

The adaption of phở in Vietnam after 1986

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น.ส.กัญญารัตน์ แสนกุล

วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต
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เฟอ เป็นที่รู้จักในฐานะอาหารประจำชาติของเวียดนาม สันนิษฐานว่ามีต้นกำเนิดจากคอนเหนือของเวียดนามในฐานะอาหารสำหรับแรงงานและแพร่กระจายไปยังภูมิภาคต่างๆ โดยมีการปรับเปลี่ยนส่วนผสมและวิธีการปรุงเพื่อให้เข้ากับภูมิภาคนั้น ความเปลี่ยนแปลงของเฟอมีความซับซ้อนขึ้นหลังการปฏิรูปโด่ยเม็ซ (Đổi Mới) ในปี 1986 เปลี่ยนระบบเศรษฐกิจจากแบบวางแผนส่วนกลางเป็นระบบตลาด ส่งผลให้เกิดการเติบโตของประชาชน 3 กลุ่มที่มีบทบาทต่อการบริโภคเฟอ คือ ชนชั้นกลาง ชาวเวียดนามอพยพ และผู้ย้ายถิ่นฐานจากชนบทสู่เมืองและชนชั้นล่างในเขตเมืองเวียดนาม การปฏิรูปยังกระตุ้นการเติบโตของการท่องเที่ยวในเวียดนามที่ทำให้เฟอกลายเป็นที่รู้จักในฐานะอาหารประจำชาติ

วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้มุ่งศึกษาความเปลี่ยนแปลงของเฟอ (phở) ในเวียดนามหลังปี 1986 และวิเคราะห์ความเชื่อมโยงของเฟอกับสังคมเวียดนาม โดยใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ การวิจัยเอกสาร และการสัมภาษณ์ผู้ที่มีความเกี่ยวข้อง และการสังเกตพฤติกรรมจากการวิจัยพบว่าหลังการปฏิรูปโด่ยเม็ซ เฟอถูกทำให้กลายเป็นสินค้าทั้งในพื้นที่ของการบริโภคประจำวัน และในพื้นที่การท่องเที่ยว ในการบริโภคประจำวัน เฟอเปลี่ยนแปลงไปใน 3 สถานะ คือ อาหารริมทาง อาหารในร้านอาหาร และอาหารเฟรนไชน์ตอบสนองความต้องการของผู้คนที่หลากหลายขึ้น ขณะที่ในด้านการท่องเที่ยว ถูกนำเสนอผ่าน 2 ลักษณะคือ แบบผิวเผิน (superficial) และแบบสมบูรณ (complementary)

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Phở is known as a national dish of Vietnam. It is originated in the north of Vietnam as a labour food. With its popularity, phở spread all over the country adapted to ingredients and way of cooking in each place. After the socio-economic reform (Đổi Mới) in 1986, Vietnam's economy was shifted from centrally planned to market-based. As a result, there are changes in the growth of 3 groups of people; the middle-income class, the overseas Vietnamese, and the rural-urban migrants and low-income class in urban Vietnam. Meanwhile, the reform encouraged the growth of tourism in which pho has been known as the national dish of Vietnam.

This thesis studied the adaption of pho in Vietnam after 1986 and analyzed the interconnection of phở and Vietnamese society. A quantitative approach is used in this thesis, namely documentary research, interview with people who have related background and field observation. The finding shows that phở has been commoditized in two areas, daily consumption and consumption in tourism. The daily consumption, there are three forms of presentation which are street food vendor, restaurant and franchise. In tourism, phở has been presented through 2 aspects; superficial and complementary.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Statement of purpose

Phở, a bowl of Vietnamese rice noodles with hot soup, is a national dish which can be found regularly along the streets of Vietnam in every province. Its long history reflects an alteration of Vietnamese food-ways and society since its first emergence in the early twentieth century. There are numerous adaptations on phở before it looks like the *phở* we know today, and every change contains the dynamic production and consumption of Vietnamese foods.

There are three assumptions about the origins of phở. The first assumption is phở is derived from a French comfort food called pot-au-feu during the colonization when the Vietnamese were hired as maids for French houses and taught to cook pot-au-feu. Later it adapted to phở. The second and third assumptions are presumed to take place in Nam Định Province, southeast of Hà Nội, the city of textile industry and steamship port. Phở is assumed to have developed from xào trâu, rice noodle with hot soup and buffalo meat, or ngừ nhục phẩn, Yunanese style noodle soup. Both were famous among the Chinese and Vietnamese laboring in Nam Định. With the influence and desire of the French eating tradition, beef consumption and catering were introduced to Vietnam. Since then, the Vietnamese who raise cow mainly for agricultural purposes have been known to eat it as well. On the other hand, *phở* was adopted by the Cantonese migrants, bringing various kind of soups to Vietnam and then gradually evolving into Vietnamese soups such as lẩu (hot pot), hủ tiếu (noodle soup with pork shrimp and bean sprouts), hoành thánh (won ton), influenced by the availability of French beef scraps (Peters 2012,127-128). According to three assumptions, there are two possibilities

about where does the word *phở* came from, one suggests that it is derived from *pot-au-fu*, French hot soup made from boiled meat and vegetable. Another speculation links *Phở* to the word *fun*; or rice noodle in Cantonese (Wang 2015:71).

A perfect bowl of *phở* must comprise *bánh phở* (rice noodle), meat (primarily chicken or beef), herbs and broth. Each ingredient has its specialty and development related to Vietnamese social alterations. *Bánh phở* or flat rice noodles, made from rice, is part of the main diet of Vietnamese people, which is grown throughout the country but especially in the Red River Delta in the North and the Mekong Delta in the South. The noodle was initially made from rice but in the late 1950s, the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) tried to nationalize many businesses, therefore, many *phở* restaurants began to use *bánh phở* made from imported potato flour, one of the Soviet economic aids for communist countries (Nguyen A. 2016, 21).

According to Vietnamese tradition, linked exclusively with Buddhist spirituality and a vegetarian diet, meat, fish and egg were abstained while vegetables were preferred as a meagre diet (*ăn chay*). The majority of protein came from fish mainly due to its long coast and numerous rivers. For meat source, buffalo was the main choice for Vietnamese people since they use it as a work animal: yet, it would be slaughtered when injured or sick or for any exceptional events (Durand 1994, 242). Beef was introduced to Vietnam by the French colonialists whose desire was to maintain authentic French cuisine in the far east colony. Cattle was imported from Cambodia by Chinese merchants, and as the war spread to the North, so did the trade. The availability of beef scraps in the North allowed the local to experience a new taste which, consequently, became *phở*.

As a result of the Geneva Accord in 1954, Vietnam was separated into two parts, North and South. Some northerners moved to the South and so phở went along with them. Even if the ingredients seemed to be fixed, the geographical conditions and local tongue led to an adaptation of the classic bowl. While in the North it is popular with its taste of real bone soup, phở in central and south Vietnam are more flavorful due to the use of particular herbs and vegetables such as bean sprouts and Thai basil, added in substitution of those the herbs used in the North. The change, consequently, come to be its local identity. Apart from its culinary aspect, the appearance of northern phở has been considered the authentic version since the authentic Vietnamese culture must come from northern Vietnam and not from the southern part which received United States support, and absorbed a more western identity (Nguyen 2016, 19-23).

After a decade of the American-Vietnam war, the communist party unavoidably faced a strong liberal ideology in the South while at the same time having numerous economic problems due to the war. There were several massive changes that aimed to combine north and south Vietnam in the second level: state institutions and economic, social, cultural policy (Nuchpiem, 1991, 44). The policy failed shortly due to incongruity of ideology between north and south which was eventually fixed by compromising policies. In 1986, a socio-economic reform was set up, targeting the build up of a strong socialism while strengthening the economic stability and modernizing Vietnam. In order to compensate the war destruction and to unite the North and South harmoniously, the government gave a chance to the private sector, allowing people to own businesses in agriculture, industry, trade and service through policies and business law reforms (Norlund 1995, 24).

A shift from a centrally planned economy to market-based economy has brought Vietnam into capitalism. The socio-economic reform has caused an intensified growth of the

middle-income class, the returning of overseas Vietnamese and the rising of rural-urban migrants. While the migrants consume phở basically for its utilitarian function, the growing middle-income class and overseas Vietnamese who possess higher purchasing power, and are strongly influenced by the global trends and culture, are approaching existential consumption. As a result, phở appears in three ways after the reform: street vendors, restaurants, and franchises. Each kind tends to different customers due to its price, location and taste. Street vendors are still serving the labor class who is seeking quantity. Phở also played an important role in the tourism arena which is growing steadfastly after the reform. Vietnam tourism is focusing on product development in order to create a national identity (Verbeke 1995, 318) while food is a subcategory of four tourism brands assigned by the Vietnam Administration of Tourism (VNAT). With its popularity and similarity among tourists, phở has been recognized as a national dish of Vietnam, used for the promotion of tourism in the international stage. Whence, it has been presented in two aspects; complementary and superficial in order to represent Vietnam properly and to respond to tourist's expectations. The adaption of phở in two scenes, local consumption and tourist consumption, portrays a dynamic social sphere caused by globalization, showing the changes, the identity and the aspiration of *Vietnam-ness*.

Food-ways themselves are always embedded in a wider economic system, even in the most rural of settings (Brulotte 2015, 2) as we can see that phở ingredients altered inevitably due to the situation of the country. The availability of phở has shown a far development from a labor dish to luxurious cuisine as seen in many fancy cookbooks and common products; instant noodles, food chain brands, small shops along the street; along with the changes in Vietnamese society. Aside from being a fundamental life-survival substance, food is a primary marker of individual and group identity (Brulotte 2015, 1). Food shifts are associated with

political, economic and social changes in its home and also the place where a particular group of people migrate to. Apart from eating tangible food, people also create and consume the identity, the expectation and the meaning behind the dish daily.

