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Branding the Others

Understanding the Influence of Western Popular Film on the Construction of
Nation Brand through a Postcolonial Lens

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, it is in Vietnamese for them: con cảm ơn ba mẹ đã luôn ủng hộ và tin tưởng con, cho dù những quyết định con đưa ra khiến ba mẹ lo lắng và suy nghĩ. Con muốn dành luận văn thạc sĩ này cho ba mẹ, cho tất cả những gì ba mẹ đã hy sinh để dành cho con cơ hội sống và theo đuổi ước mơ của mình.

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ABSTRACT

BRANDING THE OTHERS: Understanding the Influence of Western Popular Film on the Construction of Nation Brand through a Postcolonial Lens

In view of the fact that Western films are one of the most consumed forms of popular culture in the world market, this study argues that they are, therefore, integral to the nation branding process of non-Western countries. Anchored in *postcolonial theory*, this research purposely turned to Fairclough's *Critical Discourse Analysis* model as a matching analytical framework. With an intention of revealing how the relation between *language* and *power* has made these prevalent Western films become a colonial discourse on non-Western nation brands, this study uses Vietnam as a supporting empirical case. During the analysis, this study seeks to excavate the ideologies of *colonialism*, *Eurocentrism* and *Orientalism* couched in textual and verbal language of Western films' discourse on the Vietnamese people and Gender. The findings show that Western popular films' representation of non-Western nations and people rests on the strong and entrenched association with the inferior Others, while also replicating colonial stereotypes about non-Western women as being an object of the *male gaze*, sexually enticing and quiet. The results also demonstrate the *ambivalence* towards the Western popular culture's colonialism-based perception of the Others, as well as of non-Western nation brands. The findings serve as a critique of the *discursive practice* of Western film production and consumption, which have excessively reproduced and institutionalised colonialism as knowledge of non-Western nation brand. The discussion of implications concludes that Western popular culture, through contributing to global knowledge concerning the nation brand of the Others, operates as a powerful instrument of (neo-)colonialism, exerts and extends control over the nation branding of erstwhile colonies in the modern world.

Keywords: nation branding, postcolonialism, feminism, Western popular culture, critical discourse analysis

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, popular culture has come to be regarded by nation branding academics, policymakers, and practitioners as an effective means of permeating the public's consciousness and raising awareness of a nation's tourism brand (Fung, 2016; Gacek & Kohm, 2016). As Reilly (1990) maintains, tourists tend to choose their next travel destinations based on the visual information they receive about their options. In addition, popular culture is found to be one of the main points of reference guiding tourists' decision-making (Lai & Vinh, 2013), and as a result, heavily influences the perceptions and expectations of tourists about the destinations (Eishner & Waade, 2015; Govers, Go & Kumar, 2007; Wang & Fesenmaier, 2005).

As both an embodiment and communicator of popular culture, films deliver real, moving images and sounds (Connell, 2006) which tell captivating stories of a place and its people to prospective visitors, and consequently directly and indirectly generate tourism (Eishner & Waade, 2015). This particular phenomenon is collectively termed Film-induced tourism, referring to tourists' visitations ensued from the place being capitalised in cinematic products (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006, p. 256). Films invoke a feeling of familiarity with the landscapes and the location and thus, nicely encourage the audience to visit "their favourite scenes on site" (Akbulut & Ekin, 2018, p. 280). In reviewing Irish Cinema, Le Corff (2015) claims that independent film projects are the "excellent tools for branding the nation" (p. 167) in Ireland, particularly in the context of the country's struggle to redefine its national identity after its political independence from Britain. Additionally, it is also widely observed that governments, namely China, Japan, India, and Denmark, have begun to fund production of films and other popular cultural products in an attempt to gain and retain national soft power in entering the global market (Devasundaram, 2016; Fung, 2016; Matsui, 2014; Barr, 2012; Ooi & Pedersen, 2010). The influx of tourists to both Britain and Australia together with their broadened recognition are rightly attributed to the celebrated movies screened at those places, for instance *The Da Vinci Code* (2006), *Notting Hill* (1999) and *Pride and Prejudice* (2003) to England; *Mad Max* (1980), *The Man from Snowy River* (1982) to Australia (Månsson, 2015; Månsson & Eskilsson, 2013; O'Connor, Flanagan and Gilbert, 2008, pp. 424-426).

Although studies, as presented above, have appropriately positioned the *importance* of popular cultural and films to nation branding, they have failed to probe the *complexity* of their usage. As O'Connor, Flanagan and Gilbert (2008) observe, the role of popular cultural films in nation branding is commonly oversimplified as a process of a single Hollywood blockbuster being set in a specific country, and the tourism industry in that country peacefully enjoying the growing popularity as a result. I strongly argue that such a simplistic view has created the current problem of academics failing to comprehend the complexity of film-induced tourism. More explicitly, I concur with Horrigan (2009) that popular films have historically been assumed to be unproblematic and exemplary tools for nation branding, which can be easily directed and controlled to have only positive outcomes for the nation brand. I further assert that although tourists may visit a country after being attracted by the landscapes and cultural imagery featured in films, the consequences of such films is far too intricate to be measured by an increased number of inbound tourists alone.

Studying the effects that ordinary popular cultural arts and initiatives perform, Polese (2009) coined the term 'spontaneous nation- building', which refers to the construction of the national identity and image in the eyes of the public independently of the official nation branding strategy (Pawłusz and Polese, 2017, p. 873). Dinnie (2010) suggests that the key aspect of nation branding is to harmonise all information sources concerning a particular place to ensure they consistently support a collective image, whereas Månsson (2015) discerns that associations with a film can bring unexpected alteration to the place's image or create a new one. What can be concluded from these equally plausible but opposing observations is that films can pose challenges to the branding strategy of the destination in terms of place's image consistency. Similarly, as a result of its spontaneous nature, the impacts of popular culture are unpredictable and arguably conflicting with the interest of the official state-led nation branding strategy (Fung, 2016). Therefore, it can be seen that the unplanned existence of popular films and their "spontaneous nation-branding" complicates the nation branding process in various ways.

Nowadays, due to the ongoing globalisation project, the influence of popular culture, particularly from the US and Western countries, is increasingly widening as they are being shown to an increasingly diverse audience, geographically and demographically (Fung, 2016; Dinnie, 2015). Earlier researches have pointed out that place branding literature has paid scant

attention to the role of cultural products (films, musics, books, etc.) (Acharya & Rahman, 2016; Dinnie, 2004). Previous researchers (Edwards & Ramamurthy, 2017; Loftsdóttir, Kjartansdóttir & Lund, 2017; Martínez-Expósito, 2017; Allen, 2016; Kaneva, 2011) have discussed the ways in which domestic film projects produce clichéd visual illustrations, reaffirming and reinforcing stereotypes of local places and nations. However, this study posits that the current body of nation branding and film-induced tourism literature does not clearly discuss, assess or demonstrate how Western popular films are communicating and disseminating the nation image of non-Western nations to the potential tourists. Furthermore, it remains questionable whether the viewers, the prospective visitors, would perceive the destination differently when visiting the country after having seen these popular cinematic representations. As it follows, I put forward that it is pertinent to look into Western films to reveal how it informs nation branding of non-Western countries. From a nation branding's perspective, I firmly hold the view that delving into this phenomenon will help strategic nation branding practitioners and scholars grasp the dynamics that exists between nation branding and Western popular cultural films.

Using Vietnam as an example, the country's tourism industry has long since been striving to capitalise on the peaceful landscape, friendly people, and tasteful cuisine Vietnam has to offer (Polyorat & Tassanawat, 2017; Bui, 2011). However, what emerges from the recurrent popular depictions of Vietnam on the wide-screen are images of a war zone, a battlefield with Western soldiers fighting on the border between death and life (Hardy, 2015). Vietnam is just one of many non-Western countries whose nation brand image constructed by Western popular films is conflicting with the nation image they are striving for. I contend that this occurs because Western film depiction is conditioned to certain Western beliefs and perspectives, thus, may not do the best justice for other cultures and people. More importantly, I hold the view that the legacy of Western colonialism is still persistently present in many aspects of today's world, and even more so in the Western beliefs and perspectives on the non-West. Moreover, in the context of globalisation and modernisation, I discern that postcolonialism allows the researcher to reflect upon and problematise the influence of Western popular culture on nation branding, more properly and responsibly by taking into account the colonial/imperial history and the recurrent Orientalist/Eurocentric world view (Prasad, 2015, 2017; Young, 2001; Said, 1978). That said, up until this point, besides a few

studies, such as Edwards & Ramamurthy (2017); Loftsdóttir, Kjartansdóttir & Lund (2017); Sinha Roy (2007); nation branding has not been adequately explored as a part of the overarching colonial/postcolonial, Western/non-Western power relationship. Therefore, in this research, I am employing a postcolonial perspective and extend the discussion to the relation between Western popular films and stereotypical assumptions about non-Western places and countries. In doing so, this research aspires to elaborate the dichotomy between the way Western film embraces colonial stereotypes and the way non-Western countries would like to brand themselves.

Following the critical tradition, this thesis seeks to critique and undermine the discussed oversimplified and generalised assumptions about the impact of popular culture film on nation branding process. I will employ postcolonial theories as my theoretical framework to bring to the surface the inherent colonial ideologies underlying the portrayals of the non-West in Western popular culture and thus, to problematise the ways in which Western popular cultural films are involved in the construction of non-Western countries' nation brand. Overall, this thesis aspires to raise awareness of the recurring practice of nation branding which idealises and takes the colonial practices in popular cultural films for granted.

Aim and Research Question

Therefore, the purpose of this study is determined as follows:

I will use ideas from postcolonialism to investigate how colonial mindset influences Western film industry's construction of non-Western nation brands.

To achieve this purpose, this thesis will use Vietnam as an empirical case and apply postcolonialism with a focus on popular culture and nation branding as a theoretical framework. To countries like Vietnam, whose national identity has been shaped by an extensive period of French colonisation between 1887 and 1954 and a subsequent period of American invasion from 1955 to 1975, it is pertinent to question the extent to which colonial ideologies have, and continue to, influence the representation of the nation and its people in the Western film industry. This thesis will contextualise the colonial ideologies and the West/non-West relationship in the Western popular cultural films featuring Vietnam. The stereotypical themes emerged from a close reading of the Western movies will be discussed to

see how they impact the viewer's imagination about Vietnam and thus, to discover what implications they have for nation branding of Vietnam.

The research questions (RQ) this thesis aims to answer are:

RQ1: How are the national images of Vietnam represented in Western popular culture films?

The first research question aims to bring to light the colonial mindsets and a “fictionalised vision of the non-West” (Prasad, 2017, pp. 305-306) behind the cinematic presentation of the country and its people that popular cultural films are projecting onto the audience/prospective tourists.

RQ2: How do Western/American popular cultural films appear as a hindrance to nation branding of Vietnam?

By answering this question, this research seeks to examine how complex and problematic the effects of Western popular culture on the national image and identity can be. Analysis of these Western pictures will identify the negative reputation and stereotypes the official national branding strategy in Vietnam needs to counter.

Delimitation

In such a critical work like this, I consider myself as a cultural insider researcher given my Vietnamese identity and values, as well as my experience as someone who has been through a diasporic transition while travelling, living and studying in Western Europe, the UK, and Northern America. I am aware that my position as an insider provides me with understanding of and acquaintance with Vietnamese social and cultural context that researchers from other regions cannot have. I am also conscious that being a cultural insider also has a considerable impact on my research's findings on exploring the implications of Western popular culture film for nation branding of non-Western countries, and I will reflect upon this and how I achieve reflexivity in the Research Methodology chapter.

Contribution

This research bears important implications that can improve the theoretical body of strategic communication as an academic field. As numerous researchers highlight that popular cinematic products are influential in establishing image of a place in the minds of the audience (Eishner & Waade, 2015; Månsson, 2015; Beeton, 2016), they are worth considering as a crucial component in the development of place branding discipline, which is one of the focus research areas of the interdisciplinary field of strategic communication. In addition, Acharya & Rahman (2016) admit that there remains a dearth of understanding of the role of films in branding a nation and this research hopes to fill these gaps. The findings of this study gives new insights into our understanding of popular culture and its impacts on nation branding and place branding as a whole. Moreover, this research offers a novel angle to look at the influence of popular culture by applying a postcolonial perspective. I also believe that the studied subject is unique in its contribution to the scarce existing knowledge of non-Western country's nation brand. Finally, findings from this research expect to help strategic communication practitioners harness the films' popularity as well as avoid conflicting information channels about the nation brand's image.

Disposition

The rest of this thesis can be summarised as follows. The second chapter provides an overview of contemporary understanding and assumptions relevant to the phenomenon of nation branding and popular culture. The third chapter addresses my theoretical framework of postcolonialism and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and records the influence colonialism has on today's nation branding and popular culture, in both the West and the non-West. Moving on to chapter 4, where I state my position as a cultural insider researcher and explains my approach to conducting a CDA of Western popular films. Chapter 5 concentrates on an account of findings from my analysis of Western popular pictures. Lastly, Chapter 6 grounds a discussion about the key implications in connection with the research aim; and my recommendations for future research in nation brand communications of the non-West.

2. Nation Branding and Popular Culture

To begin with, this chapter reviews and discusses the previously published academic work on the communication of a nation brand. Later, this chapter charts approaches that have been studied by leading scholars in the field of nation branding and popular culture.

2.1. Nation branding as theory and practice

Over recent years, there has been a substantial growth of interest in nation branding as both a practical and an academic subject (Kasapi & Cela, 2017; Acharya & Rahman, 2016; Lucarelli and Berg, 2011). Scholars (Acharya & Rahman, 2016; Dinnie, 2015; Lucarelli and Berg, 2011; Kavartzis, 2009) consider nation branding to be a multidisciplinary research field that encompasses various professional specialisations, such as marketing and branding, diplomacy, tourism and hospitality. Around the world, there is an increased number of countries committing to fortifying their nation brand (Devasundaram, 2016; Fung, 2016; Matsui, 2014; Barr, 2012; Ooi & Pedersen, 2010). As a matter of fact, under the pressure of today's globalised world, it becomes imperative for nations to possess a nation branding strategy in order to compete (Wang, 2008) and ideally win the better deals of tourism, investment, and human resource's development (Fetscherin, 2010; Wang 2006; van Ham, 2001a, 2001b). A well founded nation branding strategy promises governments increased credibility, reinforced political power, and strengthened transnational alliance (Dinnie, 2015, p. 6). Overall, nation branding is a very efficacious tool that would give nations a widening edge over its competitors in the globalisation game (Aronczyk, 2013; Hakala & Lemmetyinen, 2011; Kaneva, 2011; Anholt, 2005).

2.1.1. Nation brand and Nation branding

There is scarcely a consensus of nation branding's definition and scope (Dinnie, 2015; Kaneva, 2011; Fan, 2010), which can be ascribed to the comprehensive multi-disciplinary nature and the multitude of stakeholders of this discipline. Akin to 'nation branding', scholars have been utilising a variety of branding vocabulary depending on their focus (Dinnie, 2015; Kaneva, 2011). 'Place branding' and 'place marketing' are the two overarching definitions which are famously associated with commerce and marketing discipline (as in Anholt's

work). Under 'place branding', studies are divided into three groups: "city branding" (as in Merrilees, Miller, & Halliday, 2016), region branding (as in Andersson, 2007), and country/nation branding (as in Bolin & Ståhlberg, 2015; Dinnie, 2015). Tourism research field is likely to resort to destination branding (as in Zenker, Braun, & Petersen, 2017). For this particular research, it is worthwhile to define what is meant by 'nation brand' and thus, 'nation branding'.

The concept of nation brand was initially conceived and developed in advertising (Anholt 2002; Gilmore, 2001). Conceptual discussions (Dinnie, 2015; Kavaratzis, 2005) articulate that a nation brand has all of the functional and emotional attributes of a commercial, corporate brand but with a richer historical and cultural background and a more complex relationship with the stakeholders. As there is no universal definition of or explanation for a nation brand, this thesis adopts Dinnie's (2015, p. 5) definition of nation brand as "the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audience". This definition uncovers the multifaceted nature of a nation brand and its strong connection with culture.

In brief, nation branding serves four major purposes: increasing inbound tourism, encouraging foreign investment, boosting exports, and attracting talents (Dinnie 2015; Kotler & Gertner, 2002), with this study choosing to look at nation branding for tourism development. On top of that, there is a great number of external and internal stakeholders that get involved in a nation branding process. Prevailing definitions of nation branding determine national governments (Kavaratzis, 2005, p.332), corporations, and residents as important stakeholders that involve in the communication of the nation brand (Hakala & Lemmetyinen, 2011, p.15). Nation branding's objective is to ameliorate the nation's position in the eyes of foreign investor and of tourists (Kavaratzis, 2005; Kotler and Gertner, 2002). This research will look at the interaction between a nation branding and tourists - international stakeholders.

