities, factories, hospitals, or hotels (Pencarelli, 2020).

In Vietnam, Industry 4.0 is expected to bring benefits and have a strong impact on its economy (Tien and Minh, 2019). Hence, this phenomenon could contribute to further enhancing the valuable aspects of Vietnam’s coffee industry. For instance, through the Internet of Things, up-to-date website content, social media tools, and online presentations could further educate consumers and travellers worldwide, thereby

adding value and cementing Vietnam’s unique proposition to become a coffee shop tourism destination. Indeed, new expressions derived from digital transformation have appeared in the tourism industry, including ‘Tourism 4.0’ or ‘Smart Tourism’ (Pencarelli, 2020). An extension of this expression of digitalisation is represented by interactive systems stemming from human-centred design methods, which can enhance the quality of tourism-provider and consumer interactions (Stankov and Gretzel, 2020).

The development and strengthening of specialty coffee offerings is yet another key aspect that can contribute to Vietnam’s efforts to position and elevate the coffee product and coffee shop tourism. The concept of specialty coffee is also referred to as “the out-of-home consumption market niche where the content of the consumption experience includes, but is not limited to, high quality coffees” (Carvalho and Spence, 2019, p. 158). A recent case study discussing the importance of social networks among coffee producers to revitalise coffee production (Truong, 2020) provides strong evidence of the potential for Vietnam’s specialty coffee to gain more influence and recognition.

Against the backdrop illustrated through the above conceptual and empirical discourses, the present study will add to the extant literature on coffee shop tourism; in this process, the study will make empirical and conceptual contributions that will seek to address recognised gaps (e.g., Bowen, 2021; Bui and Nguyen, 2022; Casalegno et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2021a,b; Dinis et al., 2021). Furthermore, by considering the RBV and VRIN conceptual tools, a more enhanced and in-depth understanding of aspects related to the development of coffee shop tourism will be developed. To address the study’s objectives, the following research questions (RQs) are proposed:

RQ1: To what extent could the Vietnamese coffee house scene become a tourism destination icon, for travellers to experience Vietnam’s coffee house culture?

RQ2: How could this potential be fulfilled?

RQ3: What is impeding/preventing such development?

In addition, given the study’s focus on considering the RBV’s literature, the following question is also investigated:

RQ4: How useful is the RBV/VRIN framework in developing a more nuanced understanding of the potential of coffee shop tourism in Vietnam?

3. Methodology

3.1. Selected methods and rationale

The study is concerned with aspects related to the potential of Vietnam to become a coffee shop destination, with implications for coffee tourism development. Therefore, the unit of analysis, or the entity, who, or what is under examination (Schwester, 2015), encompasses the views of owners/managers of coffee shops. Given their front-line role in the management, operation, and success of their coffee businesses, these individuals were the most appropriate to be approached and queried.

The preferred methods to gather data were semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face, and online interviews. According to Seidman (2006), the key purpose of in-depth interviewing is the researcher’s “interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p. 10), and in understanding people’s behaviour. O’Keefe et al. (2016) also note that semi-structured interviews afford opportunities to gather new emerging information. In addition, while studying coffee shop owners/managers through an online questionnaire was considered as a means to gather data nationwide, there was a concern about the potential for a very low response rate. Several authors (e.g., Evans and Mathur, 2018; Monroe and Adams, 2012) bemoan the low response rates that this medium can achieve.

A purposeful sampling was also selected for this research. Purposeful sampling entails the selection of ‘information-rich cases’ and determines the study’s unit of analysis, and helps illuminate the questions being researched (Patton, 2015). To determine the appropriability of these participants, the following overarching criteria were set:

- Coffee shop owners/managers have been active in this industry for at least 3 years.
- At the time of the study, they:
 - Held ownership/managerial roles.
 - Were working at a coffee shop.
 - Managed full-time staff.
- The coffee shop was still in operation.

3.2. Data collection

Once university research ethics clearance was granted, 100 coffee shops, predominantly (60) in Vietnam’s capital, Hanoi, were found through desktop searches, with 30 identified in Ho Chi Minh City, and 20 in other cities and towns (e.g., Dalat, Danang). When contacted by electronic email, a message was written to the attention of the coffee shop owner/manager, where the study’s objectives were shared, and an invitation was made for the recipient to partake in the study. As shown in Table 1, 32 (68.1%) of firms contacted in Hanoi agreed to be interviewed, and overall, 47 partook in the research, or 47% response rate. While compared to the approximately 30,000 existing coffee shops in Vietnam, the number is modest. However, it does provide insightful aspects that inform industry stakeholders and future research efforts. As many as 25 of these interviews were carried out face-to-face prior to a month-long lockdown due to the COVID-19 crisis, and 22 were conducted online, both due to COVID-19, and also due to the geographic distance that rendered it unfeasible to travel to conduct on-site, face-to-face interviews. The data collection period extended between June and September of 2021.

Based upon the aforementioned research questions, and as illustrated in Appendix 1, the interview process entailed an initial stage where the firm’s characteristics (size, type) and those of participants were learned; subsequently, participants were asked to describe:

Table 1
Main characteristics of respondents and the firms.