The study of the adaption of phở in Vietnam after 1986 intended to approach the social context with the most basic life factor, food, by picking up phở the national dish of Vietnam since its character has been adapted into various sorts. Since the economic reform, phở has been intertwined with the sense of commodity both in local consumption and in tourism. Moreover, being recognized as a national dish of Vietnam, phở, like a first gate to one country, reflects the Vietnamese history, culture and also the expectation of how the Vietnamese want to be as Erica J. Peters wrote in the introduction of *Appetite and Aspirations in Vietnam, food is not just about who people are but also about who they want to be (2012, p.3).*

1.2 Research Questions

1. How has phở developed from 1986 to the present?
2. Why is phở represented as a national dish of Vietnam?
3. What are the factors of change and development for Phở after 1986?

1.3 Objectives

1. To study the development of phở along with Vietnam's social context from 1986 to the present.
2. To examine the social and political meaning of phở since 1986.
3. To analyze the social process of cultural commodification of phở.

1.4 Hypothesis

Phở has been constantly altered, influenced by several changes in Vietnamese society. Starting with its origin, phở was obviously created among the dynamic atmosphere influenced by French and Chinese and has been confronted with alteration in its serving and consumption due to various social and economic challenges. Since the socio-economic reform improved Vietnam's society and economy, it also intensified the growth of middle-income class and encouraged the returning of the overseas Vietnamese. Both of these groups tend to consume phở as an existential product. Meanwhile, there is a rising number of rural-urban migrants who consume phở as a utilitarian product. Differences in needs of these three groups of people are displayed in three types of phở shops: street vendors, restaurants and franchises. And while, phở represents the identity of Vietnam in the tourism arena as a national dish, it has been re-created in two aspects, complementary and superficial in order to formally express Vietnam's identity.

Keywords: Phở, Vietnamese Cuisine, Vietnamese Identities, Đổi Mới

1.5 Scope of the research

This research is aimed to study the adaption of food due to Vietnamese social changes via the national dish, phở, particularly after 1975 when the American-Vietnam war ended. In order to understand the post-war relation between phở and Vietnamese society, the historical background will be reviewed from its first appearance during the French colonial period altogether with additional developments; ingredients and expansion from its origin to other areas. At first phở was served mainly for the labor class in the industrial provinces in northern Vietnam with the most basic ingredients, later it moved to the main city and became

a basic meal for workers. Phở has moved along with people to various areas, domestically from the North to the South during the American-Vietnam war or even with Vietnamese migrants. Nowadays, phở is always included in Vietnamese cookbooks and food guides in regard with Vietnamese identity and it continues to experience dynamic change.

The research focuses mainly on the changes that took place after the American-Vietnam war ended when phở was widely spread from the Northern to Southern Vietnam and even overseas while the government was busy recovering the country from war remnants. Vietnam had been through many changes in order to catch up with outside world, including the declaration of a new socio-economic regime, Đổi Mới which introduced a capitalist economy to Vietnam. This study tries to look into how phở has changed in accordance to dynamic social circumstances after the war.

1.6 Research Methodology

This research will be done to comprehend the relation between characteristic changes of phở and social circumstances after 1975. The development of phở will be studied through historical sources based mainly on related documentary, including dynamic changes in the appearance and character of phở. Modern Vietnamese socio-economic changes, moreover, are reviewed. The research is based mainly on primary and documentary sources with some interviews with the people who had close experience with changes of phở to explore ideas toward the food and society.

1.7 Significance of the research

1. Providing more knowledge on food studies related to social studies.
2. Offering an alternative approach to study social context via material culture.

1.8 Limitation of the research

There are some obstacles in researching the adaption of phở and Vietnam's social development after 1975 which include:

- i. The researcher only has basic knowledge of Vietnamese language which is not enough to conduct effective interviews with local people.
- ii. There was limited time for field research so the researcher chose to conduct the observation in the center of Hồ Chí Minh City and Hà Nội both of which are the most dynamic in culture and consumption. Some small communities in the city are observed as well since they have probably been more influenced by intense urbanization than the suburban areas.

1.9 Literature Reviews

1.9.1 Trends of food studies

Food study, though it seems to be a specific subject, has numerous and vast perspectives to approach. This research considers food as a medium to express social and political circumstances of one country, it regards the mutual influence of social changes and the character of a particular dish. "Culinary Triangle" (Strauss 1996) offered a pattern-like theory indicating that food preparation where, same as language, could be analyzed in a triangular semantic field; the raw, the cooked and the rotten in the article. The cooked is the cultural transformation of the raw, while the rotten is a natural transformation. Among the

cooking methods, Strauss considered it as a thing that distinguishes human beings from animals; more elaborated and refined. The different methods of cooking are an adaption between nature and culture in which each culture perceived those methods differently. His concept universally explains the significant of cooking in human life as it is a cultural element that has been developed for survival. In “Deciphering the meal” (Douglas 1972) the author suggests how the way of cooking and eating is designated by the value of society observing through the Hebrew eating code. Her results show that each social unit has its own preference in cooking and eating according to religion or beliefs which could be explained in a totally different mindset depending on their background. She gave another example on Brazilian and American perspectives on eating ants; In Brazil ants are a luxurious dish while Americans feel that eating ants is uncivilized. Though both of them know that ants can be eaten, they perceive eating them in a totally different fashion.

Similarly to Strauss, Roland Barthes suggested in “Wine and milk,” an article from the book *Mythologies* (1998) there is a pattern of signs —which he called communication system — embedded in the food when it is adequate. It tends to be a fact that when the character of the dish was created through a group of people with common traditions, practices, activities, nations; it becomes a system of communication. Another article of Barthes, “Toward a psycho-sociology of contemporary food consumption” (Barthes 2013), offered the way to reach food’s constituent unit via two levels; starting out with a complete inventory of food in a given society on the method of cooking, ingredients, its appearance and then considering its character related to society. He illustrated this by the study of bread in France, where brown bread is a symbol of refinement as the grain and basic substances could be seen on its texture; while coffee, nowadays, is more likely to be linked with break-time rather than a substance

for awakening. From this angle, studying food serves to encode the hidden meaning inside and cannot be done without reviewing its surroundings.

In the first chapter of *La Distinction; A social of the judgement of taste* (Bourdieu 1996), it is suggested that people make choices of taste based on their preferences which may be predicted if we know the person's background. The lower class is said to have popular taste while the upper class has legitimate taste. Unlike Strauss and Barthes who look for the fixed code hidden in different food preferences, Bourdieu was looking for the formula that determines class preference for taste. His study focused on class stratification based on various cultural methods, taste of food included, and it illustrates how each group of people consume different styles of culture including food.

Food is an undeniable component which is mentioned when comes to identifying one country. Food of nation is a post-war concept where people try to identify their own culture in a more tangible and distinguishable way. There are numerous articles and studies on national dishes and the way their value has been added through history. One remarkable study that shows how much national food is valued in the representation of a country is "Contested Tasted: Foie Gras and the Politics of Food" (DeSoucey et al. 2016), which explains the controversial morality of Foie gras' consumption. As people around the world —and also the French — have regarded the distorted process to get the liver, but Foie gras continues to represent the French cuisine, therefore, they promote an exotic taste, the clean-organic role of farming which is limited to a particular city of France in order to compromise the argument. In "Power negotiation and the changing meaning of Pad-thai: From nationalist menu to popular Thai national dish," Poonphol Kowibulchai (2013) argued that the famous dish of Thailand was recently created during the age of Thai-Nationalism promotion and, later,

twisted to another meaning with elaborate ingredients and cooking method. These types of studies portray that national dishes have been delicately created in order to specifically express a country's identity. The dish is created along with the story and uniqueness of the claim for a sense of nation, no matter what the real origin is.

Food studies started with the universal concept that human beings cook, and the way they do so is the adaption of them and nature. Cooking is culture; therefore, each group of people has different beliefs on what they eat due to several factors. However, recent studies have shown there is no stable fixed code to explain the preference in each cuisine in accordance with more complex surroundings such as political influence and historical conditions. As a result, food studies are more likely focusing on the conflict of change due to political, economic and cultural factors with semiotic analysis, as well as covering reverse perception when food become a method to express a national identity. On one hand a dish cannot be interpreted separately from its surroundings and even the most basic elements of life contained a semiotic meaning of how one society has been developed to become the one we live in.

1.9.2 Phở and other food research in Vietnam

As this research is going to observe the Vietnamese food-ways through their national dish, Phở, the concern is basically based on the character of food and that related to development of social events and people's daily life, particularly from the colonial period in which Vietnam was influenced/affected by an outside culture. Phở is known as a national dish of Vietnam, portraying the life of ordinary Vietnamese people since it was first created. Therefore, studying a dish which was chosen to be the representative of the whole country enables another way to get in touch with Vietnamese culture and history.

Having observed some Vietnamese cookbooks, phở appears to be a common dish that transformed from Vietnamese street-food to a luxurious fusion dish. Andrea Nguyen has published a cookbook about phở as Vietnam's favorite soup and noodle; *The Phở cookbook* (Nguyen A. 2017a). Prior to the recipe she created, Nguyen mentioned the origin of phở to come from industrial villages influenced by the Cantonese and French and, eventually, arriving to Hà Nội with the locals who were seeking better opportunities in the capital. Phở could portray both politics —as it symbolized Vietnam in the article of Tú Mỡ — and history due to the adaption when phở was brought to the South or during war. The recipes begin with normal phở bò and phở gà and numerous kinds of phở which are later developed; for example, fried phở (phở xào), fried pillow phở (phở chiên phồng), phở with wine sauce (phở sốt vàng). Those special menus expressed the changes in each ingredient, making a soup from scrapped beef boned to a selection of high-quality beef. Similar to other cookbooks —telling the story through the author's experience while traveling or cooking — phở is defined as a collective memory of modern urban Vietnamese people. The dish is easy to cook, well-known among the local and the foreigner and affordable, yet, there are numerous ways to enjoy phở from adding meatballs, wine or even ox-tail for a different taste; or by providing a different texture (Nguyen L. 2011, 2013, Nguyen A. 2017b) through different methods of cooking; stir-fried or rolled. These cookbooks show how far the bowl has come since its basic ingredient for soup was just beef-scrap left by French butchers.