Reviews of prevailing place branding, nation branding and destination branding literature composed in the recent few years, demonstrate their cultural, historical, and geographical homogeneity. Acharya & Rahman (2016), McCann (2009, p. 123) and Lucarelli & Berg (2011) support an expansion of research subjects to outside of Western countries, arguing that it will increase the applicability of the branding models. As a matter of fact, the theorisations

of nation branding and international development have evolved inside a limited bubble (Acharya & Rahman, 2016; Lucarelli & Berg, 2011), where there is a serious dearth of representations from other regions outside of Europe and North America. This current research, hence, points at the selected history and culture that the majority of nation branding literature has been able to tell and argue for a more diversified outlook of this discipline.

2.2. Branding a nation through popular culture

In a nutshell, popular culture is a range of art, film, literature, music, photography, and media, which are the reflection of the contemporary social values and symbols (Mickūnas, 2016; Dinnie, 2015, pp. 71-72). Popular culture is consumed by a mass population thereby, it can heavily influence and drive a nation brand (Holt, 2004). Next, this discussion organises scholarly writings about popular culture and nation branding into three main schools, following Kaneva's (2011) adaptation of Bell's (1976) categorisation, labeled: i) technical-economic, ii) political, and iii) cultural approaches.

2.2.1. Popular culture as nation brand management - Film-induced tourism

To technical-economic studies, the ways nation branding and product/corporation branding function are basically equal. These instrumentalist approaches study popular culture as a marketing tool for a nation brand, management and tourism. These approaches seek popular culture models that compose and affect nation brands. One of the most frequently cited phenomenon is Film-induced tourism, collectively referring to the study of tourists' visit to a place after it being pictured on visual images, such as widescreen, television, and video clips (Hudson and Ritchie, 2006; p. 256).

However, Horrigan (2009) also denotes the lesser known perspective that film projects can be dangerous to the place image because it strongly affects how the audience "develop perception and attitudes" (p. 56) towards a specific place. Hence, it is crucial that the involvement of film-induced tourism is handled more sophisticatedly to make sure that the place image is consistently conveyed in line with the place branding strategy (Gallarza, Saura & Garcia, 2001; Horrigan, 2009). In this light, film-induced tourism has been treated as a product of brand management, that can be curated and censored in favour of the brand per se. However, Croy & Walker (2003) and Horrigan (2009) assert that this managerial stance

overly simplifies destination promotion practice and overlooks the vastly complex effects of popular motion pictures on consumer perception about the place. One example of these effects is that, according to studies conducted by (Beeton, 2016) and Månsson (2015), the nation brand image tends to be altered by popular culture films.

Therefore, these approaches are not the best fit for this current thesis for their understanding of the impacts of popular culture films are limited. While acknowledging the marketing functionality of popular culture in nation branding, I agree with Kaneva (2011) that these technical-economic approaches are blind to the relations of power and turn a deaf ear to the implications of nation branding for democracy (p. 121). These instrumentalist studies indicate popular culture as a means of brand communication used by certain groups of elites to fabricate the nation image and manipulate the public, but the political meanings of nation branding to national administration and nation building are unfortunately not made clear. As Anholt (2008) highlights the remarkable implications of policy-based nation branding strategy to a country, this study will proceed to explore these implications in the next category of studies.

2.2.2. Popular culture as public diplomacy

Academic studies in this category analyse the impact of popular culture while contextualising nation branding under the framework of international relations, public relations, and international communications. Scholars tend to task public diplomacy with nation branding (Bassey, 2012; Kaneva, 2011) and subsequently, see popular culture as an instrument for gaining political competitiveness. These studies commonly associate nation branding with the control and leading of nation's reputation which reflects Nye (2004)'s notion of "soft power".

In recent discussions in this category, Kaneva (2011) denotes two different geographical positions, namely the U.S and Europe. The U.S strand discusses the involvement of historical events like the two World Wars and the Cold War or the unfolding contemporary political disputes pertaining to "terrorism"; whereas European trend of academics tends to be related to European historical integration projects (Kaneva, 2011). Neither of these arguments, however, considers the political consequences of the European colonisation. I maintain that academics in this political realm have only addressed nation branding from US and European centric

viewpoints and have failed to capture the bigger picture of international relations in a higher political power relationship, and thus have overlooked the implications of colonialism for nation branding. I argue that European colonisation, an event that has been shaping the today world in political, economical, and cultural dimensions, is a telling factor in building the nation image and reputation in erstwhile colonisers and colonies and thus, deserve greater scrutiny.

It is essential to this line of analysis to accept that nation-states exist in relation to one another and within a competitive political global system (Kaneva, 2011, p. 124; Wang, 2008). It is contended that nation is branded simultaneously by the nation leadership's effort (Wang 2006; van Ham, 2001a, 2001b) and external factors, that are not necessarily in line with the country's public diplomacy. By way of illustration, given the case of developing countries, who are recovering from wars, conflicts or disasters like Russia, Lebedenko (2008) reveals that due to the lack of a state-led strategy, nation branding has been mostly done by "Western media" and "other information centres", whose objective is to downplay the country's political status (p. 109). The image of these countries is only fabricated from a Western perspective, thus biased and incomplete (Lebedenko, 2008, p. 109) and this is hindering the country's effort to self-identify and rearrange its position in the world arena. Hence, it is discerned that there is a need to elucidate the construction of diplomatic nation image not only as a government's essay, but also as a result of foreign popular culture.

In another research on nation branding through popular culture in China, Fung's (2016) discussion sheds light to the juxtaposition between the state's ideological control behind the production of national popular culture and the Westernised ideology spread by the foreign popular culture. In the context of countries with an infant popular culture industry, the making of Western/Hollywood films' storyline, characters, and discourse "reproduces [Western/American] ideological positions that could challenge the legitimacy and brand image of the status quo.", Fung (2016, p. 3014) postulates. Again, these perspectives are not significant to this thesis because although they recognise Western popular culture products as an obstacle to the state's ambition of exerting an ideological control over the country's brand image, they do not draw an attention to such issues as ideologies, which the next category of studies has more to offer.

2.2.3. Cultural stereotypes in nation branding

Different from the previous approaches, studies from cultural approaches are grounded in “critical theories of culture, communication, and society” (Kaneva, 2011, p. 127) and majorly rooted in the field of media and cultural studies. Academic work in this category draws considerable attention to the national and cultural identities channelled by nation branding (Kaneva, 2011, p. 127). Akin to any form of branding, nation brand identities are associated with diverse stereotypes (O’Shaughnessy & O’Shaughnessy, 2000). Academic papers in this discipline point out that various official nation branding campaigns found successful admit that they submit to foreign tourists’ stereotypical ideas of local places and people to meet with the expectations of prospective tourists (Edwards & Ramamurthy, 2017; Loftsdóttir, Kjartansdóttir & Lund, 2017; Martínez-Expósito, 2017; Allen, 2016). Widler (2007, p. 148) concludes that nation branding materials in Sweden, Latvia, Estonia, Liechtenstein, and South Africa do not fight against but reaffirm and strengthen the stereotypes about these countries. Sinha Roy (2007)’s discussion identifies these biased nation brand narratives as an embodiment of (neo-)colonialism that dangerously contributes to the superior/inferior relationship between Western culture and the former colonies (p. 570). According to Kaneva (2011) the cultural discourse in nation branding reaffirms the national stereotypes to the taste of foreign target audience. Scholars (Martínez- Expósito, 2017; Loftsdóttir, Kjartansdóttir & Lund, 2017), following Urry (1992); Urry & Larsen (2011), widely refer to this set of expectations as the tourist’ gaze at the local populations, culture and resources. Illas (2012, p. 220) recognises that this tourist’s gaze contains a judgemental connotation that degrades the locals, their history and identity to tourism commodities. Martínez-Expósito (2017) interrogates how Spanish tourism film makers and producers have adopted this tourist’s gaze and restore the prejudices and stereotypes about the locals. He, then, registers the tourism branding activity’s reliance on the tourist’s gaze projected by films in order to recreate the sense of authenticity and effectively commodifies and sells the nation to the tourists. The recycling of tourist’s gaze in films and tourism nation branding is also found in the Scandinavian context, Loftsdóttir, Kjartansdóttir & Lund (2017)’s exhaustive text analysis of temporary Icelandic series and films put forward that they symbolise Icelandicness as masculine and exotic which speaks to the nation’s stereotypical attributes.

Moreover, scholars in this category have explained how a globalised field of nation branding prompts a homologous nation brand image and elaborate critiques of the reinforcement of the biased received ideas about the country and its people. In the examination of online nation branding campaigns of former Yugoslavia, Volcic (2008) identifies globalisation also as a driving force for the reproduction of stereotypical Western view of the country. Kaneva (2011, p. 128) points out that nation branding strategies erase and replace certain national identity narratives with other ones that are more favourable to the foreign (Western) public. Therefore, it can be seen that the contemporary field of nation branding is leaning towards a homogeneity of nation brand identities, which perpetually praises the Western values while exoticises and marginalises that of the others.

Academic writings in this field have consistently regarded culture products as an instrumental factor in constituting stereotypical assumptions about nation brand (De Mooij, 2010; Kavartzis and Ashworth, 2005; O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2000). Speaking of the impact caused by films, Dinnie (2008) sensibly acknowledge that the "heightened public awareness" (p. 126) of a nation brand generated by a well-known film is rather ephemeral, implying that it requires much more long-term effort and dedication to sustain a nation brand position. However, it is put forth that once cultural products are repeatedly sending out the same messages about the national stereotypic attributes, they constantly shape the consumer behaviour or perceptions of nation image in a certain way that would be trying to alter or erase.

Thus far, as we can see, cultural approaches to nation branding are relevant to this thesis because they have problematised the overly applauded use of national stereotypes in nation branding over the past years as well as admitted the role of popular culture in reproducing these homogenous cliches. On top of that, these approaches reflect social constructivist ideas, which acknowledge the involvement of various external and internal parties in shaping both individual and collective meanings of the national identity (Kaneva, 2011). However, the implications of Western popular culture for nation branding have not been fully explored. Dinnie (2004) maintains that many nation branding projects focus on advertising their own national cultural products and ignore the impacts of these external culture products on the nation branding strategy. Actually, in spite of their affluent impacts on nation branding,

culture products have not received sufficient attention from academia, let alone Western popular culture. Years ago, Dinnie (2004) concerns that there was a paucity of academic research on the implications of culture products for nation branding. Since then, there was not much progress made to address this phenomenon (Acharya & Rahman, 2016). Hence, this critical body of literature expresses the worry about the dominance of Western popular culture products in the world market and argue that the ways in which these Western popular culture augments a certain institution of power, knowledge and eliminate the others warrants more studies regarding impacts of Western popular culture on nation branding. More importantly, only a few nation branding research works have employed a critical cultural approach (Kaneva, 2011, p. 127), and the one pertinent perspective missing from the titles in this field is postcolonialism. Thus, responding to Dinnie (2004)'s and Acharya & Rahman (2016)'s call, the findings drawn from this current study with Western popular culture film as a nation branding factor and postcolonialism as a theoretical perspective, are expected to add valuable observations to a growing body of nation branding theory and literature.

2.2.4. The way forward for researching nation branding and popular culture

All in all, popular culture films are helpful visual communication materials in building the nation brand to the outside world as an attractive tourism destination, a promising land for investors and immigrants, but at the same time, this thesis holds the view that the intimate connection between Western popular culture and the Western stereotypes implies complex impacts on the viewers as well as the nation brand. Studies from cultural approaches contribute to manifesting the tensions and contradictions of nation branding incurred by popular culture by using primarily nation branding theory, but I argue that the same topic with an addition of a postcolonial theoretical perspective yields new insights. Namely, the results of the analysis of would be profoundly focused on Western colonial stereotypes of nation brand in Western films and more contextual in reflecting the power relations between the West and the non-West, which will be further elaborated in the next chapter.

3. Theoretical Framework of Postcolonialism and Critical Discourse Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a historical account of postcolonial tradition as an overarching theoretical framework of this research. The key concepts of postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis presented below are believed to be useful in working out how the combined imperatives of nation branding and popular culture can prompt the construction of nation brand to a colonial discourse.

3.1. Postcolonial tradition

Broadly speaking, postcolonialism¹ directly pertains to oppositional critiques of the past and the continuation of Western domination (Prasad, 2015; Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2013; Young, 2001). Postcolonialism focuses on “neo-colonialism”, the presence of the old colonial empires and their legacy in contemporary cultural, historical, and political discussions even long after decolonisation has formally occurred (Prasad, 2017, p. 303). Previous study by Young (2001) points out that these neo-colonial discourses are the medium used to secure the domination of the former colonisers over the erstwhile colonies in the modern time. Postcolonial scholars argue that the world’s order as it is today is the upshot of the Western (neo-)colonialism phenomenon and anticolonial resistance (Young, 2001; Bhabha, 1994; Spivak, 1988; Said, 1978). Another notable point is that postcolonial tradition is deeply indebted to the spirit and philosophy of activism for global justice, sustainable social change and empowerment (Young, 2009). It is the activist intervention that makes postcolonialism critical (Prasad, 2017). The vocal side of postcolonial tradition is striving to “change the inequitable power structures of the world” (Young, 2009, p. 24) and to emancipate oppressed group from the practices of (neo-)colonialism (Prasad, 2015, p.126). Therefore, the acknowledgement and contestation of inherent Western colonial encounters are integral to this thesis’s critical analysis of Western popular culture’s influence on contemporary nation branding.

¹ It is important to keep in mind that the prefix “post” in “post-colonialism” (emphasis on the hyphen) basically carries a chronological account to indicate the ‘after colonialism epoch’; whereas the “post” in “postcolonialism” (without the hyphen), the analytical framework of this research, is to indicate the critical position of scholars in relation with the (neo-)colonial empire.

Although postcolonialism has been increasingly expanded and utilised in an amalgam of studies and disciplines, including economics, political and development studies, and gender studies (Prasad, 2017, p. 295), this thesis acknowledges that it has not been as well known to the scholarly field of nation branding. That said, I am asserting that it is important for this research to adopt a postcolonial perspective to reveal how nation branding grapples with popular Western culture in a wider relationship of power. The next sections intersect postcolonialism, nation branding and Western popular culture more in details in order to further elaborate the reasoning behind my choice of approach and firmly situate the research historically in the field of postcolonialism.

3.1.1. Colonialism as a source of representation of the non-West in Western popular culture

Colonial practices are widely considered to have declined alongside the fall of the European empires. However, postcolonial scholars argue that these practices are still pronouncedly real and have survived into the present day in various ways, one of which is through cultural discourses (Prasad, 2015). Dinnie (2015) states that the rise of Hollywood products has paved the way for American culture to penetrate other geographical territories. More importantly, accompanying the ongoing globalisation movement is the worldwide spread of Western popular culture, which, as Mickūnas (2017) uncovers, plays a vital role in mainstreaming the “homogeneous Western ideas, attitudes, images, rituals” (p. 49) and manipulating the society into passively receiving these tenets as standards, which subsequently gear their perspective towards Eurocentrism.

Postcolonial engagements respond to the whole issue of representation, voice and agency emerged in the middle of cultural tension between the West and the non-West (Young, 2009; Shome & Hegde, 2002). Hence, given the impact of popular culture on the construction of nation brand, the purpose of grounding my research in postcolonial tradition is to identify and destabilise these colonial tenets underpinning the representation of non-Western nation brand in Western popular culture.

Postcolonial advocates (Zantop, 1997 in Prasad, 2017, p. 304) disclose latent colonial elements in commercial, media, and communication materials. The word “latent” here points to the fact that it is seemingly very easy to overlook the colonial connotations stemming from

“imperialistic habits and agendas” (Prasad, 2017, p. 303). As Said (1978) articulates, overtime racial biases are institutionalised and become the norms that people innately follow without questioning the aftermath of their acts. Hence, postcolonial theory’s emphasis on the persistence of colonial encounters and the latency of colonial elements, is in deed instructive for my critical study of Western popular culture.

3.1.1.1. Colonial discourses of the Others

The conception of postcolonialism owes itself to the defiant vision of the twentieth thinker, Edward Said. Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) is one of the first key pieces laying the foundation and setting a milestone in the growth of this domain. Said argues that ‘the Orient’ is nothing but a colonialist construct, externalised by the West and institutionalised in the Western society. Subsequently, Orientalism constitutes the stereotypical perceptions of Westerners about non-Western communities. Said’s discussion of Orientalism, is a meaningful tool to unsettle the remainder of the colonial institution. Said’s work aptly unearths the profound imprints left by the legacy of colonialism in the ways not only Western but also non-Western people perceive their own positions in relation to each other. Inspired by the knowledge-power nexus discourse analysis of Foucault (1972, 1977) and Gramsci (1971), Said explicitly addresses that the Western colonialism/imperialism has authored and authorised the depictions of the Other, the natives as “irrational, backward-looking, childish, and feminine” (Said, 1979, p. 10). Together with other postcolonial proponents (Aizenberg, 1999; Mishra and Hodge, 1994), Said problematises the power relationship, which endorses ‘Eurocentrism’ and Western supremacy, puts the West in the centre and the non-West on the periphery, as ‘the Other’, pivoting around.