Characteristics	Coffee shops= 47	
Years of experience in the coffee shop business	n	%
Between 3-5 years	15	31.9
Between 6-10 years	20	42.6
Between 11-20 years	9	19.1
21 years or more	3	6.4
Gender	n	%
Male	36	76.6
Female	11	23.4
Role of the participant	n	%
Coffee shop: Owner/co-founder	33	70.2
Coffee shop: Manager	14	29.8
Size of the firm (full-time employees)	n	%
Between 2-10	23	48.9
Between 11 and 25	11	23.4
Between 26 and 100 ^a	8	17.0
101+ ^a	5	10.7
Whether the business is independent or chain-owned	n	%
Coffee shop – Firm with several/multiple outlets/branches	34	72.3
Coffee shop – Independently-owned	13	27.7
Main locations where participants work	n	%
Hanoi	32	68.1
Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)	7	14.9
Da Lat	4	8.5
Other cities/regions	4	8.5

Note: In some cases, some percentages were rounded off.

^a These numbers comprise the total in various company branches or establishments.

- The extent to which Vietnam’s coffee shop scene could be developed as a tourism destination icon.
- How this potential could be fulfilled.
- Existing barriers limiting the maximisation of such potential.

Adams (2010) posits that semi-structured interviews employ a mix of open- and close-ended questions, often complemented by ‘why’ or ‘how’ follow-up questions; in line with Adams (2010), these questions were posed to encourage participants’ further elaboration and extended comments. The above themes were developed by considering various contributions that examine the development of various types of tourism, including gastronomic and coffee tourism and coffee shop marketing research (e.g., Bowen, 2021; Choi et al., 2017; Degarege and Lovelock, 2021; Dinis et al., 2021; Duarte Alonso et al., 2018, Rivas and Mayorga, 2011; Seyitoğlu and Ivanov, 2020; Wang et al., 2019). Following premises by Douglas and Craig (2007), and to address issues of integrity, the questionnaire was fine-tuned using multiple iterations by various researchers who agreed to collaborate with the research team. In this process, translations of the questionnaire both in English and Vietnamese, as well as translated interview transcripts were evaluated and revisited.

The interviews lasted on average 75 min and, in the case of on-site interviews, were complemented through observations, note-taking, and reading printed materials. These additional elements enabled a more in-depth appreciation and understanding of the businesses’ resources, and potential to create tourism-related experiences. Thus, different types of data triangulation (Carter et al., 2014) were illustrated; apart from method triangulation, source triangulation became apparent, by eliciting responses from various groups and individuals engaged in the coffee shop industry, and investigator triangulation, with several researchers took part in the interviewing process. For instance, on 15 occasions, Hanoi coffee shop owners/managers indicated that the coffee shop actively sought to provide consumption and educational experiences in the form of workshops, new product releases, or changes in menu or decoration.

Data saturation (e.g., Aldiabat and Le Navenc, 2018) became visible, though not uniformly, during the first interviews, with a more pronounced recurrence of themes after the 43rd interview.

3.3. Data analysis

Aligned with the qualitative method of interviewing coffee shop professionals, a general inductive analysis approach was also chosen, which, based on Thomas’s (2006) contribution, entails the following steps:

- Condense varied and extensive raw data into a summary format.
- Establish clear links between the summary findings resulting from the raw data and the research objectives. Importantly, this step is complemented by ensuring that the above links can be demonstrated (transparent), and justifiable (defensible).
- Develop a theory or a model concerning “the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the text data” (Thomas, 2006, p. 238).

Two further steps complemented the general inductive analysis. First, qualitative content analysis was selected; this method is designed to interpret (subjectively) text data content by employing a systematic classification process, where patterns and themes are identified and coded (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Given that the study also evaluated the usefulness of the RBV and VRIN to explore the potential of coffee shop tourism (RQ4), part of the emphasis of content analysis was on a directed approach, which seeks to extend conceptually or validate a theory or theoretical framework (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

Second, the study develops a data structure, one of the key outcomes of considering Gioia’s methodology (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton,

2012). Here, the focus is on various stages that lead to more depth and rigour in qualitative research, including creating a template or ‘data structure’ (Gioia et al., 2012). To begin with, first-order concepts will be developed; these concepts derive from participants’ observations, also referred to as ‘informant centric’ terms and codes emerging from the raw data. Moreover, in line with inductive and qualitative content analysis, respondents’ broader verbatim comments are codified or categorised into themes or patterns. First-order themes are followed by the second-order analysis, which is ‘researcher-centric’, and entails the further development of concepts and dimensions (Gioia et al., 2012). The development of overarching dimensions resulting from a) first-order codes, and b) second-order analysis, completes the process of designing a data structure (Gioia et al., 2012). Illustrations of this process are provided in two ways, first, in the form of selected verbatim comments, and second, in their further conceptualisation through the presentation of Figs. 1–3.

In the following sections, the participants will be deidentified using acronyms (e.g., Respondent 1: R1, Respondent 2: R2, etc.). Finally, the data management software NVivo, version 12 was also used to assist in the visualisation of some of the findings (Figs. 1–3).

3.4. Demographic data

The first part of the analysis examines various demographic characteristics. First, participants’ accumulated experience and knowledge are highlighted by the fact that 68.1% have worked in the coffee shop industry for six or more years. Second, the majority of the participants were male and coffee shop owners/founders, while two groups became apparent regarding firms’ size: those with up to 10 full-time employees (48.9%), and those with 11 or more full-time employees (51.1%). In addition, most firms (72.3%) feature several/multiple outlets or branches.