On the aspect of food studies, especially in Vietnam, there are some books and articles that offer interesting elements of Vietnamese food and society. Erica J. Peters has done broad studies about Vietnamese food and drink, and the social sphere under French colonialism. Her book *Appetites and Aspiration in Vietnam: Food and drink in the long*

nineteenth century is a prominent character on the dynamic food trend majorly among the ground level. She has proven that food and drinks are a symbol of social position as eating habits can re-position themselves via eating habits, offering the strong assumption “Food and drink embodied social struggles in the colony, as people negotiated for influence and for control over Vietnam’s modernization (2016, 17).”

Starting with a parallel situation of the colonial and the colonized, both France and Vietnam were faced with the great famine since the late of eighteenth century. Baguette has come to be the reminder of passed deprivation, while in the Tây Sơn rebellions, rice and food shortage were the biggest motivation for the Vietnamese to fight and the event has become a fearful mark for them. Starvation is the main reason that Minh Mạng was unable to remain the authority among several strikes from the people and his vulnerability led to full control by the French empire. Under the western control, the Vietnamese faced heavy taxation and food monopolies on specific products; salt, sugar and rice but the most controversial was alcohol which urged to exploitation since the French colonizers wanted the locals to drink imported alcohol. Due to the period, Erica's work basically related to foods and conflicts, observing case by case. This work provides perception of ordinary people such as the middle class and the peasants in the nineteenth century who struggled to survive under oppressive regimes that caused hunger. This work points out the relation between food and governance tied together in a way in which people eventually did not realize its connection, since they never wondered why they ate certain foods but they continued to do so for survival. These conflict has created a new taste sphere to negotiate with the outsider as she concludes (218) in the following passage:

*‘Living under colonialism, some of them learned a larger lesson –
that their preferences about politics might matter as much as their*

preference of food and drink. Everyday culinary experiences in Vietnam thus inspired people to look beyond confections in the marketplace and taste the whole wide world."

Rice Talks: Food and community in a Vietnamese Town (Avieli 2012) presented the interconnection of food and culture and how both have similarly enhanced the status of people. The hierarchy in age and gender is maintained via privilege to access the food during the meal which appears in both the public and private spheres; table manners and preparation steps. Whereas, cosmological symbolism as well as ritual practice where food is enhanced with special meaning and status through the preparation stages of a meal, the symbolism in presentation and aesthetics —such as the colors and textures of the dishes — served in harmonious complementary opposition. This is also a special character of Hoianese cuisine where the hierarchy and harmony are blended like a yin and yang concept while in the western perspective this does not happen. Three prominent festivals are Tết Nguyên Đán (Vietnamese New Year), Tết Đoan Ngọ (Summer Festival), and Tết Trung Thu (Mid-Autumn Festival), also observed in chapter seven in comparison with local ancestral tradition in chapter four, showing the different kind of food used to depict the character of food and history of each festival. The most prominent point of this book is how food maintains social order cultural construction, and how social patterns appear on the food and cuisine in a harmonious way as it encourages an interest on food studies which is always interpreted in the most simple of ways, yet the best norm's reproduction toward the whole society. Avieli (2012) concluded in his field research:

"...on the contrary, the culinary sphere was not a passive mirror image of other social and cultural realms but, rather, an arena of cultural production itself (236)"



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Seeing through chronological events of Vietnamese food in a large scale, Vũ Hồng Liên (2016) separated the influence of China and France on Vietnamese cuisine in *Rice and Baguette: A history of Food in Vietnam*. The book puts an emphasis on change and development in food, cuisine and taste of people on the area of present Vietnam.¹ Talking majorly on the formation of modern Vietnamese cuisine, Liên started with the geographical information of Vietnam since the pre-historical period in order to show a distinguished rice culture which has been cultivating for a long time and becoming the main element of Vietnamese food. Having enquired into chronological history of Vietnam as a country that flourished with foreign influence, the Chinese seemed to have more input in food for special occasions due to their earlier arrival and longer period of colonization –most traditional practices in Vietnam are similar to China, including the food code. Bánh chưng and Bánh dày has been used during Vietnamese new year celebrations –counting by lunar calendar – same as in China. Meanwhile, the French influence which came after played a different role in Vietnamese cuisine by introducing its eating culture to Vietnam who later adapted it making it Vietnamese food. Liên observed more on the preparation steps in the late chapter by talking about fermented food; mắm and nước mắm which created unique touches and taste, and the variety of bánh which has been used in different occasions. A widely conclusive picture of Vietnamese food in this book brought an understanding on the food trends of each period of time as well as the particular location; however, it slightly lacks connection to social events. Thereby additional articles should be read altogether for faultless interconnection.

¹ Since the study duration is from the pre-historical age to the present day, I prefer the term people who reside on the area of present-day Vietnam to Vietnamese people. According to the historical and geographical events, some of them, consequently, are no longer the Vietnamese.



This adoption was interpreted, in the article “Culinary crossing and disruptive identities: Contesting colonial categories in everyday life” (Peters 2001), through an attempt of the middle and high class of Vietnamese society to equalize their social status with that of the French officers whose condition is to avoid merging their culture with the Vietnamese. At the same time, adoption of French cuisine is also the means to distinguish their status from the lower-class Vietnamese as well as challenging the French colonizers in the same status as Vietnamese. Cuisine is considered as a small space among other kinds of culture, but it created new politics of colonial consumption where social status has been moved as well.

There are some books and articles that study about Vietnamese food from past to present such as the glutenous-rice-eating tradition in Vietnam and elsewhere of Nguyễn Xuân Hiên (2001) which portrays that particular foods contain the same meaning such as bánh chưng and bun thang while Mandy Thomas (2009) confirmed in “Transition in taste in Vietnam and the diaspora” that food carries a political interpretation —as it can be seen through the transformation of migrant Vietnamese food in Australia.

An independent study on Phở appeared in the Lucky Peach magazine; “the Phở issue” (Nguyen A. 2016) talking about the origin of phở and its diaspora to the United States, France and Australia. These articles observe the dynamic through phở owner interviews to analyze the development of phở, particularly after 1975 when most southern Vietnamese fled across the sea to various destinations. Phở as a national identity has followed people far beyond northern and southern Vietnam and all the way to their new homes, being the first thing that comes up in their mind when they consider opening a Vietnamese restaurant. “Defusing Phở: Soup stories and ethnic Erasures”, 1919-2009 is another article of Erica J. Peter (2010) that confirmed the political meaning of phở since it was seen and written by France as a dish that

can be found commonly in Vietnam. Thus, the coming of phở as a national identity is not a new thing but has been there for a long time. Nguyễn Tuân, a famous Vietnamese writer, associates the appearance of phở with the character of Vietnamese people in his article Phở, published in Văn Journal (1957). The article emphasizes the Vietnamese pride of being simple but unique like phở which can be found everywhere on the street —but each the bowl is one of a kind. Conflict between North and South Vietnam is also represented by difference in the taste of phở in the North and the South. The author has left a clue to the connection of national dishes which carry more than just the cultural aspect, but also the meaning inside soup and taste and how people, both French and Vietnamese, perceive it.

Vietnamese food —according to scholars and the researches mentioned above — shows how Vietnamese are also interested in what they are consuming daily. Most studies on Vietnamese food are based on historical events with linear chronology, portraying the influence of French and Chinese —and slightly Japanese who came in short periods but also left a glimpse of flavor. The author seems to be the only one who can portray from the point of view of the ruled and the ruler at once. Avieli's book is prominent in anthropological method but it can explain only a typical community in Hội An and also has less emphasis on the historical aspect. The other scholars also picked only a particular time, area or material to study but less of them touch on a typical dish; still there are limited number of studies about phở, especially beyond the aspect of Vietnamese cuisine culture.

CHAPTER 2

History and development of phở

3.1 Assumptions on the origin of phở

Nowadays, phở is known as a national dish of Vietnam. It is a flat rice noodle soup mainly made of beef or chicken meat with local herbs for particular taste and smell. Phở shops are conveniently found in every corner of the streets of Vietnam, from small street shops to big restaurants. Though it seemed to have appeared a long time ago in Vietnamese culture, the furthest historical evidence of phở is traceable back to the early twentieth century. To a certain extent, there are three assumptions about the origin of phở and its development.

Firstly, phở was influenced by a French dish called, Pot-Au-Feu from which the word phở was borrowed from the term “feu.” Pot Au Feu means pot on the fire, referred to the beef stew which is cooked in the pot on fire. It is a simple method of cooking; meat boiled in the pot with open fire. One could assume that pot au feu has existed for a long time yet, the first record of it happened to be in the first half of the nineteenth century and before that time it was called by another name. From “Peters Hertzman” the owner of *A la carte*, food content website, has quoted King Henry IV of France (1553-1610) on his article about pot-au-feu stating “I want no peasant in my kingdom to be so poor that he cannot have a *poule au pot* on Sundays” (Je veux qu'il n'y ait si pauvre paysan en mon royaume qu'il n'ait tous les dimanches sa poule au pot). *Poule au pot* means “chicken in the pot” which is similar to “pot-au-feu.” Raymond Blanc defined that “... [pot au feu] is the quintessence of French family cuisine, this

must be the most celebrated dish in France. It honors the table of the rich and poor alike (Blanc 2011).”