Besides Said’s (1978) Orientalism, *primitivism* and *tropicalisation* are two other colonial discourses that exposes the juxtaposition between the colonialist/imperialist and the colonised. The discourse of primitivism deems cultural traditions and spiritual rituals of the African and the Caribbean savage, backward, and irrational (Prasad, 2017), whereas, the discourse of tropicalisation fills the imagination of Latin America, Mexico, and the Caribbean with sexually alluring, incompetent and idle people (Benz, 1997). Through these three discourses, the inferior position of the Others in contrast to the superior West has become very consistent. In agreement with Prasad (2017) and postcolonial writers, I strongly believe that the discourse of the Others can be found in Western popular culture films, as it has been

spotted in public relations materials, Western media's coverages. Taken into account the major criticism of Said's Orientalism (Scott, 2011; Wang, 1997), I exclusively stress on the "s" in the Others to address the rest of Asia and colonised groups, whom are reportedly neglected in the binary power opposition between the Middle East and the West.

While Said's interrogation undermines the (neo-)colonial discourses in modern Orientalist knowledge, Bhabha (1994) hinges upon concepts like *ambivalence* to debilitate the hegemony of Western knowledge. Bhabha points towards the contrasting characteristic couples attributed to the non-West, weak/threatening, pleasing/unpleasing, familiar/exotic, to name a few, as "a social reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible" (pp. 70–71). As he explains, such ambivalent and conflicting images manifest the coloniser's biggest fear and desire to dominance towards the colonies. This can be exemplified by the contradictory way of imagining and presenting the African tribes, who are praised for being faithful to and connected to their roots, while at the same time are degraded for being unrefined and underdeveloped, like Coombes (1994) and Torgovnick (1990) recognise (see Prasad, 2017). Consequently, I postulate that Bhabha's findings plausibly appeal to the ambivalence about knowledge about non-Western nation brands registered by Western popular film productions.

3.1.1.2. Postcolonial feminism

Postcolonial tradition scholars have been integrating feminist theories into researching "the intersections of race, gender, and geographical positions against matrices of power." (Prasad, 2017, p. 301). This emerging cross-tradition perspective, according to Hall & Tucker (2004), studies gender together with other identities as a springboard for colonialism to discriminate, misrepresent and repress certain identities of other places and people. Therefore, adopting a postcolonial feminist theory permits this thesis to counter the gendered narrative of Western movie, specifically regarding the representations of women from the Global South.

Feminism asserts that gender identities and experiences as well as gender roles are social constructs, rather than being assigned by nature (Prasad, 2017). It is maintained by Prasad that through the discursive practice of these social circumstances, the definition of femininity is reified and registered to women of all race and class lines. Furthermore, Prasad claims that the discourse of sexuality, including sexual identities/orientations/preferences, the masculinity/femininity, sexual seductiveness, sexual abuse/harassment, is of great interest to feminist

because it provides rich insights into oppression of women and women's resistance to this oppression. Through the lens of feminist tradition, I acknowledge that gender and sexuality of women from the Global South are partially formed by their filmic representations on Western popular culture.

Feminist scholar hold formal institutions, like the media, accountable for the insistent gender conformation because they (re)produce and normalise gender and sexuality stereotypes, which cause the pressure on men and women to abide by certain ways of viewing "themselves and their relationships to each other" (Prasad, 2017, p. 193). On top of that, this institution systematically maintains the exploitation and oppression of women by depicting women as objects of sexual comfort, indulgence and lust (Prasad, 2017). What's more, feminist advocates like Gilligan (1977) criticise the male-based foundation of social common knowledge that persistently privileges male's voices and experiences over women's. Likewise, postcolonial feminism seeks to break the silence of the Oriental woman, who is depicted as, like Said (1978) poignantly observes, "never spoke of herself, never represented her emotions, presence or history" (p. 6). Spivak (1988) notably brings up questions about the quietness of Hindu women in their subaltern label in one of the shaping pieces of postcolonial feminism, titled *Can the Subaltern speak?*. Looking underneath the lack of voice of the subaltern while reflecting upon the feminist and postcolonial sensibilities, Spivak urges an awareness of the root cause of the problem which is the position of sexualised otherness engendered by and within the patriarchal colonised spheres that has taken away their political views and their right to speak up for themselves. Spivak invokes the male dominated and male experience based discourse of colonialism that reproduces itself, which has rendered law and authority inaccessible for Indian women and as a result reduce them to silence. Accordingly, I hold the view that feminism adds a gender aspect to the postcolonial examination of racialised alterity and otherness of the non-Western women while postcolonialism allows me to historicise the role of colonial power relation in shaping gender and sexuality experience of non-Western women on screen.

Postcolonial feminism liberates feminist researchers from the centrality of Western discourse of knowledge and allow them to go beyond the scholarly and cultural hegemony of Western feminism. Feminist scholars have been problematising the tendency to treat the whole diverse

categories of women as a monolithic group and raising awareness on the heterogeneity and uniqueness of women's stories across different race, religion, (dis)ability, and prior attainments (Prasad, 2017; Mehta, 2002). I support McLoughlin's (2017) argument that the inequality against women is intersectional and multi-layered of gender, race, class, age etc. Spivak's (1987) concept of Othering in postcolonialism is thus of critical relevance to feminist research since it destabilises the Eurocentrism and class gap that relegate and marginalise non-Western women as inferior Other in relation to Western (wo)men. Therefore, I contend that this combined viewpoint of postcolonial feminism has meaningful resonance with my reading of Western films, in particular with the respect to how the intersectionality of gender with race determines these filmic portrayals of native female characters compared to that of Western male and female characters.

It is worth mentioning the Mulvey's essay on *male gaze* (see more in Rose, 2016, p. 169), which has been popularised in many of the feminist film scholarship as a critique of the patriarchal visuality for gratification and consumption. As per Mulvey's original definition, the male gaze embodies the intense scrutiny of voyeurism and fetishism placed on the body of the women. This male gaze is present in many contemporary media and arts as Rose (2016) asserts. The notion of the gaze is also found in works of postcolonial writers (see Prasad, 2015; Nair-Venugopal, 2012; Hall & Tucker, 2004), many of which study the colonial ideas underpinning the coloniser's stare out of curiosity and enthusiasm, directed towards the colonised natives. This perpetual way of regarding eventually disregards other images of the locals that are different from the colonial stereotypes and simultaneously belittle and alienate their objects. I ascertain that the replication of the construction of natives as exotic and savage, which demonstrates what Said has described, is highly linked with the colonial male gaze in film productions.

3.1.2. Colonialism as a source of knowledge about nation branding

The preceding literature review chapter indicates a growing awareness of a homogenised and parochial theoretical body of nation branding work that has not ventured out of the regular Eurocentric topics. With the hype of internalisation and globalisation, postcolonialist scholars (see Prasad, 2015) state that Euro-American (neo)colonisation/imperialism has been disseminating and promoting Western-knowledge-based teaching curriculum in a variety of

disciplines. I find this observation valid to the development of nation branding literature as it has been and continues to be moulded and appropriated into a Eurocentric standard. Shome's (2016) essay on media studies claims that, dominant (Western) media studies only seems to grow to ignore and overlook the intercultural challenges of the non-West world. It is evident that the majority of the most influential names in nation branding (see Kaneva, 2011) come from and represent the British and American schools, which reflects Shome's & Hegde's (2002) concerns about the heavily Eurocentric worldview that communication discipline valorises for a long time. More importantly, I maintain that this colonial worldview of nation branding has been able to reproduce itself through knowledge circulation, in both Western and non-Western scholastic institutions, based on the academic reference system and the accumulative nature of social sciences. Put bluntly, the mindset of colonialism and Orientalism are still haunting the nation branding academics and as a result, give rise to Western stereotypical assumptions about non-Western nation brands. This resonates with postcolonial scholars' (Prasad, 2017; Fougère & Moulettes, 2011; Schroeder & Borgerson, 2008) critique of the ways in which knowledge development has been facilitating and reinforcing Western domination and colonisation of the Others.

Shome & Hegde (2002) convincingly insists that a postcolonial viewpoint enables communication academics to see through the colonial judgements ingrained in the 'innocent' knowledge, and eventually attain "more just and equitable knowledge base about the third world, the other, and the "rest" of the world" (p. 261). Therefore, I anticipate that by adopting a postcolonial perspective, I will inevitably criticise the current body of nation branding theories and research. I will problematise the temporary employment of Western/American popular culture film in nation branding, while reflecting on the stereotypical image of the country and the people in these films, which can be seen as characterised by (neo-)colonialist and Oriental ideologies. I also hope that bringing a postcolonial perspective into focus will necessitate a rethink of the role of Western popular culture in constructing the images of a nation brand in both domestic and international markets.

3.2. Postcolonial Critical Discourse Analysis

It is important to acknowledge that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is both a theory, that performs language and societal phenomenon analysis, and a method for investigating

exercises of power. In the following sections, I discuss the theoretical attributes of CDA, the criticisms against CDA and the responses of key scholars. The stages of a CDA analysis will be presented in the next chapter.

Conventionally, *discourse* refers imprecisely to written or spoken communication, however, in different social science domains have taken discourse to mean differently (Mills, 1997, p. 1). CDA is different from discourse analysis (DA) because CDA does not regard discourse as mere linguistic unit per se but rather multidisciplinary and complex social phenomena (Wodak & Meyer, 2009) that, according to van Dijk (1998) and Fairclough (1989; 1995), engender and reinforce social inequality in power and dominance. These discourse elements and the society are also governed by social power relations in return. Accordingly, when talking about discourse in Western film, I do not only mean the semiotic meaning of the motion images or play scripts themselves, but also the strong links amongst them, powers and social relations in contemporary societies.

CDA theory seems to espouse postcolonial theory well in several ways. First, CDA theory and postcolonialism share the same foundation, both Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and CDA owe their inspiration much to Foucault's (1972, 1977) critical concept of *discourse* and *power*. Second, understanding the ideals of CDA permits one to see Western films become a discourse practice, regarding "both their continuity with the [colonial] past [...] and their involvement in making [neo-colonial] history" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 11). CDA is about revealing why some assumptions are taken for granted by examining "who uses language, how, why and when" (van Dijk, 1997, p. 2) and challenging the legitimisation of knowledge and 'truth' through the practice of the dominant power (Cary & Mutua, 2010). CDA allows for making visible latent social phenomena, hence, it is asserted that the use of CDA is purported to expose the hidden underpinning of the spoken text or imagery in Western popular films. Third, Fairclough postulates that his CDA approach, by studying language, aims to raise awareness of "exploitative social relations" (1989, p. 4), one of which is colonial power as it "enables the production of knowledge, and [...] maps out powerful positions from which to speak" (Mills, 1997, p. 115). This fits well the objective of postcolonialism. In deed, poscolonialism manifests the critical stance of CDA to address the colonial discourses that Western films are subconsciously dealing with. The politics of CDA side with that of the underrepresented and oppressed Others to be resistant to and to undermine unequal power

relationships and eventually to attain social change, which speaks to the activism of postcolonial theory. All in all, these points support my argument that the use of CDA together with postcolonial perspective serves this research's best interest.

3.3. Synthesis of theoretical framework

Overall, I am determined to forge fruitful intellectual alliances amongst postcolonialism, feminism, nation branding and popular culture discipline. Because while the driving force of Western nation branding is to examine popular culture as a powerful brand communication phenomenon that can reanimate images and reproduce knowledge. A postcolonial perspective can add “a historical and international depth” (Shome & Hegde, 2002, p. 252) to the theorisation of how Western popular cultural productions feed into a growing archive of “the established institutionalised knowledge” (p. 251) about the Oriental others' nation brand. This thesis is motivated to use CDA to reveal the colonial stereotypes and power relations portrayed in publicly accessible Western movies. The intention of employing a CDA approach for this research is to identify principle concepts or themes across categories of Vietnam's nation brand image featured in Western/American films. The themes drawn from these films are a way of discovering the films' politics of representation of Vietnamese people and Vietnamese women while in part returning the colonial male gaze of mainstream Western cultural products. The next chapter will explain how to identify and examine these themes by applying CDA.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Epistemological and Ontological approach to conducting a critical discourse analysis

Briefly, ontology concerns the relations between the subjects and concepts of social entities while epistemology concerns the question which opinions are considered as the justified knowledge within a discipline (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Ontological and epistemological positions are important to a research because they lay the foundation on which the researcher stands, thus inherently are telling about knowledge that a research work generates (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

This critical discourse analysis of Western film is based on the premises of social constructivist ontology, which means that this thesis believes that the social world around the researched phenomenon is constantly (re)constructed and deconstructed by various social actors. Implicitly, rooted in the theoretical framework of postcolonial, this research seeks to explain human experiences that were shaped and is being shaped by the cultural legacies of (neo-)colonialism and imperialism. This thesis also relies on the ontology of CDA that discourse is a social construct rather than a natural creation. In other words, discourse is a product of social constitutions and is a social constitution itself (Fairclough 2014, 2001, 1992, 1989). This reflects the ontological argument that the ways in which discourse is perceived, shape the social knowledge and subsequently, the way people make sense of the world around them. Reality is the product of a constant process what is prone to changes in social circumstances and individual experiences. Therefore, there is no unique or ultimate reality, instead, social backgrounds and cultural ideologies largely decide how one would define and comprehend reality.

Additionally, I come to clearly acknowledge that my epistemological position is in accord with interpretivism which means that my subjectiveness as the researcher is undeniable. Interpretivist approach to qualitative research is criticised for lacking of validity and predictability due to their subjectivity and impossibility to generalise (Prasad, 2017; Jackson, Drummond, & Camara, 2007). However, I argue that this thesis does not aim to find the absolute and deterministic causal relations between the Western popular culture and the nation

branding of non- Western countries. Rather, this research values the diversity of meanings and takes to heart that different audience has different story to be heard of. Therefore, the findings of this thesis will particularly contribute to capture the intangible, connotative meanings of the Western films and empower the audience to see through the surface to better understand the impact of these texts upon its latent meanings, which cannot be unearthed by counting the numbers of time a subject is capitalised in films. In a larger scale, this thesis provides a better understanding of the nation branding of communities sharing the same attributes and resistance to the colonial power relationships.

4.2. Researcher's insider position and reflexivity in doing a postcolonial critical discourse analysis

As a foreign Vietnamese master student in Sweden exploring the implications of Western popular culture film for nation branding of non-Western countries from a postcolonial perspective, I consider myself a cultural insider. More explicitly, given my identity and experience, I see myself physically and historically a member of a Vietnamese community facing *vis-a-vis* negative effects imposed by the regime of (neo-)colonialism. It is posited that being an insider is an advantage that assists the researcher to comprehend the concealed meanings and legitimately speak up for the ones that share the same experiences and emotions (Floyd and Arthur, 2012; Katyal and King, 2011). Thus, I am in a better legitimate position to understand and represent the Others' viewpoints about Western film products than a Western researcher would be.

Another strong point being an insider pertains to the increased accessibility to the subject matters, the cultural mindsets foregrounding interpretation, and sensitiveness to cultural differences (Floyd and Arthur, 2012; Katyal and King, 2011; Shah, 2004). With it, I am also highly sensitised to the vulnerability of the subject of this specific research. As Shamim & Quershi (2013) acutely underline, concerning the aftermath of colonial legacy and the concurrent neocolonial relations, the population that most postcolonial research work deals with are regarded as vulnerable. Therefore, I believe that being an insider grants me the cultural sensitivities to certain dimensions of the research objects and as a result, enables me to gain rich and meaningful insights into the colonial stereotypes portrayed by Western films in an ethical manner.

However, besides the aforementioned benefits, being an insider, I am exposed to the risks of being biased and carried away by my own values, beliefs and perceptions as Drake (2010) recognises. I am aware that I have the power to influence this entire research process, because I am the dominant figure in the decision-making process throughout the conduct of this research. Unlike in qualitative interviews, where the researched's voices can be integrated into the research design to achieve reflexivity (Berger, 2015), I am working with filmic texts, the interpretation of these Western films are inescapably influenced by my own experience and perspective. However, Prasad (2017) puts forward that the implementation of a qualitative research is similar to that of craft work, quality lies in the craft of the research itself, and can only be attained once the researcher-craftsman is well-informed by the chosen traditions. Hence, I argue that as long as I am writing and consciously reflecting on the process, for instance, keeping my discussion about the discourses in films firmly grounded in postcolonialism and CDA with support from proper academic literature, the findings of this thesis are theoretically credible.