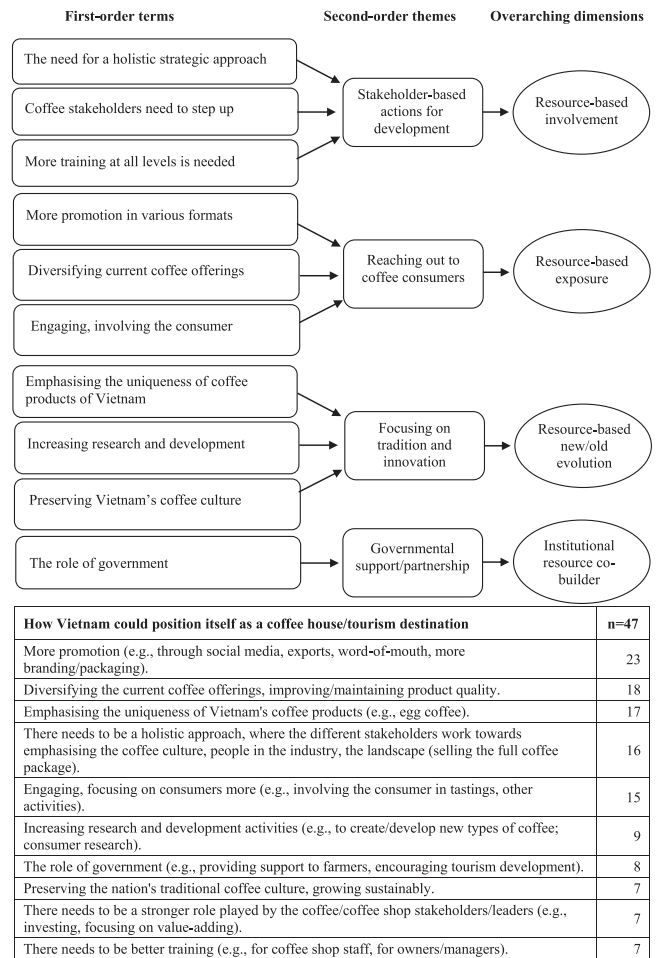


Fig. 2. Data structure: how Vietnam’s coffee shop industry’s potential could be fulfilled.

4. Results

4.1. Extent to which Vietnam’s coffee shop industry could become a destination icon

This initial part of the analysis and the data structure (Fig. 1) reveals key perceived resources in Vietnam’s coffee industry and coffee shop scene. Indeed, the subsequent development of first-order terms (Gioia et al., 2012) reveals three second-order themes. The first and second, intangible and tangible elements, respectively, illustrate the potential of Vietnam’s coffee shop industry. Two specific demonstrations of how the nation’s coffee shop industry could become an iconic tourism destination are associated with participants’ observations, with the first one emphasising the uniqueness of Vietnam’s coffee, particularly its flagship variety, Robusta; as R14 elaborated:

The Robusta coffee beans of Vietnam are very different from other coffee varieties in the world. Moreover, although much of the market prefers Arabica coffee... there are still many other segments that prefer Robusta’s strong scent and bitter taste. Thus, there is an opportunity for Robusta beans to be distinctly developed and marketed.

Secondly, the significant diversity in coffee styles and the rise of speciality coffee were also perceived as strong markers of Vietnam’s coffee shop uniqueness. During the face-to-face onsite interviews, the speciality coffee strategy appeared to be gaining momentum in at least 15 of the visited coffee shops, with owners/managers working closely with producers and roasting businesses to elaborate distinctive flavours

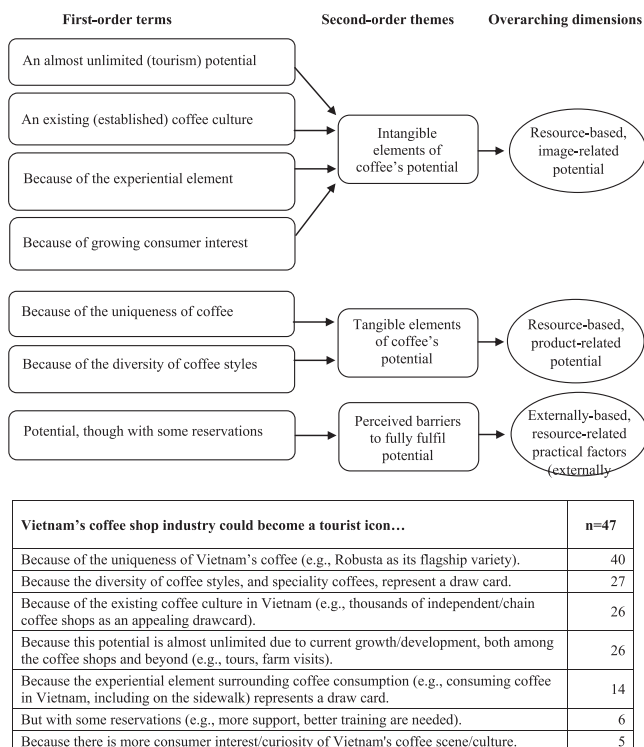
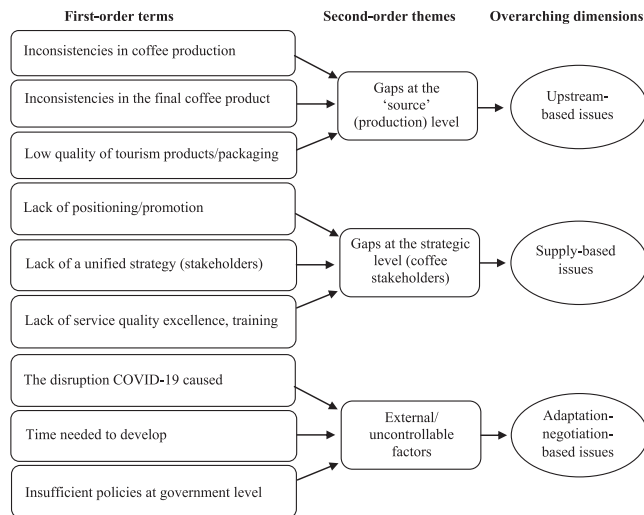