When the French ruled over Vietnam, they hired local Vietnamese as maids and chefs and taught them how to cook French food. Pot au feu, as the most common but delicate dish of every French family, was also introduced to them. The Vietnamese, however, preferred clear broth yet borrowed the slow cooking technique from the French. Though phở and pot au feu are both about meat in the soup, there are still many dissimilarities on the way of eating; meat and vegetables in pot au feu are eaten separately, while phở is a noodle soup eaten along with all its ingredients (Ngojc 2017, 24)

Somehow, most scholars suggested that phở had been eaten long before the French came to Vietnam in Nam Định province —located on the northeast of Hà Nội. It is only half size of Hà Nội but the province played an important role as trading centre, rice-growing field and also the chief silk district (Scott 1885, 87). During 1908-1909, there were ships going from Hà Nội to Hải Phòng, Nam Định and Phủ Lạng via the Red River run by the French. Most labor on the ship was Chinese, which was sharply increasing every year due to the operation of the Treaty of Tientsin signed on June 9, 1885, to end the Sino-French war. This allowed Chinese workers to travel to Tokin (Northern Vietnam) to work for French organizations and companies. In 1889 there were only fifty-seven thousand Chinese workers in Tokin but later on, in 1908, the number rose up approximately twice to 138,284. In 1909, Bạch Thái Bưởi — who was a powerful businessman — initially operated a steamship service hiring Vietnamese workers to work for him. He opened the route Nam định-Hà nội and Nam định-Bến thủy, making Nam Định busier. The more people running along the river, the higher demand for

food and drinks. Besides, Nam Định was also a textile industrial city where most factories were run by the French. With a large presence of Chinese and French population, along with an increasing Vietnamese labor, Nam Định gained and adapted its eating culture, especially the use of noodles and beef.

Two dishes similar to phở appeared in this busy trading city. One is *xáo trâu*, rice vermicelli with hot soup and water buffalo meat which was commonly consumed among the Vietnamese. It was sold along the river bank mainly for the working class who wanted to eat something quickly prepared and big enough for their stomach. Since the dish was tasty and had very good smell, it became more and more popular with shops expanding from the river bank to the ground where proper shops turned into movable vessels called *gánh* able to be carried on the seller's shoulders. One side of the vessel contained a huge hot buffalo soup, while the other had the rice vermicelli, herbs, spices, and fish sauce. When French eating culture arrived, beef consumption was unavoidable especially since the butchers offered free cow bone when buying the meat. The beef gradually replaced water buffalo meat and at some point, the rice vermicelli also turned in to rice noodles.

Another dish is *ngưu nhục phấn*, a Yunanese style noodle in hot beef soup. At that time, *ngưu nhục phấn* became well-known among both the Chinese (mostly from the southern of China) and Vietnamese workers (Dũng 2009, 8). Though the dish was called *xáo bò* in Vietnamese, it was also called *ngưu nhục phấn* which is similar to the Chinese pronunciation *niú ròu fěn* which means beef rice noodle.² *Ngưu nhục phấn* was popular among the Chinese workers who mostly came from southern China as they identified it as Yunan *guo qiao mi xian* which are noodles made from rice powder (*bột gạo*) instead of flour (*mì*) and just like

² 牛肉 (niurou) = beef; 粉 (fēn) = rice noodle

bánh phở it was served with broth and beef. Erica Peter also pin-pointed that there are a number of Vietnamese foods that were influenced by Cantonese cuisine such as lẩu (hot pot), hủ tiếu (noodle soup with pork shrimp and bean sprouts), hoành thánh (won ton). Phở could be one of them since rice noodles in Cantonese are called *fun*.

Although there is no clear record of where the name phở came from, the word phở which refers to something edible has appeared in both Vietnamese and French sources. According to lexicon evidence, the word “phở” was firstly introduced as a dish in the *Vietnamese Dictionary published by the Cultural Committee of Khai Trí Tiến Đức* published in 1931, which defined phở as the food eaten with small noodles cooked with beef: fried phở, phở soup (món đồ ăn bằng bánh thái nhỏ nấu với thịt bò (phở xào, phở tái) (443). Nonetheless, the author Nguyễn Công Hoan wrote;

“1913 in the house no. 8, sometime, (we) ate phở in the evening. One bowl 2 xu (there were 3C bowls and 5C bowls) (1913... trọ số 8 hàng Hà... thỉnh thoảng, tôi được ăn phở (hàng phở rong). Mỗi bát 2 xu (có bát 3 xu, 5 xu) (cited in Dũng 2009, 8)”

*From Jean Marquet's diary, in 1919, he heard the word “Yoc Pheu!” on the streets of Hà Nội, shouted by the Vietnamese who sold beef soup. In 1927, Jean Tardieu mentioned that pho-ô referred to soup vendors in Hà Nội and he wrote to his friend “It seems to me that I have always been here. (Il me semble que j'ai toujours vécu ici) (cited in Peters 2010, 160).” Moreover, in Hilda Arnold's book *Gastronomie Việtnamienne* (Vietnamese gastronomy) published in 1950 also gave such details about Vietnam's street food including phở. She mentioned phở in the south which, at that time, some northern noted as follows;*

“In North Vietnam, phở, a kind of Chinese soup but with rice noodles, broth, and beef, is popular. The phở is very flavored and seasoned, and the French love it, generally. There are also some in the South but it is less widespread. The same rice noodles, fried with meat, vegetables and well-seasoned, turned into the excellent phở sào”

“Au Nord-Viêtnam, on apprécie beaucoup le pho, sorte de soupe chinoise mais avec des nouilles de riz, du bouillon, et de la viande de bœuf. Le pho est très aromatisé et assaisonné, et les Français l'aiment généralement. Il en existe aussi au Sud mais son usage est moins répandu. Les mêmes nouilles de riz, sautées avec de la viande, des légumes et bien assaisonnées, constituent l'excellent phở sào (cited in Peters 2010, 160-161).”

Even though phở was known to be cheap street food, its popularity reached all classes in the early twentieth century. Its origin is related to both, Chinese and French eating culture, developed from either *ngũ nhục phần* or *pot-eu-feu* but meet the needs of Vietnamese people. Later on, it developed and new ingredients were added when it travelled from north to south, creating a new identity for phở in each place.

3.2 Composition of phở

A perfect bowl of phở is made of *bánh phở* (rice noodle), meat, herbs and broth. Each ingredient has its own specialty and difference based on time and place. Those differences give it local identity as well as social feasibilities and changes in each time.

Bánh phở or flat rice noodle is the fundamental ingredient of phở which also become the name of a dish. It is made from rice, the major diet of Vietnamese people, grown throughout the country but especially in the Red River Delta in the North and the Mekong Delta in the South. The making bánh phở begins with grinding and soaking of the rice into a slurry batter, then pouring the batter for steaming into a thin sheet. When the sheet is cooked perfectly, it is cut it into a small noodle-like shape (Nguyen A. 2017a).

During the time of the Pacific war, Vietnam was under Japanese occupation and exported rice products to the members of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere even during the natural disaster of autumn 1944-1945 (Dũng 1995, 577). When it comes to the First Indochina war, the Việt Minh was allowed to raid the Red River Delta and they took control of more than half of the villages around the area (Cima 1989, 56). As such, rice was insufficient even after the war had ended. To get rehabilitation, the Vietnamese Communist Party came up with social reforms together with nationalization of many businesses. Rice was not allowed to be used for making bánh phở claiming that it was a waste of precious rice. At around the same time, the Soviet Union started to give economic aid, including potato starch and wheat flour (Nguyen A. 2017b). They were used for making bánh phở at that time. However, people did not agree with the taste and the rule was gradually overlooked. The flour was also used for making *quẩy*, a fried breadstick, served along with phở which made the dish rather filling to satisfy the hunger during the wartime. Somehow, *quẩy* continues to be served with phở in Hà Nội until nowadays, and people think it makes the dish more tasteful.

According to Vietnamese tradition which is linked with Buddhist spirituality, meat, fish and egg were abstained while vegetables were preferred as in the diet (*ăn chay*). The majority of protein came from fish due to Vietnam's long coast and numerous rivers. As a

meat source, buffalo was the main choice for Vietnamese people as they were the local working animal choice: yet, they would be slaughtered when injured or sick, or for any special event (Huard and Durand 1994, 242). Pork was also eaten widespread and used for charcuterie, while beef consumption was more familiar to Chinese workers than Vietnamese.

Beef became familiar in Vietnam with the arrival of French colonialists whose desire was to maintain an authentic French cuisine in their far east colony —just as well as the Chinese workers did. It started from the South where Chinese the cattle was imported from Cambodia by Chinese merchants to sell to French army's commissaries (Peters 2016, 163). As the war spread to the North, so did the trade.

In the early of 1900s, there were only three beef shops in Hà Nội but later —with the growth in demand — more became available. The butcher always gave away the bones with some scraps for their customers to use for cooking broth. The availability of beef in the North provided the local the possibility to experience new tastes. Meanwhile, some elite French hired Vietnamese maids who learned how to cook beef properly (Hiền and Haye, 6). Phở, in the beginning, contained only the scraps of beef instead of the whole fine piece of meat but when people got more familiar with meat, it began to be used in full slices.

Though beef is the main kind of protein in phở, during Japanese Occupation some shops started to sell chicken phở (phở gà) —due to the government forbidding the slaughtering of draft animal for food on Mondays and Fridays (Leung 2016). Chicken was not accepted as phở from the beginning but after the policy ended, phở gà still kept its presence on the streets of Vietnam. During the second Indochina war, phở was called a pilotless phở (phở không người lái) which means phở without meat.

Broth is considered the soul of phở. Apart from the cow bone, herbs play a main role in making phở tasty. There are five main kinds of herbs used to bring the smell and taste of phở, called *ngũ vị hương* a combination of grilled ginger and shallot, star anise, cardamom and cinnamon. The spice originated in China for medication in the fourth century BC based on the five elements concept. However, the spices might be combined from different herbs and sometimes there may be more than five kinds of herbs due to geographical conditions and its usage (Nelson 2012). As well as in cooking phở, the using of herbs is differing, diverse tastes and textures of broth are favored by people from each location. Broth from the North is claimed to be clearer with less herbs and spice —while the soup in the South is tastier and sweeter with the use of rock sugar and additional Chinese herbs.