Finally, as Van Heugten (2004) highlights, to mitigate the bias of an insider researcher in such a qualitative critical discourse analysis, the subjectivity of the researcher should be "open to intensive scrutiny" and "challenged on an ongoing basis" (p. 208). Hence, it is of particular relevance to me to discuss the process with my supervisors and my peers and to take the chance distancing myself from my research subjects from time to time and avoid being so engrossed in my own topic.

4.3. Research design

4.3.1. Vietnam as the empirical case

As a result of globalisation and the development of transportation technology, travelling has become more accessible and countries now receive visitors from all over the world. Vietnam is no exception, according to recent reports, with Vietnam's tourism industry welcoming an increasing number of North American and Western tourist in the recent years (Bui, 2011; Lai & Vinh, 2013; Polyorat & Tassanawat, 2017). Moreover, as researchers (Bui, 2011; Polyorat & Tassanawat, 2017) put forward, to competitively attract inbound tourists, it is imperative for

the government of Vietnam, the tourism industry, travel agencies to invest in nation branding to distinctively (re)define its national brand image, identity and characteristics.

Besides, this discussion of colonial and postcolonial discourse is pertinent for this study given the research's empirical case, Vietnam. Vietnam was colonised by the French from 1887 to 1954 causing the division of South and North Vietnam, which was followed by a resistant war against the American during the Second World War, from 1955 to 1975. Hence, colonialism/imperialism has importance for the country's identity and it might be ingrained in the image of Vietnam.

4.3.2. Selection of films as study objects

In selecting the sample, the author sought for a variety of motion pictures while reducing the sample to ones that are the most influential to, accessible to and known to the audience. With this in mind, I used the keyword 'vietnam' to search for the latest Western/American films on www.imdb.com, one of the most comprehensive online movie database, which provided me with a handful of crucial indicators such as production year, popularity, budget, film locations, and story line.

As this research was interested in the popular films that can make the most influence in terms of both quantity and quality, the sample was limited to films that dated most recently, made more than \$20 millions at the worldwide box office, recognised by awards and the audience. I chose \$20 million in accordance with Dagaz's & Harger's (2011) suggestion that a gross number of \$10 million is a benchmark implying that the films have larger marketing budgets and a wider spreading, correspondingly, are more likely to influence a bigger audience. Then, I filtered out the movies whose plots were not recorded to feature Vietnam and events taken place in Vietnam, or has very little association with Vietnam; and left with an initial list of 5 American films. To add diversity and internationality to the sample, I extended the search to films of other countries of origin and assembled to 2 more European films. The total research's sampling was limited to 7 Western films, which produced a feasible workload within restricted time frame of this master's thesis.

I also conducted research in 'film about Vietnam' on common search engines, in this case, Google (in Incognito mode) and on film streaming platform like Netflix, to obtain a wider

observation for the most recommended and requested Vietnam related pictures in the online market, considering the shift to video-on-demand in film productions and consumption (see Lobato, 2018). The results from these searches will be discussed at the beginning of the analysis as an overview of the discourse capacitated and appropriated by the Western popular films about Vietnam.

The 7 Western popular films chosen for analysis are *Apocalypse Now*; *Good Morning, Vietnam*; *Indochine*; *Full Metal Jacket*; *The Quiet American*; *Thi Mai (Thi Mai, rumbo a Vietnam)*; *Kong: skull island*. The selected pictures were mutually nominated and awarded worldwide acclaimed prizes such as Oscar Awards (see the table in Chapter 5) as well as topped several all-time-favourite-movie-about-Vietnam lists in the past four decades. In the case of the two representatives from Europe, they have reached a smaller but diversified population. *Indochine* is highly recognisable for its eccentric portrayal of the French Indochinese epoch and viewers of *Thi Mai*, a Spanish movie that is available on Netflix, one of the most subscribed global video-on-demand platforms (Lobato, 2018), typifying the millennial generation of movie streamers. Thus, I claim that for their global popularity, these chosen films have a considerable influence on the prevailing assumptions and generalisation about Vietnam for ages. On top of that, each of the chosen movies has their own unique angle of portraying Vietnam, which diversifies the data and complements each other to convey the multifaceted complexity of the country's historical context, political circumstances and of the everyday life of Vietnamese people in relation to that of Western characters. In terms of the release years, these movies all together provide access to a holistic landscape of the Western film industry about Vietnam over the span of four decades.

4.3.3. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the analytical method

Following this CDA approach (as introduced by Fairclough, 1995; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999), I focus on three analytical elements in the Western film discourse, which are defined as: *text* (e.g film script, scenes), *discourse practice* (e.g the process of film production and film consumption), *sociocultural practice* (e.g social and cultural institutions and situations that give rise to films). These elements are based on each other and interact with each other as illustrated in Figure 1.

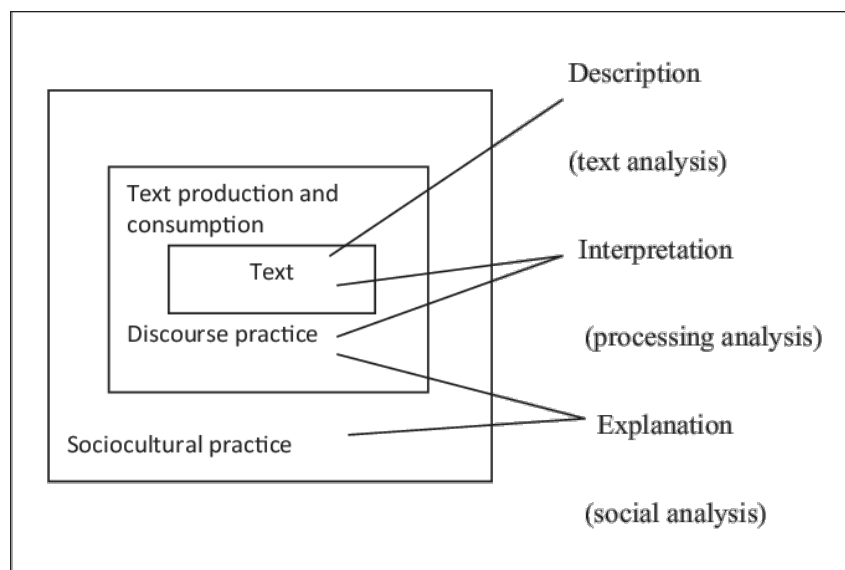


Fig. 1. Diagram Fairclough's CDA framework, adapted from Fairclough (1995, p. 98)

For instance, text constitutes a Western film discourse, which is discursively produced, distributed, and consumed by the Western film industry, which is in turn an instance of the hegemonic ideological and institutional practice. Throughout the analysis, I moved from the lowest level to the highest level of discourse. I started from Text analysis: describing the meaning of film texts, and then moved to Processing analysis: interpreting the use of Western film industry, to Social analysis: explaining the discursive events can be features of the prevailing practice of dominance and inequality. The aim of CDA is to assist me, as the researcher, to understand how non-Western nation brand's image are mediated by (neo-)colonialism, which is all perpetuated by the practice of making and viewing Western popular films in our daily lives.

4.3.4. Analysis proceedings

Ricoeur (1981) asserts that visual images such as a films, describing social interactions and/or social occurrences can be similarly analysed as written texts. Furthermore, in CDA, text is not necessarily linguistic, rather it could be understood from a multifunctional perspective (Fairclough, 1995). Therefore, in this thesis, I studied text derived from chosen film in both visual and verbal forms, for examples images used in a sequence, words used in a conversation between the characters. Then, since these films collectively socially construct a

Western discourse about the Vietnam's nation brand, I conducted a systematic comparing and contrasting the film's written and oral texts.

In researching visual materials, I must take into account the strategic employment of sound, lighting, and background noise in specific segments as they equally affect the viewer's interpretation of the work. More importantly, I visited the sequences several times, in repetition after watched them in their entirety with the research questions in mind in order to obtain a more holistic view of the films and to make sure that my findings were linked to my research purpose. Revisiting the research materials while being able to pause, rewind, and fast-forward the films and code for details also helped me avoid missing potentially important informations from the films. In practice, in the following chapter, excerpts of original screenplay and snapshots extracted from the films were adhered to the corresponding discourse to back up my argumentations and assist the reader in visualising and connecting the data to my analysis. That said, I were aware of the fact that an excessive amount of quotations and photos would weaken my points, as Elo et al. (2014) alert, and I tended to use them considerately to complement my discussions.

Mogashoa (2014) advises that data familiarisation is a requisite for a thematic CDA. Once the list of films was assembled, I watched the films singly and deliberately maintained a complementary field notes to capture key words and the first thoughts that came across my mind, this definitely has helped me, as Brinkmann & Kvale (2015, p. 204) postulate, not to miss any "immediately available" interpretation of the film's text while attending to the films for the first time. These notes and transcripts served as a preliminary material for a qualitative coding, with an attempt to identify the initial themes in the films, focusing on type of landscapes, clothing, personalities, professions and relationships perpetually associated with Western and non-Western (Vietnamese) characters. Afterwards, a raw draft of the significant and discursive meanings derived from the film texts was put together. There were 2 main recurring themes, which pertain to the portrayal of Vietnamese people, and that of Vietnamese landscape. As it follows, I continued breaking down monolithic notions of "Vietnamese people" into 9 smaller themes using divider such as social class, profession, gender, and characteristic. In addition to other 2 sub-themes of Vietnamese landscape, including Urban & Rural setting and The jungle discourse, there were 11 sub-themes altogether. In order to keep

my discussion focused and on point, I went on to drop the landscape themes, and reorganised the Vietnamese people into 2 themes and 7 sub-themes. These themes were most apposite to the research’s aim, considering that they are capable of saying about the colonial power relation and Vietnam’s nation branding, and they adequately reflect what was presented in the data about the researched subject. Therefore, the themes were finalised as mapped out below. In the final step, various pertinent postcolonial and feminist theories and concepts, explicated in Chapter III were applied to support and elevate my discussions about the use of language, images and symbols in the chosen films to tackle the broader discursive practices.

Table 1. Summary Table of Discourses identified in selected Western films

1. The Gender discourse	2. The Inferior Others discourse
Can Vietnamese women speak?	Invisible Vietnamese
Nubile, exotic Vietnamese women	Vietnamese people as tool
Colonial representation of women	Primitive Vietnamese natives
	Vietnamese people as the enemy

4.3.5. Research’s Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of a research can be assessed through how the findings are presented. According to Elo et al. (2014), the presentation of research’s findings is an integral indicator of transferability, confirmability, and credibility. However, reporting results is not always straightforward because the analysis process of qualitative research consists of partly abstract and intuitive thoughts, which might be often challenging to explain to others (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The use of direct quotations and visual materials is highlighted as necessary to the trustworthiness and credibility of the published results (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Elo et al., 2016). Clear and comprehensible presentation of the analysis materials can also improves confirmability and transferability. Because, it shows that the researcher has been working with the data honestly as well as allows the reader come up with other interpretations and their own judgements about whether or not the reported implications are transferable to another condition (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Thus, I purposefully recorded and displayed analysis materials, including still pictures and quotations from films in forms of tables and figures to ensure trustworthiness and foster transparency in disseminating research’s findings.

5. The Construction of the Others' Nation Brand in Western Popular Culture

The research questions guiding the direction of this research are: how Western film products represent the image of Vietnam's nation brand and how Western films influence the nation branding of Vietnam. To answer these questions, in this Analysis, I intend to work on the collected empirical data with respect to the developed theoretical framework in Chapter IV. This analysis of Western popular culture's linguistic and non-linguistic text also calls for CDA as the primary methodology. This chapter is sectioned as follows: Section 5.1 is my general observation of the common genre that Western films belong to; Section 5.2 analyses the discourse of Gender; Section 5.3 goes on to examine the discourse of the inferior Others; and lastly, Section 5.4 discusses the implications for Vietnam's nation branding based on the identified discourses.

5.1. War film genre

While using search engines, online film databases as imdb.com, Netflix and Google to look for films featuring Vietnam, the majority of the results that I got are linked with events, people, and locations of the wartime in Vietnam. Both Netflix's and Google's suggestions following my keywords are pertaining to Vietnam war while IMDb has a separate poll dedicated to Vietnam War Movies. As a matter of fact, 6 out of 7 chosen films are of war films, this is not due to any of the researcher's intention rather it points to what is available in the current film market.

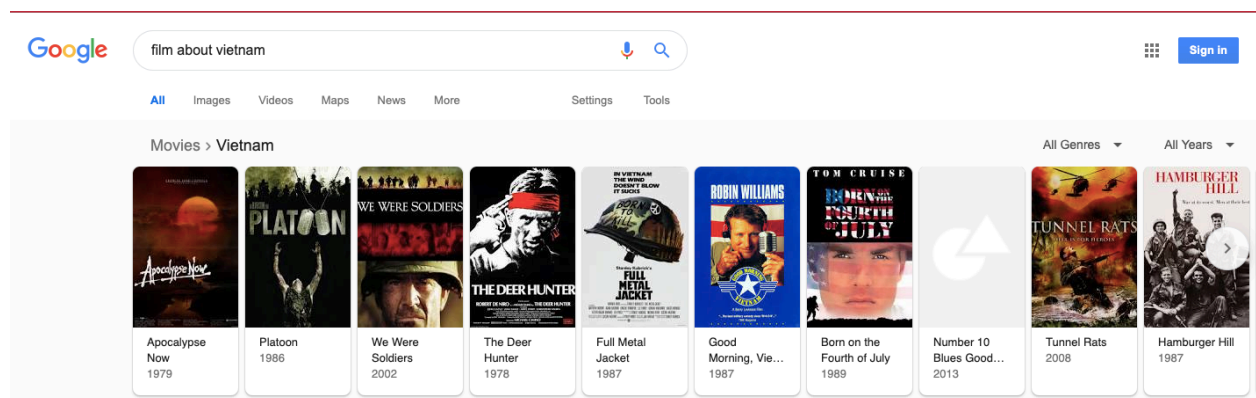


Fig. 2. Search results of 'films about Vietnam' on Google search

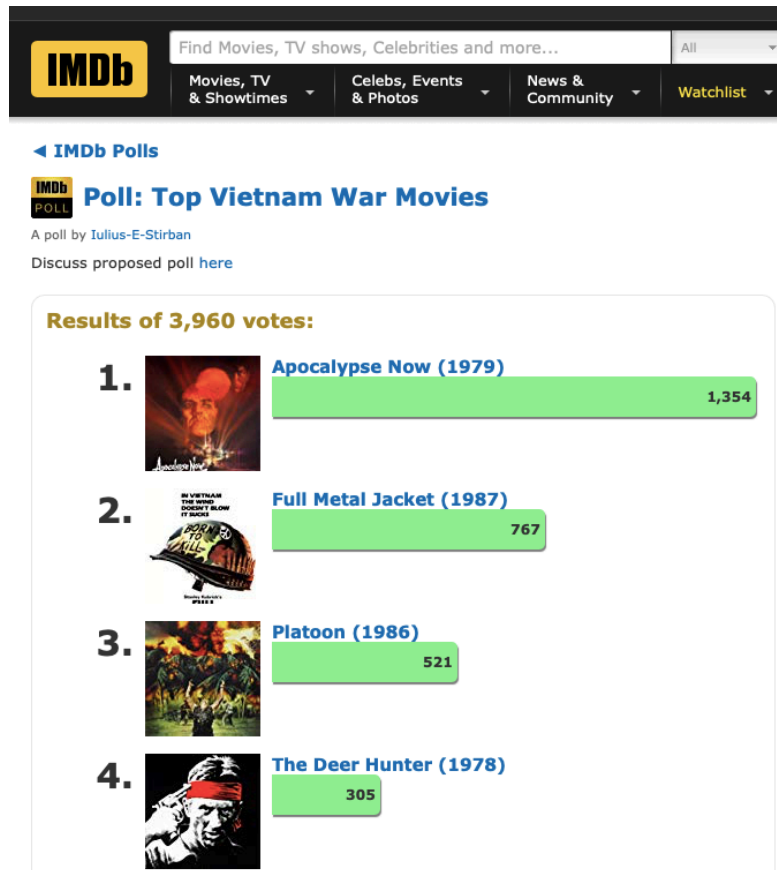


Fig. 3. Search results of Top Vietnam War Movies on IMDb.