Fig. 1. Data structure: extent to which Vietnam’s coffee shop industry could become a tourist icon.



Factors impinging upon coffee tourism's full potential	n=47
Lack Vietnam's coffee image positioning; lack of promotion.	25
Lack of a unified strategy among different players (e.g., coffee houses, growers, tourism stakeholders) to enhance tourism's image in Vietnam; educating consumers is limited.	20
Inconsistencies in coffee production (e.g., producers focus more on volume than on quality).	13
Inconsistencies in the final product (e.g., the finished coffee product, its branding, packaging).	11
Lack of service quality excellence; lack of HR training, including coffee shop owners/managers' training, farmers' training.	10
Insufficient policies at the government level (e.g., supporting farmers, in promotion efforts, in quality standards).	8
Low quality of tourism products; lack of 'blending' coffee/coffee houses and other types of tourism.	6
The COVID-19 crisis (e.g., preventing international tourists from travelling to Vietnam).	3
Time: Time is needed to develop tourism ideas around the coffee product.	2

Fig. 3. Data structure: factors limiting coffee shop tourism's full potential.

not replicable by competitors. As R25 explained, “specialty coffee can be used to promote our nation as it has been recognised by international standards.” Hence, this type of fragmentation of the coffee industry adds to the uniqueness of numerous coffee shops, roasting, and distributing firms, and highlights a clear element of heterogeneity that Vietnam’s coffee industry could use as a source of sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Selected comments underscoring the specific cultural and experiential importance of tangible and intangible elements follow:

R11: Vietnam’s coffee drinking culture is distinctive, and it is even more so in Can Tho with the coffee bars on the boats...

R36: Vietnam has quite a rich coffee culture from filter coffee, rack coffee, egg coffee - not to mention the coffee consumption culture, for instance, Vietnamese customers sit on the sidewalk, drinking coffee, reading books and newspapers, listening to Trinh music, which is quite an iconic element to many foreign visitors to Vietnam.

A third second-order theme identifies perceived barriers that suggest the potential for the coffee shop industry to position itself as an iconic tourism destination, though with limitations. For instance, R20 referred to the need for cohesiveness in a number of areas, whereby the role of local authorities and businesses was paramount in sharing and communicating information about Vietnam’s coffee shop industry that would contribute to elevating its future iconic status.

4.2. How Vietnam’s coffee shop tourism’s potential could be fulfilled

The analysis also revealed four second-order themes relating to ways in which Vietnam’s coffee shop industry could materialise its tourism potential (Fig. 2). The first theme, stakeholder-based actions for development, relates to the involvement of various key players. In this context, the findings stress participants’ consideration of a holistic approach, where a stronger role among coffee shops and other members

of the coffee supply chain is identified. As R7 pointed out:

R7: Vietnam has many outstanding points in culture, natural landscape and people. A stronger focus on exploiting tourism-related activities based upon a combination of features and appeals would be more suitable than investing in developing separate tourism products for the coffee.

Indeed, Chen et al. (2021a,b) report on the Café Apartment in Ho Chi Minh City, which draws coffee enthusiasts, is growing into a ‘pilgrimage’ site, thus, illustrating the continuous and energetic evolution of the city’s coffee culture. A similar argument can be made of other coffee operations visited during the present research, including those in the cities of Dalat and Hanoi, where similarly attractive and dynamic coffee operations are thriving.

Further within this first theme, increased training permeating the entire coffee industry, as well as the ‘storytelling’ element, whereby the coffee culture, tastes, and other intrinsic and extrinsic aspects associated with the coffee product are shared through educational activities were strongly verbalised (e.g., R27): “Coffee stores should train their employees so that they can deliver a great experience. In addition, inspiring stories need to be promoted by the media.” With an ever-increasingly competitive coffee consumer market (Han et al., 2018; Son et al., 2021), delivering high-quality experiences could go a long way, not only focusing on functional but also on emotional aspects (Oh et al., 2019; Tumanan and Lansangan, 2012), and employee-customer social interactions (Tran et al., 2020).