In every shop, there is always a basket of vegetables and herbs on the table. There is no rule to them since most are stocked depending on each season. In the North, the herbs are usually green leaf vegetables with a menthol taste and smell, while in the South people usually eat phở with Thai basil and beansprout along with some herbs. Although the differences in broth and herbs seem to be only small, they eventually represent the local identity.

3.3 Phở in other contexts

Apart from being a food, phở has appeared in some writings representing Vietnam in both direct and indirect ways. Tù Mỡ, an anti-French poet and writer, wrote a poem called “*phở đức tụng*” in which phở was interpreted as a symbol of Vietnamese people. The poem talks about the presence of phở in Vietnam making it one of the most interesting dishes of the

country. Though it looks plain and less decorated than other dishes, it has a sweet smell, good taste and, most importantly, it is nutritious and feeds the empty stomach of every Vietnamese no matter who they are. The poem was implied for Vietnamese who –at that time –were undeservingly looked down by the French rulers. The simplicity of phở refers to the humble lifestyle of Vietnamese people, while its harmonious taste is their prudent mind. He concluded it that;

Don't underestimate phở as a humble dish

Even Paris has to welcome phở

Compare to the other famous international food

Phở is delicious but inexpensive

Living without eating phở is a shame

When comes to the death, dedicate phở for them

So, people, have once or crave for it

(Chớ chê phở là đồ ăn hàn mọn,

Dẫu sao thành Ba-Lê còn phải đón phở sang.

Cùng các cao lương vạn quốc phô trương,

Ngon lại rẻ, thường hay quán giải.

Sống trên đời, phở không ăn cũng đại,

Lúc buông tay ắt phải cúng kam.

Ai ơi, nếm thử kéo them (1934)

In addition, Nguyễn Tuân, one of the most popular Vietnamese contemporary authors wrote an article about phở—published in Văn Journal in 1957 while he was the chief secretary of the Vietnamese Arts and Literature Association — criticizing the communist party for trying to change North Vietnam to Socialism by operating land reform. His article begins with a diary of his trip to Finland and how much he missed Vietnamese food, particularly. Nguyễn Tuân has explained how common phở is to the Vietnamese people; a menu that could be found in every corner of the street, among all levels of people—from the workers to the intellectuals or even the legionnaire — and the familiarity of people to their own phở shops (gánh phở), since they named the shop in their own way. However, the article also refers to political commentary based on the economic recession caused by the Vietnamese communist party's effort to turn the country into a socialist one. He stated that some people cannot even afford phở while some people could have fine beef or any meat they wish in their bowl.

Besides, he questioned industrial food products as Vietnam received potatoes and wheat flour from Soviet Union as an economic aid; wondering if one day the Vietnamese would need to have tasteless canned phở. Nguyễn Tuân expressed his concern toward the change which, to him, showed more about taste or aesthetics yet also questioned how would phở, the most common meal of Vietnamese people, would become under this governance.

“Among worries of some Hà Nội's intellectuals, there was a cracked guy who mentioned a man who wondered if we moved forward to complete a socialist economy, no more economic dispersion, then there would be no folk phở (phở cooked and sold by people) and then we will have to eat canned phở, eating a can of phở each time we put that package into the pot of boiled water...”

(Trong số những thắc mắc của một số ông Hà nội trí thức dỏ người ta có nhắc đến một ông lo sau này ta tiến lên kinh tế hoàn toàn xã hội chủ nghĩa, kinh tế phân tán không còn nữa, thì mất hết phở dân tộc, và rồi sẽ phải ăn phở đóng hộp, mỗi lúc ăn bỏ cái hộp phở ấy vào nồi nước sôi trước khi đục ra ăn... (Tuân 1990, 561)

Even though phở appeared in southern Vietnam before 1954, it was not as popular as it was in the North and most of the South saw it was similar to *hủ tiếu*, the Chinese noodles (Dũng 2009, 8). The flux of north Vietnam migrants during and after the French-Indochina war (December 19, 1946, to August 1, 1954,) led to migration from the North to the South of Vietnam with assistance from the American and the French. In addition to foreign aid, the Geneva Accord gave an opportunity to people who wanted to leave from the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) stating in article 14(d) that; *“From the date of entry into force of the present Agreement until the movement of troops is completed, any civilians residing in a district controlled by one party who wish to go and live in the zone assigned to the other party shall be permitted and helped to do so by the authorities in that district (Geneva Conference doc 1954)”* There were about one-hundred and twenty thousand northerners who went for evacuation but the French ship could handle only eighty thousand people (Prados 2005).

During the American-Vietnam war, there were troops smuggling for the Vietcong cells from the North to the South. Phở Bình, a phở shop in Saigon was a place of meeting for the undercover F100 Vietcong cell troop and weapon transportation during the tet offensive (1968). According to Los Angeles Times the shop was owned by Ngô Toại who moved from

north to south and was serving noodles while Vietcong cell members hid in the room. Nguyễn Kim Bách, son-in-law of the shop owner explained the secret room as;

“[the owner]... spent a year renovating the house, adding secret escape routes through the roof, sewers and adjoining buildings. A dark-haired beauty posed as his mistress to bolster his cover.

The 5-by-30-foot, concrete-lined basement hid eight-hundred pounds of B-40 antitank weapons, AK-47 assault rifles, grenades, dynamite and C-4 explosive. Upstairs, a Sharp Multiband Deluxe radio the size of a small suitcase allowed Tran to communicate with Hà Nội and with the Củ chi tunnels, a vast network of underground passageways that served as supply routes and hiding places for Viet Cong fighters.

Nguyen and other F100 members helped transport the weapons to Tran and others on carts pulled by buffalo. The arms and explosives were hidden beneath fruit, potted plants and straw mats and secreted in the carved-out base of a traditional Vietnamese bed (Cain 2010).”

Phở Bình is still selling phở while the upper floor became a museum collecting some furniture from the wartime. In relation to historical context, phở bình is seen as a symbol of patriotism and Vietnamese nationalism. Even though there are no official records, when talking about a Vietnamese national dishes, phở is the first name that people think of.

The development of phở has layers apart from changing in taste or ingredients; it also expresses the social circumstances of Vietnam and the Vietnamese. There have been so many

alterations since its first appearance in the early of twentieth century, this based on three assumptions. Though there is no precise answer yet, it could be implied that north Vietnam has a cultural influence from the Chinese and the French who appear to play an important role in Vietnamese society. The more famous phở became, the more both foreign populations were increasing.

Phở was famous among the labor class but its simplicity and approachable character made it well-known in every level of society. In records from the French it was found almost everywhere. Thus, it has been taken as a symbol of Vietnamese people and pride in the political literature in both positive and negative ways as the work of Tù Mỡ and Nguyễn Tuân can tell. After the French-Indochina war, phở entered south Vietnam along with northern migrants. Living far from their hometown, nostalgia was addressed in the most basic way: eating. An attempt to cook phở in the South led to another face of phở, with different taste and ingredients due to dissimilar geography.

Phở has become well-known as a national dish of Vietnam as a result of its appearance throughout the whole country. Socio-economic reforms after the end of the American-Vietnamese war are another important factor that helped in promoting its existence in through different approaches which will be explained in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

The socio-economic reform and Vietnam's social changes

As stated in the last chapter, phở has adapted from time to time along with a dynamic evolving society. Historically, phở is related to the eating culture of the Vietnamese, French and Chinese as a comfort food. It has been well-known among all classes of people since its origin, yet most popular among the laborers. However, the changes have gone beyond what appears in a bowl since the end of the Vietnam war and the socio-economic reform called Đổi Mới.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first and the second sections provide a picture of Vietnam in two periods: pre-reform period (1975-1986) and post-reform (1986 onwards). The third is about the presentation of phở after 1975 which is majorly based on observation through phở shops in Hà Nội and Hồ Chí Minh City. The last section refers to the factors that caused the adaption of phở from the perspective of socio-economic reforms based on two aspects: socialist-oriented market which affects the meaning of consumption and globalization which affects the cultural influence.

3.1 Vietnam in the pre-reform period (1975-1986)

The American-Vietnam war left Vietnam in ruins; the country suffered from the war; The Vietnamese Communist Party –who was in charge of governance – made an effort to reunite the whole country under a socialist regime; though the changes had started even before the war completely ended, it could not be harmoniously accomplished. In 1986,

therefore, the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam decided to launch socioeconomic reformation policies, or Đổi Mới, aimed at moving the country forward in the world state while maintaining a socialist regime.

The Socioeconomic reform massively influenced Vietnamese economy. Though it was launched to the public in 1986, the process of change required an amount of time ahead and abaft the marking. After the war ended in 1975, The Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) was struggling to reunite north and south Vietnam under a Socialism regime. At the fourth national congress of the communist party of Vietnam in December 1976, they determined *“...to move directly from small-scale production to large-scale production without passing through the capitalist stage, to give priority to heavy industry, and to turn Vietnam into a socialist country with modern agriculture and industry within twenty years,”* however, the different social backgrounds of the north and south caused an unstable change, especially in the economic aspect. Southern Vietnam had been influenced by liberalism during the United States domination while the North had been familiar with the communist regime due to the leadership of the VCP. Operating an intensive communism pathway from the first step of reunification, thus, was not working out.

During 1976-1980, the reconstruction of Vietnam's economy started unstably under a goal to reunify north and south Vietnam under Socialism. The industrial sector was nationalized while the agricultural one was collectivized. This transformation, however, provided an unexpected outcome according to an adequate understanding of social and economic conditions between north and south Vietnam as;

“...The social structure of north and south Vietnam had developed in quite different ways. These differences were the result of the long period of separation

after 1954... The clearing cultivation of new lands in the South had been conducted under French control and relied more on a system of modern capitalist exploitation than on the traditional organization of the Vietnamese village. As a result, private property was established on a wider spread basis in the Southern region, whereas in the North and Centre it co-existed with more traditional forms of land ownership (Ngoc, Trinh and Nguyen 2007)."