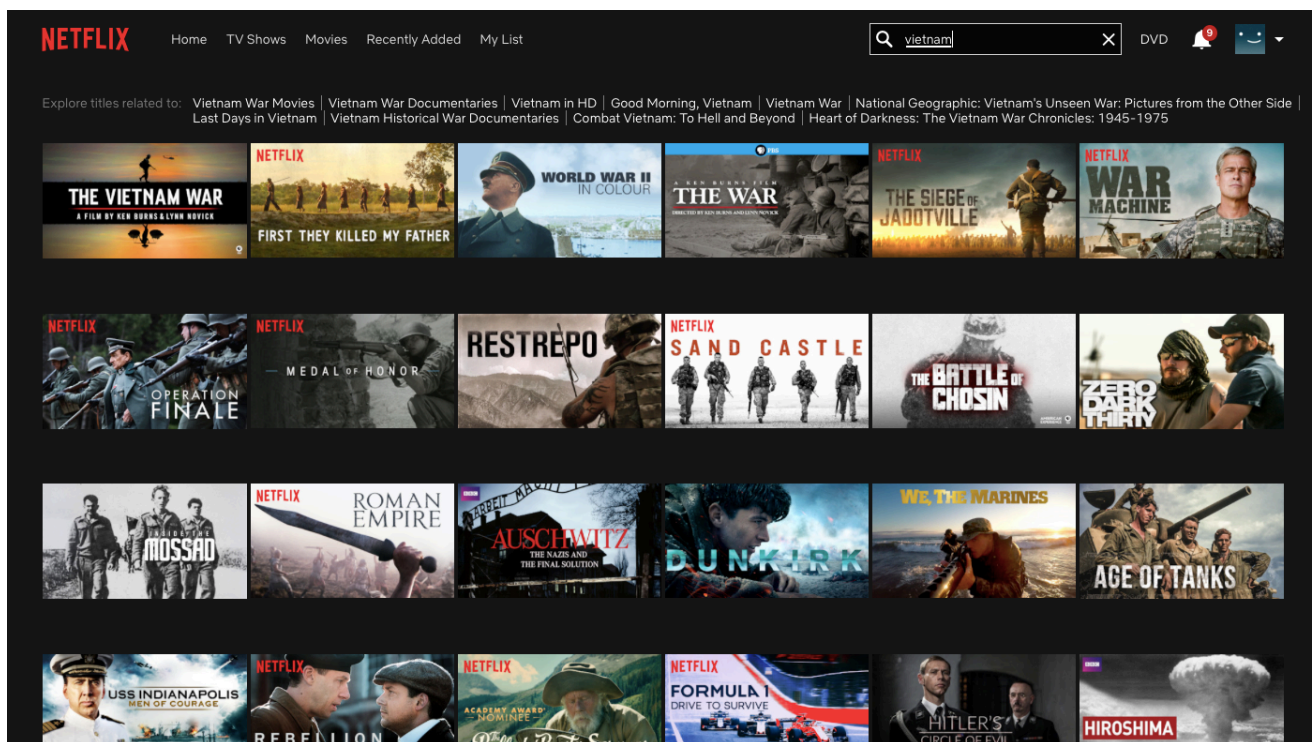


Fig. 4. Search results of 'Vietnam' on Netflix Sweden

Therefore, I strongly assert that Vietnam war has become a film genre. *Genre* refers to the kind of narrative being told, which frames the presumptions and navigates audience expectations regarding character constructions, settings and stories (Rose, 2016, p. 28). Berger (1972 in Rose, 2016)'s expression *ways of seeing* is also important because what makes a genre different is not simply its particular ways of showing, but also the particular ways of seeing that they summon. So the prominence of Vietnam war film genre is telling about the Western popular culture's ways of presenting the image of Vietnam and what ways of seeing that they invite. In other words, war film genre, through the lens of CDA, becomes a discourse of what happenings and experiences that the audience is bound to expect and not to expect when visiting or staying in Vietnam.

Next, brief key information (<https://www.imdb.com>) about the 7 films are listed chronologically in tabulation to assist the readers in easily comprehending and following the analysis. A summary of analysed characters is also listed in a separate table. Plot summaries are enclosed in Appendix for the reader's reference.

Table 2. Summary Table of selected Films for analysis

Film	Release Year	Country	Genre	Director	Awards	Gross Worldwide
Apocalypse Now	1979	United States	Drama, War	Francis Coppola	2 Oscar Awards and another 18 wins	\$150,000,000 (Peter, 1990, p. 132)
Good Morning, Vietnam	1987	United States	Biography, Comedy, Drama, War	Barry Levinson	Nominated for 1 Oscar Award and another 7 wins	\$123,922,370
Full Metal Jacket	1987	United States	Drama, War	Stanley Kubrick	Nominated for 1 Oscar Award and another 7 wins	\$46,357,676
Indochine	1992	France	Drama, Romance, War	Régis Wargnier	1 Oscar award and another 11 wins	\$5,603,158
The Quiet American	2002	United States	Drama, Mystery, Romance, War	Phillip Noyce	Nominated for 1 Oscar Award and another 13 wins	\$27,674,124
Thi Mai	2017	Spain	Comedy	Patricia Ferreira	/	\$2,174,896

Film	Release Year	Country	Genre	Director	Awards	Gross Worldwide
Kong: skull island	2017	United States	Action, Adventure, Fantasy	Jordan Vogt-Roberts	Nominated for 1 Oscar Award and another 1 win	\$566,652,812

Table 3. Summary Table of analysed Characters in selected films by Gender and Ethnicity

Film	male characters	female characters	male characters	female characters
	Western	Western	Vietnamese	Vietnamese
Apocalypse Now	Willard - main character - U.S. Army Captain Kurtz - Green Beret colonel	Playboy playmates in the party for the U.S soldiers	Montangards indigenous tribe Vietcong	
Good Morning, Vietnam	Cronauer - main character - DJ for the U.S. Army based in Da Nang	/	Tuan or Tho - communist/ Vietcong, Cronauer's friend Other communists	Trinh - Tuan's sister, whom Cronauer likes
Full Metal Jacket	Joker - main character - a Marine war respondent based in Da Nang Pyle: a freshly enlisted marine	/	/	Vietnamese prostitutes
Indochine	Jean-Baptiste: a young French Navy officer	Elaine: main character - a French women living in Vietnam during the Indochinese epoch	Tanh: son of a royal family in Vietnam, leader of the Vietnamese nationalist movement	Camille: Elaine's adoptive daughter and Jean-Baptiste's parter
The Quiet American	Fowler: main character - British war reporter Pyle: American medical specialist	/	Hinh: Fowler's assistant	Phuong: a professional dance partner, lover of both Fowler and Pyle

Film	male characters	female characters	male characters	female characters
	Western	Western	Vietnamese	Vietnamese
Thi Mai	Andrés: a Spanish gay man that helped Carmen	Carmen: main character - a Spanish woman, who comes to Vietnam to adopt Thi Mai Elvira, Rosa: Carmen's best friends	Dan: a Spanish translator and a officer of the adoption service centre	Thi Mai: the orphaned girl
Kong: skull island	Hank Mallow: a stranded American soldier	/	Iwi indigenous tribe	

5.2. The Gender Discourse

This theme, based on a theoretical framework of postcolonial feminism, interprets how the gender and sexuality identity of Vietnamese women are viewed in Western popular culture and what they possibly reveal about the gender aspect of Vietnam's nation brand.

5.2.1. Can the Vietnamese women speak?

Starting off with images of Phuong and Trinh, what do they convey about these two women?



*Fig. 4. Silent beauty 1. Phuong and Pyle (in white, centre) are dancing together
(The Quiet American)*

The first picture is taken from *The Quiet American*. This sequence is set in a dance hall, where Phuong met Fowler, an old married English war reporter, when she still worked as a taxi dancer. Taxi dancer is a service whereby someone pays to dance with a professional, and in most cases female, dancer. After the words of her sister, Phuong is “the most beautiful girl in Saigon”. In the picture, Phuong is dancing with Pyle, a young American enthusiast, who is a new friend of Fowler. As it shows, many of other American officer also pay to pair with local female dancers. They are dressed elegantly in *ao-dai*, the Vietnamese traditional dress. In this sequence, Pyle meets Phuong for the first time and falls head over heels for her, which make them three involved in a complicated triangle. Pyle and Fowler compete with each other to have Phuong as their lover. The film is a compilation of conversations between the two men about the political movements in Vietnam, the US's affiliation with the South regime, and some times, about Phuong, how beautiful she is, how much they love her. The movie is about a

‘quiet’ American, but Phuong is the one that is quieted here. Phuong’s dreams, opinions, characteristics remain unknown to the audience, even some dispersed information about her past as a daughter of a late teacher was not given by herself, but Fowler, her English partner. We only see Phuong talks when she is in the bedroom, whispering honeyed words to her partners or asking about fleeing to London, to America, other than that we do not know much about the character of Phuong. Her quietness aptly speaks to Said’s observation of the discreet Oriental women and to Spivak’s (1988) discussion about the voiceless sulbatern. Moreover, Phuong’s dreams about migrating to the West implies certain embracement of Western supremacy, the belief that the Global West is better as a place to live than the Global South, that has been articulated in Said’s (1978) Orientalism. Accordingly, Phuong is perceived as not standing up for her country or worse, an uncritical supporter of the West invasion. I argue that this stereotyped presentation is substantially muting Vietnamese women’s political judgement and opinions. This discourse, hence, apparently attests to the patriarchy institutionalised by the colonial system that oppresses Vietnamese women’s voice and detracts their autonomy.



Fig. 5. Silent beauty 2. Cronauer sees Trinh in her English class (Good Morning, Vietnam)

The second and third figures are snapped from *Good Morning, Vietnam*. Fig. 5 is Trinh, in a white *ao-dai* listening to her English teacher, and Fig. 6 is herself with Cronauer, an American disk jockey. The movie follows the happenings of Cronauer’s mission in Vietnam. On the first day of his secondment in Vietnam, Cronauer actually sees Trinh on the street and immediately gets attracted to her, so he follows her to her classroom, and Fig. 5 captures the moment when

Cronauer looks at Trinh from outside. He later takes over her English class with the intention of getting closer to her. Cronauer eventually has a date with Trinh, as seen in Fig. 6, as he takes her and her family members to go shopping and then to the cinema. But other than an ill-fated love rendered unresolvable by a cultural clash with Cronauer, there are not much information revealed about Trinh. She appears to be very sweet but not very well spoken. Like in Fig. 6, in response to Cronauer's questions, she always smiles and on a very rare occasion, utters some incomprehensible English sentences. The audience does not know anything about Trinh regarding her background, her situation except that she is the sister of Tuan, a close friend of Cronauer; and she goes to Cronauer's English class. Trinh seems to be a decoration that adorns Cronauer's life. The stereotype of Vietnamese women is summed up by Cronauer very precisely when he tells Trinh that "Well, you know you are very beautiful and you are also very quiet." The message is conveyed as if it is unproblematic and even more of a compliment on the performance of Trinh but why are they "quiet" like that? Are they simply very closed-mouth or has their mouth been closed shut?



Fig. 6. Silent beauty 2. Cronauer and Trinh on their first date (Good Morning, Vietnam)

Looking at these Western popular culture products, we can clearly see the familiar pattern of patriarchy that feminism has been protesting against. Most of these stories are of a male's journey and adventure, and are heavily based on the experiences and the views of the male characters. Subsequently, what dominates in these films is the male's voice, while the Vietnamese female is recurrently depicted as some beauty who does not have her own voice. Furthermore, following the narrative of these films, it is plausible that the appearance of these

men is so important that it gives meaning to the existence of Vietnamese women in Western pictures. It is observable that common events characterising Vietnamese women are romance and separation, against the backdrop of historical conflict. They are the most pretty girl in town, well educated, whom no one can resist, but are always desperately stuck in some star-crossed romance with the white male characters. Life of these women as portrayed in these films, is a train of uncertainties and miseries, before they become defined by and dependent on relationships with the Western male characters. So it is arguable that the only purpose of their appearance is to polish the picture of the white male characters as there is always a Vietnamese beauty to be the last jigsaw puzzle to complete the image of a lonely, sex deprived and bewildered white male saviour. This is pointing at the Western film industry that are putting the centralisation of control over women in the hands of the white men, hence, supports Spivak (1987)'s argument that women have been treated as the peripheral and trivial Other in many societies, including Vietnam.

5.2.2. The Western male gaze's objectification of Vietnamese women

Another aspect of Western film's view of Vietnamese women can be explored by studying the camera work. Fig. 7 offers a generous display of Phuong's bosoms, looming under her lacy sleepwear. Phuong is lying on their bed, in front of Fowler, probably waiting for his attention. This scene illustrates his gaze concentrating on her nubile breasts, transmitting a sense of desire and passion that Fowler has for his lover, to the viewers.



Fig. 7. Male gaze 1. Fowler looks at Phuong, in bed. (The Quiet American)



Fig. 8. Male gaze 2. Elaine's father caresses his native female servant (Indochina)

In Indochina, Elaine and her father, Emile, moved from France to settle down in Vietnam. The film never mentions her mother but it is apparent that Elaine's father lives alone, and he has had many native female servants before but, according to Elaine, no-one has satisfied him like this "con gai"². Fig. 8 is set in Emile's bungalow, he is lying on the plank bed with his shirt unbuttoned while his favourite female servant is combing her hair, turning her bare back to him. What emerges is the juxtaposition of these two characters: an antiquated French man, a young and fresh bodily Vietnamese woman. This scene allows the viewer to see clearly the direction of the male gaze (see Rose, 2016) on the body of the local servingwoman, along the spine, his gaze and his hand harmoniously caressing her bare skin.

Leaving this group of docile domestic women and move to a more liberal and outspoken group of Vietnamese women, who sell sex and other sexual services to American soldiers.

The prostitute: Hey baby. You got girlfriend Vietnam?

Joker: Not just this minute.

*The prostitute: Well, baby, me so **horny**. Me so horny. Me love you long time. You party?*

*Joker: Yeah, we might party. **How much?***

*The prostitute: **Fifteen dollar***

*Joker: Fifteen dollars **for both of us?***

² con gai: used to indicate young Vietnamese women

The prostitute: No. Each you 15 dollar. Me love you long time. Me so horny.

*Joker: Fifteen dollar **too boo-coo**³. Five dollars each.*

*The prostitute: **Me suckee-suckee**. Me love you too much.*

Joker: Five dollars is all my mom allows me to spend.

The prostitute: Okay. Ten dollar each.

*Joker: **What do we get for ten dollars?***

*The prostitute: **Everything you want.***

Joker: Everything?

*The prostitute: **Everything.**(Full Metal Jacket)*



Fig. 9. Male gaze 3. American soldiers and a Vietnamese prostitute (Full Metal Jacket)

In Fig. 9, there are two cameras, one is of the film's director, the second camera is of an American soldier taking a photograph of another American soldier and a sexually intriguing looking prostitute. It can be said that the director's gaze captures the gaze of the American white men and magnifies it on the cinematic screen. Joker (wearing glasses) makes a pose with the prostitute for his friend to photograph, his hand on her back and she is standing very close to him, flipping her dress to show her buttocks, a typical sexually arousing gesture. In the background, there is Danang city, in its ordinary rhythm, people walking and minding their business. Prior to this scene, the hooker from across the street, who unsurprisingly

³ beaucoup (French): much, a lot

remains nameless to the viewer, comes in front of these two young officers. She opens the conversation with her choppy English “You got girlfriend Vietnam?”. The way she uses English is not grammatically correct, but she explains herself well and Joker understands that she is a sex worker, who is looking for clients. For these women, English is not their everyday language, but a survival language. They only know a couple of English words, enough for them to communicate with their main clients, American soldiers; like it was with the French soldiers during Indochina. That is why sometimes the American soldiers like Joker and his comrades babble some French words, for example “beaucoup”, to communicate with the hookers. It is recognised that the erstwhile French colony status of Vietnam does have an effect on the American’s expectations and assumptions about Vietnamese women.

Regarding gestures and body movements, this girl seems to comfortably touch her intimate parts as she expresses her “horny” sexual readiness several times. The exchange between them only pertains to the negotiation of price and prostitution service. Based on the content of their conversation, the “everything” value of this woman, on one hand, boils down to “5 dollar each”, “15 dollars” and “10 dollars each”, a symbolic number that indicates her purchasability and dispensability as a service. On the other hand, the “everything” can be perceived as the women being “so horny”, “love you long time”, “me suckee-suckee”, “love you too much” that underlines the objectification of this woman as a mere sexual entertainment.