A second theme highlighted the importance for the coffee shop industry to engage and reach out to coffee consumers through promotion, diversification, and engagement. These points are in line with coffee tourism research conducted by Candelo et al. (2019), whose findings revealed the importance of various benefits, including business diversification, cooperation and empowerment, or enhancing the region’s destination image for local communities (farmers, their families). For instance, R3 reflected upon the potential for emphasising the uniqueness of Vietnam’s coffee production and culture:

At both the macro and micro levels, positioning and promotion strategies are critical... they need to be very specific, meaningful, and with clear statements ...identifying the unique factors of Vietnamese coffee... or where the best locations of Vietnamese coffee are.

Further complementing this second theme, the third underscored the value of maintaining traditions while also considering innovative practices and strategies. As R28 observed, these efforts were dependent upon investment from various coffee industry stakeholders, and, if executed, they could provide further support to promotion and engagement with consumers: “More investment in product, branding, packaging, merchandise... in training customers and employees, for instance, creating more guided videos of home brewing coffee and introduce Vietnamese coffee more widely...” R28’s comment also relates to the consideration by coffee and coffee shop owners/managers to embrace online platforms and technologies to disseminate knowledge, communicate, and engage consumers, including through electronic word of mouth (Kim et al., 2015; Zhou et al., 2020). This aspect also illustrates the potential for Industry 4.0 to play an important future role, helping develop coffee shop tourism, through Tourism 4.0 technologies (Pencarelli, 2020).

A fourth theme underlined the significance of institutional support, as well as government-industry partnerships. As R5 noted:

The government needs to develop guidelines and detailed plans to ensure that investment is carried out methodically and systematically, as well as to prevent firms from self-implementing and

deviating from prescribed directions, resulting in a contradictory message being delivered about Vietnamese coffee.

The call for institutional support as a means to support the development of coffee tourism is not surprising. First, recent research conducted in Ethiopia (Degarege and Lovelock, 2021) identifies several ‘perplexing issues’ associated with developmental challenges, including a “clear institutional commitment or framework to identify ways to use coffee as an engine for tourism growth” (p. 439). In contrast, a study conducted in Thailand (Smith et al., 2019) found that, through public and private support, the establishment of coffee tourism activities not only can be realised, but also help support local communities where coffee is grown.

4.3. Factors limiting coffee shop tourism’s full potential

The evaluation of participants’ views led to the emergence of three second-order themes (Fig. 3) highlighting challenges limiting the potential of coffee shop tourism. First, the theme ‘gaps at the source level’ identifies various perceived shortcomings, particularly inconsistencies throughout the coffee supply chain. Among other participants, R38 lamented the ‘wrong priorities’ at the production level, where quick but marginal profits undermine the long-term growth and positioning of Vietnam’s coffee industry, with direct impacts across the entire chain:

The Vietnamese industrial mindset is very much towards volume... volume at all costs in the detriment of quality. Farmers produce high volumes, but they are not producing quality, and quality requires people to slow down, accept a lower volume, and get a higher value for each kilogram of coffee.

R43’s observations further illuminate gaps at the supply level, with clear implications for the development of consumers’ images of the coffee shop industry and, by extension, that of a coffee shop tourism and destination image:

Many coffee shop owners who are kind of traditional... Their coffee tastes nice, but they don’t learn how to create a brand image in the tourism industry, whereby visitors could be drawn to check out the coffee shop scene when they visit Vietnam.

In this context, Chen et al.’s (2021a,b) research revealed that coffee tourists’ memorable experiences, together with satisfaction, strongly influence their word of mouth and revisit intentions. Moreover, given that many coffee shop businesses heavily rely on repeat customers, word of mouth, and social media’s influence, their owners’ priority is the enhancement of memories among visitors (Chen et al., 2021a,b). In doing so, the coffee shop is remembered; in addition, coffee shop owners expect that photos or positive stories are shared, thus, contributing to drawing more customers (Chen et al., 2021a,b). Earlier coffee shop consumer research conducted in Australia (Chen and Hu, 2010) concluded that both food and beverage and coffee quality factors can affect consumers’ symbolic and functional value of their experience.

Associated with the above second-order theme, gaps at the strategic level were also recognised, for instance, through a lack of a unified strategy among different coffee industry stakeholders, limited promotion and positioning, and deficiencies in training and service quality. Despite the achievements of Vietnam reflected in coffee production, exports, and an established domestic coffee-consuming market, R6 bemoaned that “there is no professional training school for coffee processing or to improve a barista’s skills. Business owners have to learn by themselves...” Similarly, R16 observed that “only short-term programs and vocational training centres are offered... Coffee [shop] training programs have not been implemented methodically.”

A final second-order theme depicts external/uncontrollable factors, where again, the role of government is verbalised in various comments; for instance, R8 noted: “The government lacks management policies for

regulating the quality of coffee beans sold in the domestic market, resulting in inconsistent product quality and a poor consumer experience.” In addition, participants, including R22, voiced their concerns regarding the time required to lay the foundation of coffee shop tourism development: “Farmers have to learn techniques by themselves, experience on their own, without receiving support from associations or the government.” The fact that such processes are additionally affected by the irruption of the COVID-19 crisis highlights a further challenge that is beyond participants’ control.

5. Discussion

In evaluating the last step of Gioia’s methodology, the developed data structure revealed as many as 10 overarching dimensions that provide conceptual guidance concerning the three main themes of this research. In bringing together the key elements of the analysis, the study proposes a theoretical framework (Fig. 4). The following subsections present a discussion of the findings from a conceptual perspective; in addition, various theoretical implications will be presented.