The Second five-year plan (1976-1980) focused on both industrial and agricultural production while the Vietnamese leader believed that they could easily bypass the capitalist industrialization stage and into the communist one. Thus, they mismanaged by prioritizing heavy industry and collectivized agriculture by using the benefit of abundant agrarian society to impose collectivization and excessive extraction from the agricultural sector in order to finance the development of heavy industry (Un, 3). This act discouraged the farmers to produce, and along with the natural disasters in 1977-1978, it led to food shortage.

The Second five-year plan which aimed to put Vietnam's economy into a system of "great socialist production" failed to succeed in time. Lê Duẩn also reported that,

"The living conditions of the people, particularly those of the laborers and civil servants, are very difficult. The supply sources of energy, raw materials and means of transport do not help the exploitation of the existing imports. Prices are falling prey to complex fluctuations. The mechanism of management and planning remain heavily bureaucratic and are based on State financing (cited in Trung 1982, 241)."

The failure brought about a major policy change in the third five-year economic plan (1981-1985) which never took final form but observed and adopted policies by year. Even though the third plan was still focused on becoming a socialist state, it compromised between ideological and pragmatic elements within the party leadership. Therefore, the policy announced each year fluctuated in whether to allow the private capitalist activities or collectivized agriculture and industry. However, the plan aimed to “develop agriculture by integrating the collective and individual sectors into an overall system emphasizing intensive cultivation and crop specialization (Cima 1989, 151).” This policy encouraged a rise in families' economies which were allowed to sign contracts for the collective farmland and took responsibility to meet the production requirements. They were allowed to have surplus while, in the other hand, they had to take responsibility if the production fell short. During the times of fluctuation, the private sector performed some activities to solve problems, an initial step of the coming reform. Fence-breaking (phá rào), a co-operation of the private sector to make deals with each other to supply materials, shop and sell on the free market, and give bonuses to the workers helped private owners to survive through the economic recession. Fence-breaking received positive responses, bringing economic benefits to the workers and abating their living difficulties and efficiency of the production unit. Another attempt to decentralized bureaucratic economic was pricing-salaries-money (giá-lương-tiền) which was approved by the Central Committee of the VCP in 1985. This increased the price of particular goods to its authentic value yet, later on, speeded up the inflation rates (Tuan 2013, 54).

Despite the plan focusing more on agricultural development and also encouraging small-scale businesses, the agenda was just to improve people's living condition due to food shortage in the late 1970s. Heavy industry was still prioritized as its investment was increased

by seventeen percent while the investment in light industry decreased by forty-eight percent (Cima 1989, 152). The fourth Plenum, Lê Duẩn criticized his cadres for neglecting the socialist revolution and set the goal to eliminate private trade and complete collectivization by 1985 (Vu 2017, 240). A half way compromise created fluctuation in the economy which meant Vietnam could not achieve any of their goals, including bringing about a stable economy in time.

3.2 Vietnam in the Post-reform (1986 onwards)

Vietnam had been through severe economic problems since the war ended. Their attempt to become a socialist state failed due to internal and external issues. With prominent progress from small reform in the Third Five-year Plan, the government realized that more economic reforms needed to be implemented. The economic experience in the previous ten years was an experiment of trail-and-error processes which lead to the launch of the socio-economic reform (Đổi Mới) at the 6th National Congress of the communist party of Vietnam along with admission of economic failure by Nguyễn Văn Linh;

“In the past ten years we have made a lot of mistakes in determining our objectives and approach to building the material and technological foundations for socialist reform and economic management... (Elliott 2012, 51)”

Whereby, in the Sixth Plenum of the Central committee the VCP endorsed this activity, considering a more liberal economy formed of state, collective, joint state-private (small business) and individual sectors. The party increased its support base on private and small economy units in order to enhance economic growth, to meet domestic needs, and to enhance the import-export role. The reforms were featured in four facets of change.

1. Although there was a strategy shift from 1980, most of the state investment still majorly relied on heavy industry. After experiencing improvement from the third five-year plan, state investment prioritized agriculture primarily, and light industry over heavy industry secondarily. In the fourth five-year plan, the production of food, consumer goods and export products were stressed, considered as the core of the socio-economic tasks for the five-year plan and the main objective to be attained (Thayer 1987, 158). Three major economic programs accounted for 70% of total state investment (Tran 2003, 11).
2. From the sixth party congress, the system of bureaucratic centralized management based on state subsidies was agreed to be abolished in order to shift to a market-oriented economy (Arkadie and Mallon 2004, 68). Therefore, price control was also eliminated for all kinds of goods except oil gas, electricity and transportation fees.
3. Private ownership was allowed in all activities. A communist party resolution issued in 1988 provided a greater role to individual and private enterprises especially ones related to agricultural activities. Farmers were given long-term rights to own land and allowed to sell their products directly to the market (Arkadie and Mallon 2004, 68). Additionally, Company Law and Law on Private Enterprises were enacted by the National Assembly on December 1990 in order to gradually eliminate control of ownership (Hai 2006, 40). Though the law was still shortcoming since it was a recent move, it is considered an essential foundation for laws and regulations that came about in later years. As a result, cooperation system was dismantled, price control was eliminated, and the role of private enterprise started to rise up since then.



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4. An open-door policy was pushing forward in a field of international trade and investment. As a result, the new Law on Foreign Investment was promulgated in 1987, 'enable a surge of the first wave of foreign direct investment flowing to Vietnam (Vuong 2014):'

The most essential part of Đổi Mới is when the Vietnamese Communist Party moved from centrally planned market to market-based economy as it was agreed at the 11th Party Congress that,

“Vietnam’s socialist-oriented market economy is the multi-sectoral commodity economy, operating under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam following the rules of the market economy while led and regulated by principles and nature of socialism (Cap 2016).”

Vietnam’s economy was improving both internationally and domestically. An average GDP growth rate in the first five years of reform took place: the agricultural sector was 4.5 percent; industry and construction were 2.7 percent; and the service sector was 6.4 percent (Thang 2000, 24). One mark proving the accomplishment of the reforms is how Vietnam —having suffered severely from food shortage in 1970s — became the third largest rice exporter by 1992 (Tran 2003, 13-14). The economic growth rate became constant from 1991-1992 when laws and regulations on business were approved and enacted with reconfirmation at the seventh party congress (1991) to continue with market economy which seemed to be successful (Schellhorn 1992, 234). Production rate continuously increased both in the agricultural and industrial sectors.

With legal progress, private sectors increased more rapidly and provided higher production rate, while foreign direct investment rate was growing over 30% (Minh 1996).

Before the reform, Vietnam's economy had majorly mobilized by stated-owned enterprises (SOEs), owned and run by the government. This is the heritage of a centrally planned economy which was supposed to provide jobs for the people and products for the nation (Frank 2013, 3). Yet, its failure in management —with the rising abilities of the private sector — led to SOEs reform or SOEs equitation aimed to equalize private sector to state sector. The equitation process created a rising middle class who eventually became the major consumers of food and drink products. On the other hand, the reform also brought Vietnam into globalization, connecting it with international organizations which not only impacted the economy, but also generated cultural changes.

Đổi Mới shifted Vietnam from the centrally plan economies into market-based economies by acknowledging, reconstructing and stimulating the development of private enterprises. The milestone to become a market-based economy is the official enactment of the Company and the Private enterprise laws in 1990, separated from The State-Owned Enterprise law. The separation is a process of SOEs equitation where state enterprise will have lessened privilege. They were also aimed at liberalizing the market as stated in the first article;

“[they]...laid a legal foundation for the development of private sector in the country. The right of freedom to do business and to establish businesses of Vietnamese citizens and entities was for the first time recognized, though limited to a certain extent, in these laws (Frank 2013, 9-10).”

Both sets of law had a huge effect on private sector development as over thirty-five thousand companies and private enterprises have been established with the total registered capital of 17,389,099 million VND within seven years after the laws were enacted. On the average, more than five thousand new companies and private enterprises are registered each year, with the annual capital of about 2,484,157 million VND. It is estimated that the private businesses have created over four-hundred thousand jobs and made considerable contribution to the State budget (MONDAQ 2000). Between 1986 and 1994, employment rates in state enterprises declined by 1.1 million while non-state sector employment rates increased by 6.8 million (Jansen 1997, 16). These two reverse numbers have marked a rapid growth in the non-state sector which has been supported untiringly.

Later on, in 1999, the new Enterprise law was launched, considered as an upgrade version and combination between the Company laws (1990) and the Private Enterprise law (1990). It provided more freedom and opportunities to three types of companies: (1) Limited Liability Companies (LLCs), (2) Shareholding Companies (SCs) and (3) Partnerships (Hai 2006, 30). The enterprise law allowed Vietnamese business in every scale to register without waiting for the government approval (the first step), which changed the process to one week instead of six months with the previous requirements. An easier registration process led to an expansion in the number of enterprises. Four months after the law was officially enacted, the number of registered private businesses had more than doubled (Brown 2002, 102).

However, with various sets of related laws and different provisions on each kind of business according to the economic sector, the law is not consistent enough —especially when it came to foreign investment/business. Thus, in 2005 the National Assembly of Vietnam enacted the Enterprise Law 2005, which officially took effect on July 1, 2006, to replace the Enterprise Law of 1999. This law provided a favorable environment for private business sectors as well as foreign business/investment and international integration as it “applied to all companies regardless of their owner or economic sector (Hai 2006, 31).” In Article 1 of the Enterprise Law (2005) it is stated “*This law sets forth provisions on the establishment, organizational management and operation of limited liability company, share-holding company, partnership and sole proprietorship belonging to all economic components; corporate group.*” Article 8 —on right of enterprise — allowed all kinds of enterprises to identify and to apply by their own initiative.