In another sequence in *Good Morning, Vietnam*, Cronauer and his mates are having some drinks after work. As they complain about suffering sexual deprivation since their arrivals in Vietnam, when looking at the girls hanging out at the bar. Then to help his friends to have some fun, Cronauer decides to use money to attract the girls who are making out with other American GIs⁴ at the bar counter. In Fig. 10, Cronauer appears with money in his hand as he shouts at the Vietnamese girls “Oh, girls, girls, come on over. Your loss.” with a tremendous cheer from his fellows. The word “loss” is used to indicate the money these Vietnamese girls would lose if they miss him but it could be interpreted as Cronauer see them no more valuable than the amount of money that he has in his hands. The attitude that Cronauer has towards these Vietnamese female escorts is revealed by scrutinising two following details. First, he

⁴ GIs: private American soldiers in the US army.

does not bother to go and talk to them himself but literally shouts at them from afar. Second, he does not make more effort than throwing some money out and the locals easily comes to him. Thus, Cronauer's gaze in this sequence implies a disdain for Vietnamese women, as to him, they do not deserve a genuine interest, money or a lot of money is sufficient to get them do what he wants.



Fig. 10. Male gaze 4. Cronauer shouts at Vietnamese girls in the bar (Good Morning, Vietnam)

Popular culture, particularly the Western cultures, exponentially account for global representation of Vietnamese women and femininity, and as a consequence, set a standard which Vietnamese women are expected to fulfil. Thus far, through the characters of Trinh (Good Morning Vietnam) and Phuong (The Quiet American), the identity constructions of these Vietnamese women in Western films concur with the Oriental beauty stereotypes. In other words, they are the embodiment of what Said (1978) defines as nubile, and exotic women of the Global South. This further recognises the contribution of Western popular film to the persistent sexualisation and exoticism of Vietnamese women, as an institution. The camera's lens laid on the exposed body parts of Vietnamese women are evidence of Mulvey's white male gaze (see Rose, 2016), which patronises women as mere sexual attractions. This colonial white male gaze replicated in many of the sequences, directs the viewer's gaze towards the bodily Vietnamese women, to put it another way, the viewers become fixated on looking fixedly and intently in desire and excitement at Vietnamese women. From the pictures above, it can be said that Western popular films has mainstreamed the white male gaze and as

a result, turned these women into a source of willingly inviting and accessible sexual pleasure to their audience.

Or else, the white male gaze materialises Vietnamese women for white Western male's sexual needs. After a long time being domesticated for their service of sex and care-taking to the white male characters by Western films, Vietnamese women are seen on the street, working and making their own money. However, the working condition of these women is mostly related to prostitution. This points to the problem that the discursive perception of the identity of Vietnamese women is exceedingly associated with female prostitution. Are Vietnamese women prone to selling sex because of their nature or because it is the nature of the white male gaze, more generally the nature of Western films' gaze at the native women? According to postcolonial feminism, what is problematic about this is not the career these women choose to make ends meet but the colonial legacy that claims possession of Vietnamese female body throughout the plots of Western popular films. I contend that this discursive practice of Western film production puts Vietnamese women in a vicious endless circle of sexual exploitation and materialisation, as they get out of the possession of one white Western man to become a shared possession of many white Western men, and vice versa. Therefore, it is imperative to acknowledge the role of Western film industry as an institutionalised structure of patriarchy and colonisation in reinforcing the objectification and sexualisation of women, particularly Vietnamese women.

5.2.3. Colonial representation of women

The following image shows a general idea of how Vietnamese women look like through the eyes of Cronauer, who just touches down in Saigon from Greece for his mission in Danang in *Good Morning, Vietnam* movie. On the way from the airport to the broadcasting station, Cronauer is curiously checking every single women walking on the street. After a moment of excitement of seeing so many beautiful women, he gets confused because they are all dressed in white Vietnamese traditional costume and the iconic cone hat. The outfit is actually relevant to that specific time of Vietnamese history but the identical depiction of Vietnamese women is telling about the Western way of regarding the women from the Global South as one homogeneous group. This Western way of treating all women of colour as the Others,

who are all alike and cannot be distinguished is criticised in the work of several postcolonial feminists (Prasad, 2017; McLoughlin, 2017; Mehta, 2000)



Fig. 11. Colonial presentation of women 1. Vietnamese women's outfit (Good Morning, Vietnam)



Fig. 12. Colonial presentation of women 2. Eliane's working outfit (Indochina)

The colonial discourse of gender as in Spivak's (1988) discussion about otherness, is highlighted in Indochina, where Vietnamese women are hovering at the backdrop providing contrast to highlight the determined, powerful and self-governing white female character, Eliane. Identified as women but Eliane is no less powerful than her male counterparts, namely Jean-Baptiste in Fig. 12. She is reserved and forceful, uncontroversially fitting into a matriarchal figure of the Indochinese epoch. She is a woman of herself, a gritty and earthy

woman who manages to stay serene and lucid in the turmoil of the country. Eliane has full control of her social and private life, she finds her own indulgence in temporary sexual affairs and opium's smokes and thus, are liberated from traditional gender norms. Fig. 12 depicts Elaine in her working outfit, blue chemise and beige trousers, she swings her hands comfortably and confidently while affirming her position as the boss of the workers behind her.

Though this discourse conveys that Western women is a dominant figure, Eliane's appearance and gender expression as seen in Fig. 12 again point at the enduring institution that celebrates the superior masculine, patriarchal power. She is often dressed in menswear pants and chemises when doing her monitoring trip in the rubber plantation. That is to say, Western women are more controlling and assertive to the point that their representation resembles men or it is adopting a male look that makes power more accessible and achievable for Western women. I posit that it is still an expression of the patriarchal system, also in the West, that consistently oppresses and devalues femininity of all races.

Indochina tells a story about the triangle amongst Eliane Devries, her adoptive daughter of Vietnamese descendants, Camille and a junior French naval officer, Jean-Baptiste, who is later eliminated by the French authority. Compared to Eliane's menacing solid presence, Camille is a demure and fragile girl, who needs care from Eliane and protection from Jean-Baptiste. There is a crippling lack of depth to the characterisation of Camille as the focus of the camera has been either on her Asian half naked and fertile body or her epochal love at the first sight for Jean-Baptiste. Camille's bare chests are deliberately shown twice. One time is when Jean-Baptiste find her faint on the street during an armed rebellion in Saigon. He brings her to a safe place and takes care of her, for instance, he washes Camille's body in Fig. 13, Camille then wakes up, sees him for the first time and falls in love with him because she thinks he saves her life.



Fig. 13. Camille's naked body 1. The first encounter with Jean-Baptiste (Indochina)



Fig. 14. Camille's naked body 2. Before the wedding with Tanh. (Indochina)

The second time is the day before she is supposed to get married with Tanh, her childhood friend. In both of the events, Camille gives the audience a sense of vulnerability, she is unconscious of and does not know about what Jean-Baptiste is doing to her, and later she faces an arranged marriage, which she does not get to decide for herself. It should also be noted that Elaine's body never gets revealed in the film even during her intimate moments with Jean-Baptiste.

The opposite character constructions of Eliane and Camille properly demonstrates Spivak's (1988) argument that the Eurocentrism sustained by the legacy of colonialism, has been belittling and diminishing the image of women of colour on screen. This attests to the failure of Western feminism as albeit the progresses that it makes, women of colours are still left out,

as proved by the previous findings, Asian women's body is still the object of sexualisation in many products of Western film industry. Furthermore, the colonial representation of women revealed in Indochina seems to agree with postcolonial feminist's explanation of the interconnected nature of gender and race discourse (see McLoughlin, 2017) that doubles the discrimination against Vietnamese women or the Others' women in general.

5.3. The Inferior Others discourse

Western popular pictures offer the audience an appreciated source of information about Vietnam nation brand. This theme is going to testify to the sustained colonial stereotypes of Vietnamese people, capitalised by the Western film industry and subsequently, explore how they navigate the audience's perception of Vietnam nation brand.

5.3.1. The invisible Vietnamese



Fig. 15. The invisible Vietnamese 1. The massacre in Phat Diem (The Quiet American)

Fig. 15, captured in *The Quiet American*, shows an abundance of corpses of Vietnamese innocents after an atrocious massacre in Phat Diem. The camera slowly gazes at the dead bodies, one after another, gradually the whole scene is immersed in an eerie, lifeless atmosphere. The colour of their bodies and their clothes blend in the background, renders them even more invisible. Fig. 16 shows another aspect of invisibility, that is the invisibility of Vietnamese people's right to live. This figure belongs to a sequence in *Apocalypse Now*, in which Vietnamese innocents, the indiscriminate targets of US army's vicious gunshots and

napalm bombing, are screaming, rushing outside of their burning compound to find their way to safety. Thus, it can be said that through the Western film makers' camera, Vietnamese people remain anonymous and their death remains passive. They are often shown when they are being killed, and what the audience sees is just the shadows of their collapsed corpses. They have no face, no name, and no voice. I put forth that sequences like this steal of Vietnamese characters their chances to interact with the viewers, to tell the story from the Vietnam's side, simply because none of them survives to speak for themselves.



Fig. 16. The invisible Vietnamese 2. The mass shooting (Apocalypse Now)

The summary of the characters in the analysed Western films, Table 3, makes it clear that although these films were selected because they feature Vietnam, they still have a severe dearth of Vietnamese people's representation. Moreover, due to the fact that there is a serious disparity between Western and Vietnamese characters assigned with a speaking role, the stories in these Western popular pictures are mostly told by the English, the American, the French and the Spanish, basically the ones who speak and not by the Vietnamese, the ones who are silenced. Followers of CDA assert that that knowledge is not objective, it exists in favour of and because of the ones in power (van Dijk, 1998; Fairclough, 1995). I further contend that the silence and invisibility of Vietnamese characters form a non-linguistic discourse, which is contributing to the colonial discursive practice of silencing and erasing the racial Others. Furthermore, since the discourse on Vietnam people in studied Western films is charged with opinions, expressions and impressions entrenched in Eurocentric thinking and ideologies, I argue that this discourse persists in securing and promoting the Western colonial

stereotypes of Vietnam as a nation while suppresses dissents. Thus, I argue that this discourse poses a challenge to Vietnam's effort to communicate its own nation branding.

5.3.2. Vietnamese people as tool



Fig. 17. Vietnamese people as tool 1. Elaine and her coolie (Indochina)

In Fig. 17, there are 4 people in the front, 3 people including Elaine are standing, looking down at the miserable coolie in his ragged shirt, while two more people are working in the background. The male labourer is bowing down to the ground, begging for Elaine's pardon after his intention to flee is discovered. Elaine imperturbably sees him as "her children", who is small and needs to be taken care of, and he submissively calls her his "father and mother", which can also be interpreted as he is giving Elaine the power to control and discipline himself.

*Elaine: "You wanted to run away. You made me hit you. A **mother** doesn't like to hit **her children**"*

*The man: "You are **my father and mother**"*

From the picture, it can be perceived that the man looks so small and disadvantaged, who probably represent many of the labourers maltreated by their French bosses during the Indochinese epoch. They come to the rubber plantations as healthy men, looking for an opportunity to change their own and their families' lives for the better, but not many of them make it till the end of their labour due to the severe working condition. They have to work

early in the morning, the road was even so foggy and dim that they need the head lamp, the ones that use oil, to walk to and to work in the plantation with, as see in Fig. 17, and later they continue to work for long hours in the factory to process the rubber. The way Vietnamese labours work for Eliane and her father effectively reflects the purpose of what a former colony is supposed to do for France, the ‘mother’ nation. In other words, grappling with the colonial context, the mother figure of France to Indochine is naturalised through the identity construction of Eliane. In Elaine’s view, Vietnamese people are destined to be her coolies, her labourers, and her children, who are not as strong or as courageous as herself and her father. Eliane’s dotting on Camille also romanticises an exploitative relationship between her and Camile’s family properties. So, to Elaine and other French colonisers, enslaved Vietnamese are tools that serve their colonisation of Indochina.

During the Vietnam war with the America, the South and the North of Vietnam were separated and the American government endorsed a puppet regime in the South, that is why the majority of these film were set in Hue, Danang, and Saigon. For that reason, the plots involved more Southern Vietnamese people, who are often portrayed as the obedient servants to the Western characters. Hinh in Fig. 18 is a byword. Hinh is a very capable man, he speaks fluent English and has a wide network that could sort things out for Fowler timely. Fowler highly appreciates him for his talent and responsibility but Hinh's role never gets out of the stereotypical local wingman that eases the life of the colonisers.



Fig. 18. Vietnamese people as tool 2. Hinh, in white - Fowler’s assistant (The Quiet American)



Fig. 19. Vietnamese people as tool 3. Dan (first, left) and the Spanish group (Thi Mai)

Dan works for the adoption centre as an escort translator for the Spanish group in *Thi Mai*. In Fig. 19, he is at the hotel, confronting Carmen and her friends with his disappointment as they lied to him and faked the legal papers so that they could adopt Thi Mai and bring her to Spain. That is to say, many years later, in a more cosmopolitan context, the role of Vietnamese people remains unchanged, an odd-jobber whose purpose is to solve problems for the Spanish tourists. The prejudices that frame Vietnamese people as “stupid”, “the bottom of the tadpole” still lingers, as Dan points out. Thus, I put forwards that colonial mindset continues to establish an unequal relationship between the locals and tourists, which authorises the Western tourists to look down their nose at local people.

Throughout these films, stereotypes of local people have never tired of enslaving Vietnamese in order to serve the Westerners’ goals of colonising Indochina or eradicating the Northern Vietcong threat. These grand Western film productions highlight the submission of Vietnam to the West, symbolised by the bows that Vietnamese worker give to Elaine when being punished for desertion in the rubber plantation in Indochina. Later during the Vietnam war, the aligned South Vietnamese men always run after their French or American master and wait for their orders. They are recruited as handy, helpful assistant that smooth out the business of Westerners in the country because they know the local language and people. I put forward that this representation does not counter but feeds into the inferiority - superiority dichotomy between the coloniser and the colonised that Said (1978) and Prasad (2017) pointedly record.

This representation, more dangerously, is in the service of the propaganda that the local South Vietnamese are supportive of the heroic acts performed by American soldiers in Vietnam. The

belief that Vietnamese people are in great need of these bigger and stronger men to save them speaks to Benz's (1997 in Prasad, 2017) concern about the weak, unenlightened, inept stereotypes which colonial discourse subjects to. For instance, in *Full Metal Jacket*, Joker and his fellows would have not killed people if “*Asians boys ought not to do [it] themselves*”. Every uncelebrated decision made by the American, happens to be for the sake of the local people, because they are too feeble to save themselves. As demonstrated previously in Fig. 15 & 16, the shocking shots of gunshots, bomb dropping, tears and blood also leave the audience to a heavy sense of pity for the defenceless Vietnamese people.

Furthermore, in *The Quiet American*, albeit Pyle's effort to distinguish Americans and their ideologies from that of ‘colonialists’, I recognise that the ways in which he victimises Vietnamese civilians resonates with the ways in which Elaine exploits her coolies on the rubber plantation. The death of thousands Vietnamese civilians caused by Pyle's order is just a necessary sacrifice to make, in order to exterminate the existence of communist and, in Pyle's words, to bring Vietnam “*freedom to choose*”, which according to Fowler, “*a very Western word*” that is incomprehensible to uneducated Vietnamese people, who “*vote and elect Ho Chi Minh*”.

Looking at how Pyle reasons out his order to explode the most populated streets in Saigon and took away lives of Vietnamese citizens, we can see reminiscences of Orientalism (Said, 1978)

*Let's just look at Phuong. There's **beauty**. There's **daughter of a professor. Taxi dancer. Mistress of an older European man**. That pretty well describes the whole country, isn't it? [...] **we are here to save Vietnam from all of that.** (Pyle, *The Quiet American*)*

This paragraph encapsulates Vietnam in an Oriental light, using an identity of a Vietnamese woman as a metaphor. First, Phuong's beauty refers to the femininity of the Oriental natives. Second, regarding her jobs, a professional dance partner indicates the low social class of Vietnamese people. Third, Phuong's “mistress” status forces Vietnam into submission to “an older European man”, which can be interpreted as the U.S or France.

And like other imperialists and colonialists, *the quiet American*, Pyle as well as his peers in *Full Metal Jacket* and *Good morning, Vietnam*, firmly and perhaps, innocently, believes that they are in Vietnam for a brighter future of this country. This sounds like a solid justification

of their intervention in Vietnam, however, following postcolonial advocates (Prasad, 2017; Said, 1978), if we look closer at the construction of this discourse, we can identify latent colonial elements. In deed, this discourse is constituted of words like: “save lives.”, “help”, “fighting for your country”, “give”, which positions Vietnamese people as the ones desperate for the mercy of the U.S to protect them from the ugly bad Vietcong. Hence, I acknowledge these dormant colonial attitudes and support postcolonial CDA’s argument (see Said, 1978 and Fairclough, 1995) that Orientalism has instilled into Western films’ politics and gradually into our society through the discursive practice of consuming and disseminating Western popular culture products.