5.1. Theme one

Examining the extent to which Vietnam’s coffee shop industry could become a tourism destination icon led to the emergence of three dimensions. First, the ‘resource-based, image-related potential’ dimension originates from intangible elements, as well as resources, that are illustrated in Vietnam’s coffee industry. Second, and equally important, the ‘resource-based, product-related potential’ dimension emphasises tangible elements, and also points to the strong and unique factors of Vietnam’s coffee and coffee shop industries, including its large Robusta coffee production, and numerous coffee styles on offer. Third, and while associated with challenges, participants’ observations identified existing obstacles limiting the fulfilment of coffee and coffee shop tourism’s potential. In all these dimensions, a clear relationship with the notions of the RBV/VRIN analysis is identified (Fig. 4).

Further analysis elucidates relationships between the three resulting dimensions and the VRIN analysis, thus, illustrating that Vietnam’s coffee and coffee shop industries possess characteristics that can advance and elevate the nation’s coffee ‘destination image.’ Selected observations from the participants further support these points:

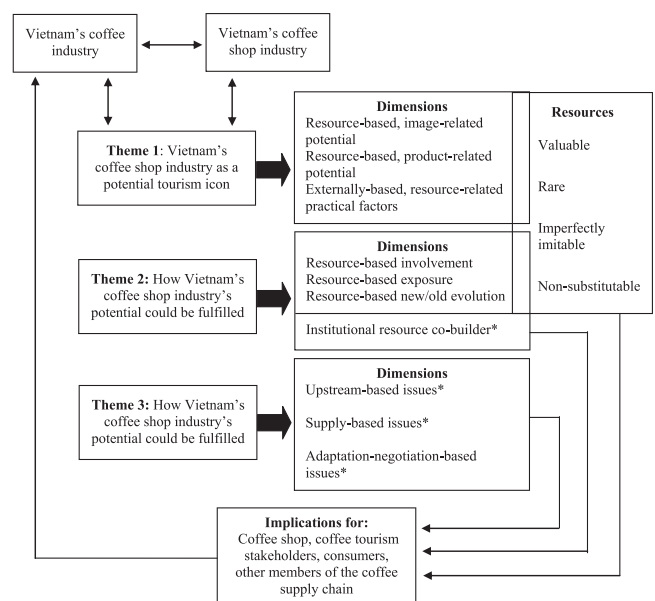


Fig. 4. Coffee shop tourism development – a conceptual view. * These dimensions are not directly related to the RBV or the VRIN analysis.

R18: Coffee is a highly popular street drink characteristic of Vietnam and each region of Vietnam also has its own unique coffee culture.

R26: Vietnam has great attractions and the potential to include the coffee house scene in the tourist experience.

R35: Our strength is Robusta coffee, which actually can be used to create our distinctiveness... It has its own characteristics, is full of aroma, and strong, rich tastes, and is easy to prepare coffee drinks.

Consequently, considering the above dimensions as conceptual lenses through which a more nuanced understanding of the extent to which coffee shop tourism could be developed represents the first overarching theoretical implication.

5.2. Theme two

The analysis of how Vietnam's coffee shop tourism's potential could be fulfilled revealed the following four dimensions; apart from their conceptual value in the present study, these dimensions have clear relationships to the RBV/VRIN analysis (Fig. 4). More importantly, a theoretical implication emerges, in that utilising the conceptual lenses afforded by the dimensions is helpful in gaining a more refined understanding of this significant theme.

First, the *resource-based involvement* underscores the importance of stakeholder-based actions for development, which include the consideration of a holistic strategic approach, as well as the need for more involvement among coffee stakeholders and training (all levels/parties).

Second, the *resource-based exposure* underpins the notion that the coffee shop industry is the key driver, engaging consumers, promoting, and diversifying. Strong strategies and initiatives to draw the attention of consumers, to educate them, or to constantly update and broaden the portfolio of coffee offerings require unique and valuable resources. Hence, the resources acquired and accumulated by owners/managers of coffee shops, for instance, in terms of product quality or uniqueness, could support such efforts to reach out to consumers. Concerning diversification, however, there is also reliance upon other members of the coffee supply chain, particularly growers and roasters.

Third, the *resource-based new/old evolution* proposes that the coffee shops' product/service resources, including the skills of owners/managers, and the knowledge and expertise of these individuals or their staff bring together the 'old and new' in the form of tradition, and innovation, respectively. Thus, the significance of valuable and rare resources becomes fundamental, in pursuing further development and competitiveness, with favourable consequences for the future potential of coffee shop tourism as an iconic offering.

The aforementioned actions and efforts reaching out to coffee consumers, coupled with the focus on innovation/tradition, and expectations of government support, require the development, investment, and mobilisation of key resources. Furthermore, the above three dimensions stress the role of the coffee industry (e.g., growers), and the coffee shop industry, through self-initiated plans and strategies, whereby key resources from individual businesses and from the industry at large are called into action. These points are empirically supported by the following observations:

R13: A systematic investment plan and a broad vision are required, firstly with the coffee industry. Investing in infrastructure and roads is needed in order to be ready for tourism growth.

R17: Enterprises must make the first move in developing coffee tourism products and be proactive in reaching out to the government for the necessary assistance.