In the meantime, Vietnam established cooperation at the international level by participating in many economic organizations while developing diplomatic relations. In 1990, Vietnam developed its diplomatic relationship with the European Union (EU) and, a year after, with China. In 1992, their relationship with EU brought them to sign cooperation and trade agreements and restored its relationship with IMF, World Bank, and Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The communist party put the military force in Cambodia back in 1989. This action pleased ASEAN member countries. Along with progressive economic development, Vietnam signed the Treaty of Amity of cooperation with ASEAN in 1992 with an expectation to become a member by 2000. However, it took only three years for Vietnam to partake in this regional organization, being accepted in 1995. The most



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prominent development after joining in ASEAN is certainly economic, since ASEAN countries and Vietnam have a long history of trading even before they became a member. ASEAN's secretary General Lê Luong Minh stated "during the course of 10 years from 2006 to last year, Vietnam's GDP shares in ASEAN doubled from 3.5% to 7%. ASEAN-Vietnam trade increased 120% with tighter connectivity in infrastructure, trade mechanisms, and human resources (VOV 2017)."

With United States —considered the world biggest market and their former war enemy — their relation was re-established in the 1990s, followed by the signing of a bilateral trade agreement. The Americans were allowed to set up a defense POW/MIA accounting agency in order to find and return prisoners of war (POW) and those missing in action (MIA) in Vietnam again after it had ceased since 1975 when the communists took over the country. Along with the mission, Vietnam decided to pull back their military forces from Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge period which finally led to signing a peace contract under the United Nation observation (Mayin 2001,2). These situations marked the starting point of Vietnam's compromise with their former enemies and begins new phase of relationship.

A sign of diplomatic establishment came to life in 1993 when the two countries opened the Foreign Ministry offices in each other's capital (Alear 2018). In the following year the US lifted the embargo on Vietnam —this at the hand of president Bill Clinton. Eventually, the formal diplomatic relations between US and Vietnam began in 1995. Trade agreements were intensely discussed since then as Vietnam was eager to improve their progressive economic growth.

Although the bilateral agreement had been mentioned since 1996, it was signed and formally promulgated in 2001. The agreement deals with six major issues:

1. Market access for industry and agriculture, including tariff concessions.
2. Protection of intellectual property
3. Market access for services
4. Investment protection
5. Business facilitation
6. Transparency

Under the bilateral trade agreement, trade on goods between US and Vietnam grew steadfastly resulting in the increase of employment rates and upgraded technologies. Due to the bilateral agreement, the relationship between Vietnam and United States developed so far that in 2006 the United States finally granted Vietnam a permanent normal trade relation (PNTR), recognizing Vietnam as a market-based economy country. This agreement is the milestone proving that Vietnam is opening for international economic integration even it has to compromise over their old enemies. This status has brought Vietnam into World Trade Organization where an opportunity for international trade is higher.

After obviously showing an expectation of joining the WTO since 1990, Vietnam was finally accepted in December 2006. However, joining in World Trade Organization (WTO) is also one of the big issues which marked widely the economic integration of Vietnam. As the goal of Đổi Mới is to have sustainable economic growth and poverty alleviation, joining in the global scale organization is a crucial contribution. To be a member of WTO, however, the country is forced by the regulations to improve and adjust their foreign and international trade regimes.



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Legal reform was required as the first issue due to general WTO rules which singled out that a member country's laws relating to trade must be clear, certain, transparent and conform to WTO conventions (Tran-Nam 2007, 399). In addition, there are seventy-five new and amended laws or decrees aimed at reforming the economy both in general and the administration in particular. Meanwhile, State Owned Enterprise reforms were urgently required as they fostered a culture of corruption, strengthened a sense of nationalism over global integration and retarded the development of the private sector that played an indispensable role in WTO economic environment. Changes in the economy have supported the rising of private businesses where the Vietnamese possess higher opportunity and better income.

3.3 The growth of specific groups of Vietnamese

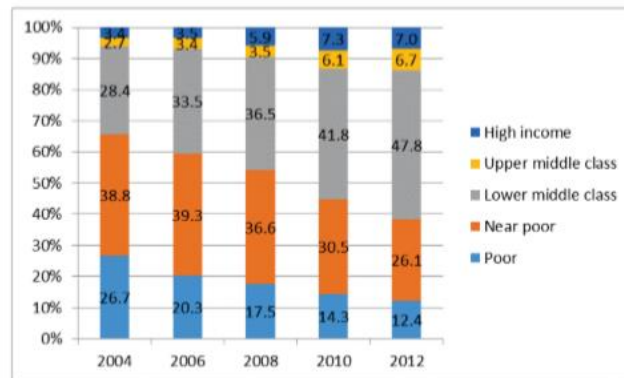
Since socialism does not seem to be helpful to the development of the country, Đổi Mới was launched to save Vietnam from an economic crisis and mismanagement by shifting from centrally planned market to market-based economy, encouraging the role of private sector and foreign investment. The government reformed and amended the laws of enterprises to equate the role of the private sector and minimize the number of SOEs. Meanwhile, Vietnam has reached out to the global stage, participating in international economic organizations, seeking for more opportunities to improve their economy beyond their boundaries. As a matter of course, Vietnam was forced to develop transparency in their economy to gain trust from the world. The changes in economic structure caused the changes in demographic structures of particular groups of people which are the middle class, the overseas Vietnamese and the rural-urban migrants.

3.3.1 The rise of the middle class

Since the socio-economic reform, the size of the middle class in Vietnam has been growing due to structural changes in economic policy. The term ‘middle class’ is rarely stated in Vietnam or occasionally mentioned as middle level (tầng lớp trung lưu). They are usually described relatively to modern or civilized and it is stressed that they acquired their wealth because of hard work and education (Leshkovich 2012 cited in Helmisaari 2015, 38). They adhered to a certain lifestyle or set of rules in order to seek a social position (Nguyen-Marshall and Drummond 2012, 9), while higher income allows them to reach a wider range of products with higher quality.

According to the Asian Development Bank research on the role of middle class in economic development (2011), there is a significant relationship between the size of middle class and economic growth. They play an important role on driving consumption growth innovative development as stated;

“Our analysis also shows that the middle class is positively associated with higher levels of urbanization and better democracy, while a larger service sector, ethnic fractionalization, and landlocked countries are negatively related to the size of the middle class. Another significant finding is that the size of the government in an economy is positively related to the size of the middle class; however, growth in the government’s size hurts the growth of the middle class (Chun, Hasan, and Ulubasoglu 2011, 3).”



Source: Vu Hoang Dat 2015

Figure 2
The rapid growth of Vietnamese middle-class from 2004-2012

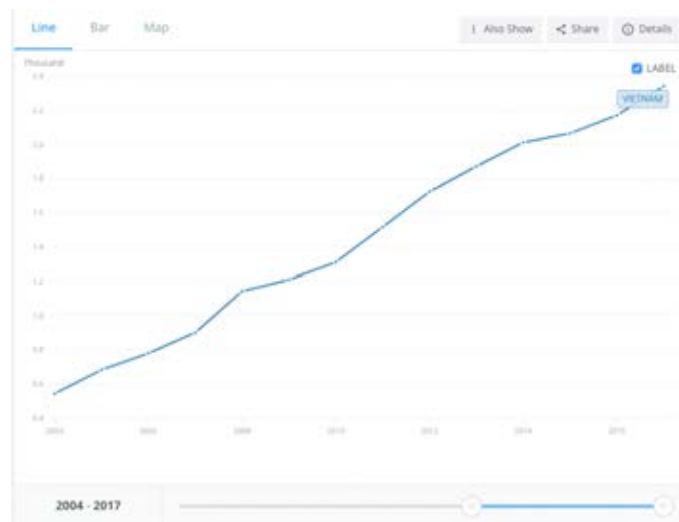


Figure 1
Rapid rising of GDP per Capita of Vietnam

People who belong to the middle-class group could be identified via their income, expenditures or even education level. Research shows, Vietnamese middle class refers to people whose wage is approximately 1,500-3,000 USD per month, or who spend around 3-10 USD per day. Some of them have upgraded from the labor class who can reach an education and find job opportunities because of economic development, while some are the former state officers who gained higher position in private sectors. Considering demographic information,

by 2017, the number of Vietnam's population grew up to 95.5 million of which 70 percent is under age of 35 and only 2.19 percent is unemployed (Trading Economic 2018). There is a prominent rising of GDP per capita; in 2004, GDP per capita of the Vietnamese was only 543,866 USD but it was growing steadfastly to 1,515.48 USD and reached 2,342 USD in 2016. On the other hand, the growth of the lower middle income class increased from 28.4 percent of total population in 2004 to 47.8 percent in 2012. Similarly, the upper middle-income growth rate rose from 2.7 to 6.7 percent in the same years —meanwhile the number of near poor and poor are dropping by almost double. The Boston consulting group suggested that in 2020, Vietnam's middle class and affluence consumer will be rising in double as the country's GDP per capita will be able to rise up to 3,400 USD (Bharadwaj et al. 2013).

The enlarging size of the middle class and higher GDP per capita indicate a decrease in poverty and an increase in consumption since people have more purchasing power. Wage and employment are an important factor as when people gain higher salaries, they spend more and help boost the economy. The purchasing power also raises competition in the market since people are looking for more options that please their wants and needs at best.

Liberalized market changes the way people produce and consume products. Private consumption has changed from limitations to encouragement. Jean Baudrillard (1981) argues *“consumption is simply another manifestation of labour that makes the system of capitalism complete, a system that requires both sides to exist in collaboration with one another. Without consumption, the forces of labour production have no purpose and no function (cited in Fitchett 1997, 71)”* While planned economy usually focuses on producing and delivering

enough goods to people, a market economy fundamentally depends on growth —and thus on increasing levels of consumption.