5.3.3. The primitive Vietnamese natives

The legitimatisation of the way French colonisers behave towards the Vietnamese on their quest to imperialism, stems from the prejudice that Vietnamese people are an uneducated, savage and backward nation, and it is the coloniser’ mission to appropriate and civilise them. According to Elaine, the fact that Camille and Tanh, son of a royal family are exposed to French culture and language, which can be regarded as a form of civility, qualifies them to be the first generation of “Indo-Chinese elite”.



Fig. 20. Civilisation. Elaine teaches Camille to dance

However, I find it controversial that the more local people are exposed to the so-called civilised Western culture, the more uncivilised they become. By way of illustration, in *Apocalypse Now*, *Kong: skull islands*, there is no such attempt as civilisation; rather, the

Vietnamese people are largely the target of cultural appropriation. On one hand, the Western films represent Vietnamese as indigenous people, to whom fashion, education and hospital have no values. The tribal villagers always perform some ceremonial rituals that appear nonsense and barbarous to the American soldiers. For example, the Montagnards celebrate and dance in a ferocious and bloody sequence of religious persecution. In *Kong: skull islands*, the Iwi are described by Hank Mallow as those who do not speak and never smile; I discern that their uncanny silence once again reproduce the invisibility of Vietnamese people as postulated in the previous section. On the other, the Westerners are neatly dressed, well-educated, properly medicated, and rationally articulate with a decent accent. So in a way, native people never get to be as smart, elegant, wise, and cultivated as the West, their positions remain unchanged, at the bottom of the social hierarchy in the colonisers' eyes.

Further, even more telling of Eurocentrism and primitivism is the construction of white masters of the indigenous tribes in *Apocalypse Now* and *Kong: skull islands*.



Fig. 21. Primitivism 1. The Montagnards (Apocalypse Now)



Fig. 22. Primitivism 2. The Iwi (Kong: skull island)

While Colonel Kurtz is the fitting embodiment of the superior West compared to the submissive, docile natives; Western supremacy and imperialism echoes in the form of (neo-)colonialism in modern King Kong movie with Hank Marlow living with the silent Iwi. Through the ways in which the relationships between Kurtz and the Montagnards, Hank Marlow and the Iwi, are played out, it is questionable that how these two white bewildered men, with little to no knowledge of the native's language and culture, are still able to surpass the natives to control the tribe and get them to accommodate their requests? Actually, it is not difficult to recognise that it is because the worshipping of whiteness and of the West has been institutionalised and mainstreamed by Western film industry. Such association is potentially an embodiment of primitivism and Eurocentrism.

I postulate that these replicated depictions of the natives next to that of American soldiers, again recapitulate the Eurocentric binary - the superior West and the inferior Others. Prasad (2017) holds the view that the discourse of Eurocentrism thinks highly of the West as standards for social politeness and etiquette while trivialises the Others. I maintain that Western films actually functions similarly to the colonial era freak shows, ridiculing the Others as primitive, savage and peculiar for the entertainment of the West. It might be worth mentioning my perspective as a cultural insider, for me, they are just ordinary Vietnamese ethnic people living more of a tranquil and inward life in remote countryside and highlands. Thus, I argue that this discourse exercises and reinforces the discriminatory social practices on the grounds of race and sustains the disrespect towards the local culture.

5.3.4. Vietnamese people as the enemy



Fig. 23. Anti-war movement in the US (*Kong: skull island*)

The majority of the films make reference to the anti-war protest in the US with scenes of people marching on the streets, raising “End the War in Vietnam”, “War NO MORE!” banners and chanting, implicitly indicating the politics of the movies as seen in Fig. 23 below, a scene from the opening of *Kong: skull island*. But are these films changing the way Americans and the world think about the Vietnamese and the war?

Apocalypse Now and *Full Metal Jacket* describe the nuances and process of dehumanisation of the American soldiers, which is a pertinent subject shared by American movies about the Vietnam War. Referring to the characters of Pyle and Joker in *Full Metal Jacket*, these marines start off being the good boys of loyal American families, but their sanity has been deteriorating since they get involved in the Vietnam war. The characters of Kurtz, Willard, and other American soldiers in *Apocalypse Now* are also going down that road as they sink into the demonic indoctrination of killing, sex and alcohol abuse in the battlefield of Vietnam. Critics see the focus on the war’s consequences related to dehumanising the American soldiers as a righteous anti war message but at the same time, I argue that this opens a way to escape their responsibility by framing the American soldiers and French colonisers as victims of the war. These films deliver a clear message that the American they see as heartless killing machines are not truly who they are. It is noticeable that these Western films highlight that the American men get involved in order to defeat the Northern Vietnamese Army, the Vietcong; and they would have had not been to Vietnam if the Vietcong are not there. Thus, it becomes

apparent that these films have created a discourse not of opposing the war itself, but of opposing loss of American lives and of opposing the Vietnamese's resistance and military aggression aimed at the US soldiers. Consequently, there emerges a discourse which frames Vietnamese people as the ultimate enemy, whose intention in the war directly results in the dehumanisation of the American soldiers.

Moreover, strong evidence of Said's (1978) the Others discourse is constantly present in the inhumane and deadly portrayal of Vietnamese nationalists. This theme persistently comes up, for example in *Apocalypse Now*, as Kurtz says to Willard that the Viet Cong "*had come and hacked off every inoculated arm*" of babies in the village to reject Western assimilation. If we stop here, then the message is pretty linear and in line with foregoing discourses on uncivilised Vietnamese, but Kurtz as well judges them to be

*"... the **genius**—they will to do that—they were stronger than we ... they fought with their hearts ... they had **the strength** to do that.... We need men who will use their **primordial instincts to kill** without feeling, without passion, without judgment, because it's judgment that defeats us."* (Kurtz, *Apocalypse Now*)

Suddenly, everything seems to be reversed, the discourse that this text constructs seemingly does not support what have been argued before. Through the content of this text, Vietnamese people are found to be "genius", "stronger", "had the strength", "kill without feeling" and no longer the incapable, emotional Vietnamese. This adds complexity to the discourse on Vietnamese soldiers and pose a question: Are Vietnamese people the unbeatable, evil enemy? Or are they the weak, desperate, innocents sub-humans? I will take another example from the character of Tuan in *Good Morning, Vietnam* to clarify this question.

Amongst the Vietnamese male appears on the studied films, Tuan is one of the most vocal character. Tuan and Cronauer get to know each other in an English class that Cronauer is in charge of. At the beginning, Tuan shows Cronauer around in his city, gets him to taste local foods, they do normal things as other friends would do together. Their friendship progresses after Tuan saves Cronauer from a bombing attack at Jimmy Wah's. Later, Tuan comes just in time when Cronauer's jeep is exploded and manages to rescue him out of a dangerous zone. To this point, the Tuan has been playing the useful helper that adores and assists a white Western man during their colonising mission in Saigon. Then, the dynamics between them

starts to change once Cronauer learns that Tuan is actually a member of the communist party. In the last sequence of the film, Cronauer rushes to find Tuan and yells his name in anger.

Adrian Cronauer : [to Tuan hiding from him] I know about the bombing, Sparky. No wonder you hauled ass. You were my friend. I trusted you.

[silence]

Adrian Cronauer : YOU HEAR ME?

Tuan : [hidden] You a naive man, Cronauer. You take a stupid side. Now you have to go. You're better off.

*Adrian Cronauer : That's not the fucking point! You understand me? I fought to get you into that bar! And then you blow the fucking place up! Listen... **I gave you my friendship... and my trust!** And now they tell me that **my best friend is the goddamn enemy!***

*Tuan : [in tears, showing himself] ENEMY? **What is enemy?** You killing my own people so many miles from your home. **We not the enemy! You the enemy!***

Adrian Cronauer : [tersely] You used me to kill two people! Two people DIED in that fucking bar!

*Tuan : Big fucking deal! My mother is dead. And my older brother, who be 29 years old, he dead! Shot by Americans! My neighbour, dead! His wife, dead. **WHY? Because we're not human to them! We're only little Vietnamese...** and I'm stupid enough to save your bullshit life at An Lac.(Good Morning, Vietnam)*

At the first glance, this text is just another discourse contributing to the colonial oppression that denies any sense of autonomy or agency that resist the American armed intervention in Vietnam. Tuan, a symbolisation of a Vietcong, is framed as a criminal and a terrorist, who jeopardises American national integrity and threatens the sustainability of Western culture and civility expansion. No matter how many times Tuan has saved Cronauer's life, what lasts is his image as a betrayer, an opportunist that make use of Cronauer's friendship. Cronauer castigates him for being disloyal to their entrusted friendship by being a North Vietnamese sympathiser. Not only in *Good Morning, Vietnam*; but also in other films of this war in Vietnam genre, 'V.C' and 'Vietcong' are visually associated with scrawny, cunning, sneaky

creatures, consummately adapted to the jungle. Portrayals of Tuan and other Vietcong operatives enact the discourse on otherness as the cruel, wicked elusive super enemy.

At the second glance, the content of this dialogue sums up very well the whole discourse on the inferior colonised Others presented by Western films. Said's (1987) critiques of Western supremacy that marginalises the Others resembles Tuan's confrontation with Cronauer about who is the 'enemy', whose death is a bigger 'deal'. Here, there are two different discourses of "enemy". To Cronauer, "enemy" equates to "the bombing", "blow the fucking place up", and "kill two people", while to Tuan, "enemy" are the Americans that shot his own people, including his mother, his older brother, his neighbours "many miles from your home". From the beginning of the movie *Good Morning, Vietnam* till this sequence, the situation of Tuan's families and friends have not been revealed, thus, they are invisible to Cronauer and to the viewers, so are their sufferings and loss. At the same time, what is central to the movie is the story of Cronauer and his fellows, basically, the American soldiers. What the viewers see and hear is what Cronauer believes and tells. I argue that once the Western film industry make Cronauer's definition of the enemy the only accessible discourse about the Vietnamese soldiers, Cronauer's accusation of Tuan or any other Vietnamese soldiers would always sustain as legitimate. Furthermore, Cronauer's ignorance of the death of Tuan's families and neighbours, and of Vietnamese people as a whole, reveals the indifference of Western supremacy towards the colonised Others.

Going back to the question about what is the real depiction of the Vietnamese soldiers, I assert that both of the scenarios are possible. I concur with Bhabha (1994) regarding the ambivalence about colonial knowledge of the Others. So far, the analysis has continually spotlighted the ambivalence that accompanied the representation of Vietnamese and Western knowledge in general. This discernible duality of Vietnamese identity, namely impressive/impotent, sinister/inert, fearful/dangerous, innocents/killing materials; resonates with Bhabha's notion of opposite double images of the Others. Bhabha concludes that such ambivalence and ambiguity discursively deny the legitimate presence of the Others, subsequently exert control and wield power of the colonisers. That being the case, I argue that either being the sinister enemy or the obedient sidekick, at the end of the day, Vietnam is still the bad guys under control of and unequal to the West. There always exists a more humane, smarter, kinder, and more civilised image of Westerners next to the "not human" Vietnamese.

Therefore, I want to point at the fallibility of the Western knowledge of the Others and bring attention to the contemporary Western knowledge based knowledge on nation branding of the Others.

5.4. Concluding discussion of the findings

The filmic presentation and distribution of the colonised Vietnam during a period that encompasses the French colonisation to the independence of Vietnam from the military intervention of the America as a united nation on 30 April 1975, carry heavy weight in the postcolonial discourse of Vietnam's nation brand. This research collects and compiles visual and verbal depictions of people, landscape in Western Vietnam war films, including films that are based on the events surrounding the French colonisation in Indochina and the Vietnam war. Although my original aim was not to focus solely on the wars in Vietnam, it emerged in the early stages of data collection that wartime has historically been and remains the single dominant theme in the Western film industry's portrayal and representation of Vietnam.

This war film genre is of critical relevance to the investigation of how Western popular culture reframes Vietnam's nation brand. Through the lens of genre, Vietnam has always been a war zone. It is piercingly clear that these films' in-depth exploration are highly cognisant of the subject of French colony, and Vietnam War, which makes the history of Vietnam and America known to the world, but it is also the only knowledge that the world has about Vietnam. In the established memories of many television watcher generations, in Vietnam, a place they have never been, time has stopped at the military conflict with the America.

Since the rise of Vietnam war film trend in the 1980s, the nostalgic tendencies in this film genre has repeatedly set back the calendar to the 1960s in Vietnam. Popular culture coverage of Vietnam has been inundating public consciousness with detestation, trauma and sorrow of warfare in Vietnam, thus, immortalises the Vietnam war in public's memory. The audience is frequently transported to the thick, the brutality of war and engulfed by the battlefield agony of the common soldiers. Vietnam is depicted as a strange country, who has nothing to offer but a jungle full of killings and death. On screen, Vietnamese people have never stepped out the war that ceased 40 years ago and the modern Vietnam scarcely exists in spite of the fact that Vietnam has recovered from the consequences of war and has started to prosper, as

reported with impressive economic development indicators (Vanham, 2018). Like a Vietnam-war writer and academic Viet Thanh Nguyen aptly explains:

“...while the United States lost the war, in fact, it won the war in memory on most of the world’s cultural front outside of Vietnam, dominating as it does movie making, books publishing, fine art, and the production of historical archives.”

While during the war, Vietnam lost its resources and people, after the war, the presentation of Vietnam in these Western films have been costing it forty years, and still counting, of existence and of effort to rebuilding the country. And in the future, the new release of this genre is anticipated to continue widening and making it impossible to close this time gap. I argue that it is this time gap that makes Vietnamese primitive, backwards, uncivilised, the literal people of yesterday.

The central focus on American soldiers and French colonisers does not only warrant the invisibility of Vietnamese people but further enables the legacy of Orientalism and colonialism. They remain unidentified, no name and mostly hidden during the course of the movie. The face of these North Vietnamese Army (NVA) or Vietcong is shown only once they approach the Western characters. There are always two sides to the story, but the silence and visibility of both Vietnamese men and women in Western popular culture makes it so easier for the audience to forget about their existence and their opinions about the war. The audience of Western popular pictures is eventually deceived into ignoring the fact that Vietnamese are also human and not the mere object of the Western gaze. The killing of Vietnamese people is happening in silence just as the way Vietnamese character lives. This silence thematically speaks volumes about the ways in which the Western films’ makers regard the Vietnamese as unimportant. Given the unequal representation of Vietnam and Vietnamese community and individuals, my use of CDA then begs the question whether or not these Western films become the ultimate discourse constituent of the public’s knowledge about Vietnam’s nation brand attributes. To an intended popular audience of these moving images, these colonial discourses are what they perceive as Vietnam and Vietnamese people. The wars in Vietnam become the only discourse about Vietnam’s nation brand that is disseminated by the Western films and received by the viewers. The perception of Vietnam’s nation brand in Western popular culture is adhered to and preserving the colonial ideologies. The complex layers and

nuances of Vietnam's nation brand identity are encapsulated in the colonial stereotypes of the Oriental Other.

The stereotypes of non-Western local people and places thoroughly played out in Western popular movies rest on a colonial perspective and each of the film has been adding its own elements to many colonial stereotypes of Vietnam nation brand. If one could draw an analogy between the construction of Vietnamese and Western characters, it becomes clear that the Western popular culture takes pains to create a steep contrast between them. By constructing the Vietnamese people as the enemy who kills, the friend who betrays, the server who disobeys, the villager who whimpers, the girl who self prostitutes, the Western films recapitulate the Eurocentric binary 'the West and the Others', thus reinforce the Western colonisation of the communication process of Vietnam's nation brand.

Examples from these films reveal the colonial discourse that makes ways for the male and colonial gaze to relentlessly monitor, appropriate, and patronise the Other (wo)men's own behaviour. These films tick all the boxes of cliché concerning Oriental women, speaking pidgin French and English, sometimes intelligibly, wearing clothes exposing their curves and figures, the object of sexual pleasure and servility amongst the American troops. In studying the effects of film production on gender representation, I discern that the patriarchy of popular culture institution exercising power over non-Western nation by getting viewers involved in the adoption of the male gaze magnified through the screen.

Furthermore, through the gaze of Western popular culture, it becomes and remains a common misconception that Vietnam is a battle field, a jungle with the Vietnamese communists lurking in the darkness for a chance to take over the country. From a nation branding perspective, it is posited that this gaze bears important implication for the tourist's gaze over the image of Vietnam. With regard to what nation branding scholars (Martínez- Expósito, 2017; Loftsdóttir, Kjartansdóttir & Lund, 2017) have discussed, as elaborated in the literature review (Chapter III), tourist's gaze influences the expectations of tourists which is a very crucial input to the facilitation of tourist's activities. It can be inferred that the prime tourist's gaze at Vietnam and Vietnamese people are underpinned by the West's (neo)colonialist and imperialist strategy, that foreground and take part in reproducing Oriental and colonial stereotypes and prejudices about non-Western countries. Therefore, we should be aware that the reproduction of these

distorted filmic portrayals and later, nation branding practices contribute to the relentless selection, erasure, and exclusion the historical and cultural versions of the country that does not conform to the tourist's gaze. And this goes against the mission of nation branding, which is to engender racial diversity and cultural richness.

6. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

6.1. Discussion and implications of this study

The primary aim of this thesis has been to examine to what extent colonial ideologies have an impact on “how colonial mindset influences Western film industry’s construction of non-Western nation brands”. This has been done by analysing 5 American films, 1 French film, and 1 Spanish film, to chart the central discourse themes to the nation brand image of Vietnam. Through an adoption of Fairclough (1995)’s Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model, I have sought the link between the identified discourses, Western knowledge, and the power of colonialism. Moreover, I have addressed the discursive practice of Western popular film industry that enacts the (re)production and institutionalisation of the Eurocentric mindset as well as the colonial ideologies about Vietnam’s nation brand. The following section offers discussion about the implications of this thesis for the nation branding of non-Western countries, meanwhile gives suggestions for addressing the limitations of this thesis.

6.1.1. Implications for nation branding discipline

Nation branding practitioners and tourism industry eagerly favours the ideas of engaging with unproblematic popular culture products but key findings from this research make a substantive argument that the knowledge produced by the studied films is feeding into the Oriental/colonial perceptions of the non-Western nation brand.

Findings from this study indicate that the non-West has been mostly and persistently branded by Western popular film industry. The inequality of power leads to the inequality of voices. Such inequalities become more evident, especially in countries with a small and young popular cultural industry, where there is a serious dichotomy between a few infamous local movies and a plethora of big-budget and star-led foreign productions. In fact, the most vocal accounts have been given by the Western media, counting American Hollywood and European film industry. By way of illustration, stories about Indochinese epoch, the Vietnam war and the aftermath have been relentlessly recounted from the West side. As a result, these non-Western countries as a tourist destination are not only advertised and branded by the

official communication strategy of their own government but also by Hollywood movies or Western popular culture at large.

What's more, nation branding practitioners should be conscious that these films present a Western film makers' subjective interpretation of non Western nation brand image. The same thing happens to the racial representation and the illustration of the relationship between racial characters and white characters in Western popular culture films. Looking at Western popular cultural films through this postcolonial lens, it is clear that they, subconsciously, reanimate these colonial experiences, in which the non-Western countries and their people are always the weaker, the clown if not the savage, exotic; in contrast to the stronger, smarter, and civilised West. In other words, these movies are feeding into the assumptions about the colonised Others. It is true that Hollywood movies have brought the world's attention to these countries, but at the same time, they also disseminate and mainstream an American/Eurocentric stereotypical viewpoint about them.

At a strategic communication level, the findings of this study suggest that, to a large extent, these prevailing Western popular culture films are the most accessible representations of the brand of Vietnam as a nation in the last 40 years on screen. These films are a second hand experience the audience has with the war and more generally, Vietnam. These films maintain archival values in accumulating the collective memory of the Vietnam's nation brand, and thus, according to Dinnie (2015) and Kaneva (2011), are paramount in their popular cultural legacy in defining the nation brand image. Throughout the West's global expansion, Western popular films contribute to reviving and reinforcing cultural Orientalism as "the Western way of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said, 1978, pp. 222-224). On top of that, a generation of movie watchers whose knowledge of a non-Western country comes from the images and texts used in popular films make these films become a discursive practice that retains and reproduces colonialism and Eurocentrism.

This thesis provides a better understanding of the implications of Western popular films on the present sociocultural practice, which might affect the viewers' expectations or cultural stereotypes of non-Western nation brand images and identities. The discourse of the Others, in light of the prolonged colonial experiences, influences not only the Global South but also the Global North. But for the Global South, Western popular culture's attention to colonial centre-

periphery hierarchies underpin the preferences of tourist activities, the employment of cheap labour, and the exploitation of resources by the Global North. Dinnie (2015) further stresses that a nation branding strategy must be sensible of the existing perceptions about the country and promptly intervene to avoid "historically skewed and stereotypical imagery" that may harm or dilute the current nation brand image (p. 71). In order to cope with the inadequate nation brand image authored by the Western world, it is requisite to possess a long-term, strategic promotion of the nation brand that is aware of the effects and consequences of Western popular culture to either take advantage of the positive ones or attenuate the negative ones. Globalisation and internationalism entails the proliferation of culture exchange and immigration, which have been increasing exportation of non-Western popular culture. Therefore, I suggest that effort should be put into mulling over the complex connotations of the representation of the non-Western's nation branding and more importantly, making it possible to reverse the simplistic viewpoint of Western movies through the lens of postcolonialism and CDA.

In conclusion, to postcolonialism, the Western colonial/imperial past is palpably present, it did have and is still having profound consequences for the economic, political, ideological and cultural spheres, in both the empires and the former colonies. Such consequence is considered at cost to the nation brand identity and image of the Others, the non-Western community, collectively and individually.

6.1.2. Theoretical implication

This study contributes to the academic field of strategic communication with key findings that illustrate how colonialism is relevant and needed as an approach to study the practice of nation branding communication. This research also urges an awareness of a gap in scholars' understanding of the communication of non-Western nation brands. By historicising the legacy of colonialism in Western films, this thesis empowers researchers to challenge their own perception of nation brand, and what it is constituent of. The current practice of nation branding through popular culture needs to be changed. Though the findings of this qualitative research are drawn from one empirical case, it serves as a stepping stone for more integration of postcolonial ideas into the development of nation branding theoretical frameworks. As a result, it leads to possibilities for further research, which will be outlined in the next section.

6.2. Limitations and Avenues for future research

Finally, a number of important limitations and recommendations for further research direction need to be considered. First, the most important limitation lies in the fact that a hybridity of nation branding and post colonialism is rare to a majority of scholars and researchers. As observed by Kaneva (2011) and Acharya & Rahman (2016) the current body of nation branding literature mostly revolves around branding for tourism, marketing and commercial purpose. It is well comprehended that the utmost purpose of nation branding is to strengthen the reputation of the nation as an attraction for talents, visitors, investors and its own citizens. However, I put forth that nation branding practices and theories have been heavily dependent on European and American ideologies, that make themselves an embodiment of the (neo-)colonialism and Orientalism in the academic institution of strategic communication. As a researcher, I have encountered difficulties in finding the contextually relevant articles for my research, and I believe many other researchers who come from outside of these two camps can relate.

Secondly, the findings from this study can benefit from different perspectives of other non-Western viewers. Therefore, I suggest that the problems addressed by this research to be studied, with suitable adjustments, in other former colonies to enrich our understanding about the impact of Western popular culture on the nation branding process of these countries. This will allow non-Western nation branding scholars and strategists to create a sharing network that counterbalances the current Eurocentric condition of this discipline.

Thirdly, the study did not evaluate the points of views of other stakeholders. This study departs from a perspective of a cultural insider but living and studying abroad, thus, I argue that an investigation of viewpoints of other cultural insiders, like residents and tourism management would add valuable insights into participation of different stakeholders in the reproduction of colonial stereotypes of the nation brand image. What I also find worth considering is the perspectives of Western viewers themselves because they are the target audience of the Western popular culture as well as the target of the nation branding projects of the non-West. Therefore, I propose to base on the findings of this research as the theoretical foundation, conduct a qualitative research in three stages: first, delineate a number of films that are popular for Western viewers; second, run group discussions together with movie

viewings; and third, interviews individuals in-depth to harvest the participants' interpretation of the empirical data.

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Filmography

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APPENDIX

Apocalypse Now (1979)

This is an honoured American film adaptation of Joseph Conrad's novella on 19th century colonialism, *Heart of Darkness*. The film's time is set during the Vietnam War though it does not follow any recognisable events of the war itself. The film has been claimed to truly reflect the so-called Darkness, referring to the destructiveness of war and the dehumanisation of the American soldiers throughout their deployment in Vietnam. The story started in a small hotel room in Saigon, where Captain Willard stayed before he traveled along the Nung river to find and assassinate the notorious Green Beret Colonel Kurtz. Through the documents compiled and provided by the military intelligence, Willard learned that Kurtz was indoctrinated with cruelty, brutality, dehumanisation, and has been reactionary towards the American army. Together with him on the gunboat, there were other four young men, Chief, Clean, Chef, and Lance accompanied him in the mission. Here, as the main plots unfolds, their search for Kurtz advanced, the river was sending them, symbolically through the nature of the Vietnam war and metaphorically, to the madness of war. They started to have mental breakdown and characteristic disorder. The theme park with Playboy girls and the soldiers juggling alcohol exemplified the decay of their sanity. The climax of this madness was the bloody killing of Kurtz backgrounded by the celebration of the Montagnards around the killed water buffalo. The film ended leaving us a question about Willard, about his comrades, would they be freed from the Darkness now that Kurtz died or would they become servants to the Darkness?

Good Morning, Vietnam (1987)

A multi Oscar nominated product of Walt Disney's Touchstone Films, including the first nod for William, loosely based on a true story about Adrian Cronauer. Cronauer was an army disc jockey, seconded to Vietnam in 1965 to lighten up the broadcasting content of the Armed Forces Radio and morally cheer up the GIs. Cronauer's caustic nonstop monologue and a good taste of classic rock and roll immediately earned him good reputation. He felt head over

⁵ GI: used for private soldier in the US army

heels for a Vietnamese girl, Trinh, whom he saw on the streets. In order to impress her, he tried to take over her English class and befriended with her brother, Tuan. At work, he became conscious that the content of his programme did not reflect a fraction of what actually happened in the battlefield, especially after he witnessed and survived a bombing explosion at Jimmy Wah bar, thanks to Tuan. He then felt an urge to report his experience on the air and did it albeit his superior's disapprovals and warnings and as a consequence, got suspended. Between Cronauer and Trinh, things did not progress much. They had a date and enjoy it, with her family members tagging along, but Trinh refused to be with him and insisted that their relationship was pointless due to irreconcilable cultural differences. Cronauer's chief eventually found out that Tuan, Cronauer best friend, was a Vietcong secret agent and thus, forced Cronauer to leave Vietnam and the broadcast station. Cronauer came to confront Tuan with blames and accusations for being disloyal to him. The movie ends with Cronauer's remarkable refrain "Gooooood morning, Vietnam!" in his last radio broadcast as his plane took off in the music background of Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World".

Full Metal Jacket (1987)

Full Metal Jacket is consisted of two distinguished scenarios, the first constituent shows the severe training conditions of fresh recruits, one of which is nicknamed Joker, in a Marine Corps bootcamp on Parris Island directed by Sergeant Hartman. The purpose of Hartman's abusive, vulgar language and cruel punishment was seemingly to turn these young men into a killing machine without conscience. It was obvious in the case of Pyle, from a chubby harmless farm boy, who was falling behind at every assigned tasks in the drill to the best trainee of the humiliating and heartless Sergeant Hartman. However, the brutality and horror of the drill has eventually driven Pyle mad, he ended up committing suicide after shot dead his persecutor in front of Joker's eyes. The movie abruptly transitions to the US military bay in Da Nang where Joker now actually works for Stars and Stripes as a Marine war correspondent. To make some newspaper worthy materials, he was then deployed to the battlefield in Hue and joined a seasoned unit called 'Lusthogs' for an assault on areas occupied by the Vietcong. Through his conversations with other GIs, it could be seen that the anaemic feelings, the fragmentary state of mind of these soldiers got heightened. During their raid, the Lusthogs got off to a wrong direction and put them in a difficult situation when three of their peers were

killed by a sniper hidden in one of the abandoned buildings. In the last sequences, we see the result of what the director has prepared in the first part in *Joker*. The killing-machine's spirit was passed on from Hartman, to Pyle, to the guy who was shooting indiscriminately on the helicopter to *Joker*, who was no longer afraid after finishing the sniper's thin life with a bullet through the head.

Indochine (1992)

Indochine, a French award winners and box office best sellers, revolves around the life in Indochine in the 1930s of a French woman, named Eliane Devries. Eliane adopted Camille, the infant daughter of her late best friends, Prince N'Guyen and his wife and subsequently acquired their assets. Eliane met and deeply felt in love with Jean-Baptiste, an intense young French officer, however, their love affair was set apart by Eliane's father. The mother-daughter relationship between the coming of age Camille and Elaine's seemed to be inseparable in their everyday activities, from learning dance steps to talking about her childhood friend, Tanh, who was studying in France at the moment, until one day Camille told Elaine that she felt destined to be with Jean-Baptiste. After the arranged marriage with Tanh, Camille ran away to the North to find Jean-Baptiste who was stationed Ha Long Bay. They reunited at a slave auction, and Camille's murdered a French officer in revenge to her friends in need. The couple managed to escape and dodge the raid of the French army with the help of Tanh, who then was leading the Vietnamese nationalist movement. Unfortunately, not long after Camille gave birth, Jean-Baptiste was arrested with their son. Followed the suppression of the resistance movement, Camille was also imprisoned. Jean-Baptiste was executed by the French government and left their son to Elaine to raise. In 1936, Camille was released and determined not to return to her life before but joined the Vietnamese nationalist movement. Shortly after the collapse of French colonial authority in Vietnam, Elaine's Indochinese life came to an end. In the last scenes of the movie, we see Elaine and Etienne, the son of Camille and Jean-Baptiste, before he could try to meet his birth mother, Camille who was part of the Vietnamese delegation in the Peace accords in Geneva.

The Quiet American (2002)

This film adaptation stays truer to the original storyline and character of Graham Green's bestselling novel of the same title than its predecessor in 1958. The movie opens with the voice of Flower expressing his obsession with his Vietnamese mistress, Phuong, whom he wanted to marry but his demand for a divorce was refused by his wife back home in England. Flower was stationed in Saigon, working remotely to the Sunday Times office with London to report the war circumstances in Vietnam in the 1950s. Fowler met Pyle (Brendan Fraser), an American medical specialist, by chance when having his afternoon tea in front of the Continental and introduced him to Phuong. Pyle confessed to Fowler that he felt in love with Phuong at the first sight when they were under a bunker at Phat Diem. Fear of losing Phuong, Fowler lied to her about the divorce but got caught red-handed by Phuong's sister, which pushed Phuong into the Pyle's arms. There have been explosions taking thousand lives of innocents but no parties has claimed responsibility for, and Fowler started to doubt the role of Pyle in these movements when he saw him speaking Vietnamese and getting closely involved with General The. Confirmed that the explosions occurred under Pyle's orders, Fowler set up a private dinner with Pyle so that Hinh, his assistant, could 'take care' of him. Pyle's dead body was found and Fowler insisted on being guilt-free. Fowler came to the dance hall to persuade Phuong, who returned to her previous job as a taxi dancer, to move back to live with him and promised that he would stay with her forever. At the last scene, we can notice that Fowler was always in Vietnam and produced profusely articles covering the war from 1954 to 1966.

Thi Mai (Thi Mai, rumbo a Vietnam) (2017)

The movie records a spontaneous trip of a group of Spanish friends, Carmen, Elvira, and Rosa, to Vietnam to adopt Thi Mai, a young girl, who was supposed to be a legally adopted by Carmen's late daughter. At their arrival at Hanoi's airport, they encountered Andrés, who came to Vietnam to settle down with his boyfriend and Dan a representative/translator of the adoption agency. These two men later played a tremendously important role in helping Carmen fabricate the marriage certificate between Andrés and Carmen's daughter to legalise the adoption of Thi Mai. After being challenged with many legal and bureaucratic issues due to the sudden passing of her daughter, Carmen has finally succeeded in being allowed to bring

Thi Mai with her to Spain. The movie is filmed in modern Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam, and its outskirts.

Kong: Skull Island (2017)

This most recent Hollywood picture featuring Vietnam is a reboot of the monster series - King Kong. In the later years of the American war in Vietnam, a team of scientists, soldiers, and photographer is assembled to map out a newly discovered tropical island, called Skull Island. The team was divided into two small groups, one is led by Conrad, a former British Special Air Service Captain and the other is led by Lieutenant Colonel Packard. The two groups parted and entered the jungle, where they were attacked by many giant creatures. After death of their members, Packard's group learnt that that their actual mission was to trace something deadly yet undefined inhabiting on the islands, whereas Conrad's group encountered with the Iwi natives and an old American pilot, Hank Marlow and learnt that Kong was the island's guardian, who protected the natives from the many predators including Skullcrawlers, the most dangerous one. As the two groups converged, more team members were killed by Skullcrawlers. After witnessed Kong's true humane nature, Conrad and his teammates decided to save him from the insane Packard, who was determined to kill Kong to take revenge for his fallen men. However, Skullscrawlers appeared and took Packard's life. Kong's loss his fight against the Skullscrawlers seemed irreversible, but with the human's help from Conrad's team, the victory of the giant ape was attained.