P23: We need to focus on the quality of the coffees, and on customers' education. This means we need regular training and onboarding training programs for our employees.

R32: Vietnam should have more typical/signature drinks to promote to international tourists... The coffee we are roasting now is not the dark roasted but the medium roasted coffee, which is well received by both local and international customers, like Korean visitors, who switch from Americano to Vietnamese iced coffee.

Fourth, the *institutional resource co-builder* does not suggest the need for firm resources. Instead, the dimension highlights the support or assistance provided by institutions at a national or regional level. Co-building initiatives could trigger the development of coffee shop tourism, and, by extension, the development of resources among coffee shop operations. As the following comments highlight:

R9: Government officials need to change their mindset in developing agricultural products (seedlings, farming methods, output quality, etc.), and provide support for both coffee farmers and producers.

R15: The country's quality management policy for coffee exports in general, and each enterprise's quality management policy in particular, are needed to ensure that Vietnam's coffee bean products receive proper international recognition.

5.3. Theme three

The analysis of the perceived factors that limit the development of Vietnam's coffee shop tourism industry led to the development of three dimensions. While not directly associated with the RBV/VRIN analysis, considering these dimensions to understand limitations in such development represent a fundamental theoretical implication.

The *upstream-based issues* dimension conceptually stresses various gaps that are currently undermining the successful development of coffee shop tourism, and the future development and competitiveness of Vietnam's coffee industry, including that of individual coffee shop businesses. Indeed, and as previously identified, participants pinpointed concerns in the upstream link of the supply chain, at the production level, that, if perpetuated, could have adverse consequences for other supply chain links. Moreover, the *supply-based issues* dimension further highlights the interdependence between the different links of the supply chain, in this case, at business and managerial levels. Thus, this dimension is also conceptually valuable, in alerting the coffee and coffee shop industries' limitations in training, including barista skills (R6), promotion, and associated initiatives that are essential in the journey of positioning Vietnam's coffee products and related services. R12's comments provide various demonstrations of the importance of the above dimensions to understand the hurdles along the way to develop a coffee shop tourism industry:

Because the processing technologies and production lines for refined coffee are still outdated, Vietnam is unable to manufacture products that satisfy international trade requirements. Mostly sell raw coffee beans at low prices to other countries and then buy back finished products at very high prices for domestic consumption. Farmers' agricultural methods are still highly outmoded, and there is no update of new technology. Coffee beans produced are of inconsistent quality...

Finally, the *adaptation-negotiation-based issues* dimension provides conceptual insights into external/uncontrollable factors that different stakeholders in the coffee supply chain, including coffee shop owners/managers, need to gain awareness of. Here, adaptation strategies due to the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis, flexibility, in understanding the short-, medium-, and long-term steps and needs to produce changes and

improvements, and entrepreneurship, in taking the initiative in anticipation of lacking government support, are fundamental.

5.4. Practical implications

The analysis and the resulting findings and dimensions illustrated in Figs. 1–4 have important practical implications. First, the intangible and tangible elements of the potential of Vietnam's coffee industry, and supporting elements (Fig. 1) represent valuable and rare resources that, arguably, are also imperfectly imitable and non-substitutable. These elements form the foundation of any future coffee shop tourism and associated forms of tourism and leisure stemming from coffee consumption and related activities (educational tours and workshops).

Fig. 2 further strengthens these notions. For instance, the second-order themes identify specific strategies, such as considering a holistic approach and initiatives, including engaging consumers, focusing on tradition/innovation, or increasing learning/training opportunities. In contrast, Fig. 3 underlines the existing barriers to coffee shop tourism development, which include product and service gaps. Following these premises, the following specific key implications are put forward:

- 1) The coffee industry and coffee shop industry stakeholders, together with other members of the coffee supply chain, as well as hospitality and tourism actors, need to emphasise the product and service elements much more strongly. In doing so, a clearer and more impactful message of what the nation's coffee shop scene has to offer to both the domestic and international visitors could be conveyed.
- 2) More importantly, given the competitive hospitality and tourism environment (Khatri, 2019), maximising opportunities from Vietnam's appealing factors, including the nation's predominant Robusta coffee production, coffee consumption tradition, culture, artifacts (traditional coffee-making equipment), and diversity in the coffee shop scene, industry actors could strengthen Vietnam's destination image.
- 3) The perceived barriers (Figs. 1, 3) some participants indicated the need to make continuous improvements for coffee shop tourism to experience growth and popularity. As outlined previously, the advent of Industry 4.0 and the associated emphasis on technological disruptions, digitalisation, and smart technology holds potential for Vietnam (Tien et al., 2019). Unsurprisingly, Industry 4.0 is also growing in the tourism industry (Pencarelli, 2020); some of its forms could be valuable for the future development of coffee shop tourism. The dissemination of coffee-related information through Industry 4.0 technologies, particularly through the Internet of Things and smartphone technology could go a long way. Here, product launches by coffee shops and other coffee and hospitality businesses (e.g., roasters, distributors), together with e-brochures, social media, events and visitor testimonials will help position Vietnam's diversity of products, coffee shop styles and architecture, and different ways to consume coffee.

In addition, through observations and commentary during the data collection process, enhancing and maximising the uniqueness of Vietnam's coffee images and experiences through specialty coffee (Carvalho and Spence, 2019) is a valuable tool to elevate Vietnam's coffee industry. Moreover, the production, sale, and even export of specialty coffee have already provided advantages and benefits to numerous coffee shops and roasting businesses (e.g., R3, R5, R7, R9, R11, R18). The focus on niche coffee products, in 'sharing the story' behind Vietnam's coffee industry and its attractive elements could help create coffee themes and lasting memories, with the potential to be disseminated through both technologies and the tangible product.
- 4) More communication and engagement with different actors in the coffee supply chain are essential to gain an understanding of challenges and opportunities. For instance, some comments (R9, R12, R15) pointed to gaps between members of the supply chain; these gaps need to be narrowed by an interaction between key players,

such as government agencies, the hospitality industry, distributors, roasters, and coffee farmers. Moreover, participants emphasised the important role that the government could play in supporting coffee shop tourism development.

However, with governments world-wide redirecting resources, for instance, in response to COVID-19 (Tangcharoensathien et al., 2021), and resulting in limited supporting or alleviating resources to go around, businesses owners/managers need to shift focus and seek to build their own adaptive and remedial strategies.

For instance, through stronger collaborative efforts between different owners/managers in the coffee production and coffee shop industries, much-needed adaptive skills could be developed. During some of the on-site interviews, the researchers were informed of ongoing 'from tree to cup' initiatives. In these cases, coffee shop owners/managers, roasters, and coffee growers were working together to achieve a more sustainable trajectory and 'win-win' situation for all, in marketing and through product consistency.

6. Conclusions

The study had two major objectives, with their corresponding made two key contributions. First, it empirically explored coffee shop tourism development in Vietnam, a major coffee producer, from three different angles: 1) the extent of the potential for the coffee shop industry to become a tourism destination icon, 2) how this potential could be fulfilled, and 3) what challenges are currently impeding development. The findings clearly demonstrate that the study contributed to the broader hospitality and tourism literature, and addressed research gaps, particularly in the field of coffee tourism (Bowen, 2021; Casalegno et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2021a,b; Dinis et al., 2021).

Second, the study set out to make a conceptual contribution, providing a theoretical framework through which coffee shop tourism could be more rigorously understood. This conceptual foundation could support future studies examining coffee tourism in different forms, including coffee shop tourism. In addition, the findings (Figs. 1 and 2) ascertain the usefulness of the RBV/VRIN analysis in eliciting a deeper understanding of the importance of resources in the development of a diversification tool emanating from Vietnam's coffee, hospitality, and tourism industries.

6.1. Limitations and future research

The study presents various limitations that could be addressed in future investigations exploring coffee and coffee tourism's potential and development. First, the study's overall participant sample, while very useful in providing first-hand data on growing phenomena (coffee tourism, coffee shop tourism) is limited when compared to the tens of thousands of coffee shop operations in Vietnam or elsewhere. Second, the study only examines coffee shops in Vietnam. Thus, there is an opportunity for future research to consider cross-national studies, where a) different business models and philosophies could be contrasted, and b) a larger number of participants could be elicited.

Third, the study was conducted between June and September of 2021. Therefore, there is a limitation regarding the lack of longitudinal data gathering. Future studies could therefore consider a longitudinal approach, where a deeper understanding could be gained of how coffee, coffee tourism, and coffee shop tourism evolve or further develop, including potential changes in coffee shop owners/managers' perceptions. Finally, the study's conceptual development has been only evaluated in one investigation. To ascertain more strongly the value of the proposed framework, and that of the RBV and VRIN analysis, future research could incorporate the model, its individual parts, or propose extensions that might emerge from the data collected.

Author statement

No potential or actual conflict of interest is identified, and no funding was received for this research.

Data Availability

Data will be made available on request.

Appendix 1. Questionnaire tool

Questions eliciting demographic information:

We would like to ask you some questions to learn a bit about you and your coffee shop business:

How long have you worked in the coffee shop industry (years/months)?

What is your gender?

What is your current role at this coffee shop?

How many full-time employees does your business have?

What is the ownership of the business? For example, is the coffee shop independently-owned, or part of a chain of coffee shop businesses?

Where is the main location of your business (e.g., city/town)?

Semi-structured, open-ended questions:

Now would like to ask you to provide your views based on your experience, and elaborate on the following questions, if possible, providing examples:

To what extent could Vietnam's coffee shop scene be developed as a tourism destination icon?

How could the potential of coffee shop tourism be fulfilled?

What are the current barriers limiting the maximisation of coffee tourism's potential in Vietnam?

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- Oanh Thi Kim Vu**, Research interests include SMEs, management, tourism, hospitality, community-based tourism, culture, and entrepreneurship.
- Abel Duarte Alonso**, Research interests include international business, micro, small and medium enterprises, family enterprises, innovation, and community development.
- Wil Martens**, Research interests include emerging and frontier markets, stochastic frontier analysis, earnings management, investor protection.
- Lan Do Thi Ha**, Research interests include strategic management, leadership, sustainability and entrepreneurship.
- Thanh Duc Tran**, Research interests include tourism, hospitality, community-based tourism, women entrepreneur, and local entrepreneurship.
- Trung Thanh Nguyen**, Research interests include tourism, hospitality, community-based tourism, culture, and local entrepreneurship.