Hong and Thien (2014) pointed out that after Đổi Mới, the individuals are allowed *to pursue freely of their private gains* instead of receiving what the government considers sufficient. In a country ruled by a communist party and with little freedom of speech or media, consumption has represented the strongest sense of liberty brought along by Đổi Mới. The reforms have led to a new acceptance of consumption and display of wealth, and those who can afford it are now able to purchase and display consumer objects that would surely be judged as bourgeois excess not long ago (Hansen 2017, 182).

3.3.2 Returning of overseas Vietnamese (Việt Kiều)

After the socio-economic reforms, there is a rising number of overseas Vietnamese traveling back to Vietnam to live-permanently or to stay long term. Overseas Vietnamese are the people who fled out of Vietnam as refugees, relocating in western countries such as the United States, France, Australia, Canada and Thailand. Most of them have adapted to their host culture, attained an education and learned particular skills. Before the socio-economic reform, they usually sent remittances back to their family or relatives who stills resided in Vietnam; however, after the reform, it shows a growing number of overseas Vietnamese visited their homeland or even came back to reside or to invest in Vietnam due to attractive offers on investment provided by the Vietnamese government who saw the advantage of their contribution to the growth of the economy.

Since the second world war, there are approximately 2.6 million Vietnamese living their own country and residing abroad. The biggest majority of overseas Vietnamese nowadays left Vietnam in 1975 after the end of the American Vietnam war (Dorais 2001,3). These people considered themselves refugees, opposing the communist regime from the northern government whose power spread down for reunification. There are majorly three waves of migration due to times and reason of leaving. The first wave of migration was during 1975-1977, right after the war ended. About ninety-seven percent of these people are resettled in United States. The second wave was after 1977 who fled out by sea —the so called ‘boat people’. There are varieties in class —from labor to middle class trying to escape socialist regimes of the VCP. The last wave was after 1980 due to enabling family reunification programs which allowed Vietnamese residents abroad to bring their close family members who lived in vietnam (Dorais 2001, 8). There are about 2.7 million Vietnamese overseas resettled all around the world, mostly in United States, France and Australia. Most of them are highly skilled and well-educated and fully adapted to western culture.

Since they left with limited choice and poor conditions, overseas Vietnamese had to adapt quickly when they relocated abroad. Their standard of living after resettlement was improving as they were mostly recognized in the middle-income class. The wealthy grew up from 0.8 to 8% while the poor decreased from 16.8 to 6.3 percent. Most of them fled to western countries where education and special training are more accessible therefore, apart from advantage in linguistic, multi-linguistic and cultural skills, overseas Vietnamese contain preferable academic skills in particular fields. This benefits them as a worker in foreign or international companies/organizations in their homeland, especially for foreign companies interested in investing in Vietnam but which do not have local connection and knowledge

(Ivan V. Small 2012, 236). This bond offers an advantage for the diaspora in expanding trade between their new host county where they have preferential access to available opportunities, and their country of origin where they continue to have strong links. (cited Ries 1998 in Pham 2010, 12)

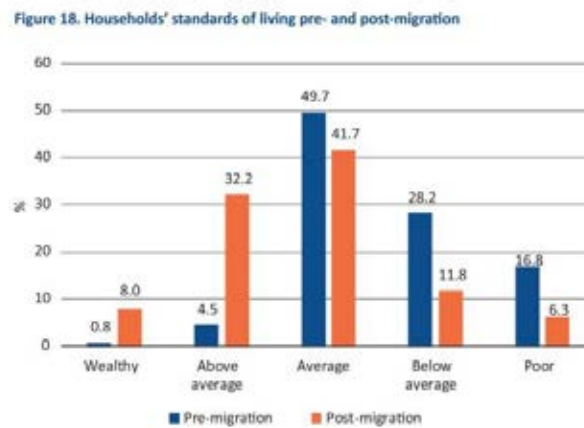


Figure 3
The Household's standard of living pre- and post-migration

Although most of them have spent over a decade out of their homeland and being restricted to returning, they remain in touch with their family or relatives who reside in Vietnam. Before the socio-economic reform, the overseas Vietnamese usually sent remittances back to their family. In the mid to late 1980s, approximately one to two hundred million USD was sent to Vietnam as a remittance each year and it continued rising up throughout the 1990s. In 2001, the value of total remittance sent back to Vietnam was estimated at about 1,754 billions and reaching 2.6-2.7 billion in 2003 (Sidel 2007, 3).

Overseas Vietnamese remittances have played a significant role in the growth of the economy. Andrew Pham has suggested that apart from formal investment figures recorded by the government, capital inflow of the overseas Vietnamese has been sent along with their

remittance due to lacking trust in government policies. In 2014, remittances reached twelve billion —amounting to 6.4 percent of Vietnam's GDP. In 2015, it grew to thirteen billion, accounting to seven percent of the GDP and still continues growing. Around seventy percent of the remittances are invested in production and business while another twenty percent goes to real estate. Apart from financial support in business, the overseas Vietnamese also make a great contribution on knowledge transfer. They offer a lot of assistance in education, training and retaining personnel and also share professional and managerial skills on business (Pham 2010 ,4).

Generally, overseas Vietnamese fled because a socialist regime was being applied to the whole country during the beginning stage of reunification in 1975 — another reason was disappointment toward the economy. The achievement in economic improvement since the economic reform, therefore, held their resentment toward their home country. They have seen more opportunities to grow in Vietnam, seeing themselves as a bridge for business sectors since they hold qualified management skills, language skills and in-depth cultural knowledge of both Vietnam and their host countries (Manabu 2016). Government policies towards the overseas Vietnamese were becoming more acceptant since the socio-economic reform. The Foreign Investment Law which was implemented in 1989 has been amended to improve the flow of investment. The amended version of the 1992 Foreign Investment Law implemented in May 1993 finally introduced the incentives for the overseas Vietnamese investment in Vietnam. Besides, the implementation of resolution 36-NQ/TW issued on March 26, 2004, of the Politburo on overseas Vietnamese have officially supported them on maintaining close links to their homeland while residing in other countries; while also encouraging them to

invest and do business in Vietnam (The Politburo of the Communist Party of Vietnam, 2004).

This has allowed for policies toward the overseas residents to become more transparent.

On the other hand, Law on Vietnamese Nationality implemented on July 1998 has encouraged the restoration and relinquishment of Vietnamese nationality by setting time limits for settling an application for naturalization in Vietnam. Following the guideline of Resolution 36-NQ/TW, the amendment of Law on Vietnamese Nationality 2008 has officially established the identity of overseas Vietnamese by enabling them to restore their Vietnamese nationality and also offering dual citizenship to people who has Vietnamese origin. In this version a visa exemption guideline for the overseas Vietnamese was also introduced in order to encourage the return of the overseas Vietnamese community to Vietnam. Along with these policies, it has been reported that there are twelve thousand overseas Vietnamese traveling back to reside in Hồ Chí Minh City as long-term residents or relocating permanently. There are increasing number of investments from Vietnamese as there are more than nine hundred businesses in Hồ Chí Minh City managed by the overseas Vietnamese, who have invested approximately 1.8 billion USD. They have impacted mostly the real estate and restaurant markets, especially the fusion food and western style due to their mixed cultural background. (Saigoneer, 2017; Pennington, 2019).

Overseas Vietnamese affected the growth of Vietnamese economy since they have skills and financial power. With favorable policies toward their status and benefits, they are more interested on investment or work in Vietnam, using their advantages to bridge the country's economy to the international flow. Apart from boosting investment and economic growth, the return of overseas Vietnamese has introduced the western lifestyle and culture to Vietnam, especially in the food and restaurant sectors. Dan Q. Dao (2018) has proposed the

role of overseas Vietnamese in the transformation of the food scene of Hồ Chí Minh City when they return to reside in Vietnam. Stylish modern cafés and restaurants serving fusion foods are blooming with impressive style and decoration —these are owned by overseas Vietnamese and they introduce a western/mixed culture of eating not only on the food but also the scene with establishments such as sky bars or co-working spaces. This modern scene of food consumption is growing in Vietnam and it is spurred up even among the local food places.

3.3.3 Increasing of Rural-urban migrants and low-income class in urban

Vietnam

Although the socio-economic arena has boosted the rising of middle class in a prominent level, the lower-income class still has huge share in the total population. Vietnam has the highest urbanization rate in ASEAN countries. From 2000 to 2010, urban population growth increased by 7.5 million people, annual population growth was at 4.1 percent. According to data from Vietnam General Statistics, in 1979, there were 3,293,146 people living in Hồ Chí Minh City and 2,456,928 people in Hà Nội. The number growing slightly in 1989, three years after the refer, reaching 3,924,435 in Hồ Chí Minh City and 3,056,146 in Hà Nội. From 2009 to 2016, the number rose from 6,47,200 to 7,310,700 in Hà Nội and 7,196,100 to 8,287,000 in Hồ Chí Minh City.

Growth in the private sector and foreign enterprise caused by the socio-economic reform changed the structural demand of labor in foreign investment and the private enterprise. Foreign investment tends to increase “specialization and the share of less land intensive sectors such as manufacturing and services (Grekou and Owoundi 2017, 7-8).” In

order to cut costs of communication and transportation, their production activity inclined to congregate in the urban area. From 2005 to 2013, the urban employment in Vietnam grew by twenty-five percent while rural employment grew only fourteen percent (UNESCO 2018, 4). Also, operating foreign investment is required by the host country's law to hire local staff so it generates a number of job availabilities for the local.

Urban population is combines two groups, the local urban and the migrant, which can be divided in to urban-urban migrants and rural-urban migrants. Local urban represented most of the urban population; however, the number of rural-migrants are growing continuously. From 1999 to 2009, rural-urban migrant population was the only group that increased compared to the number of urban-urban migration and urban non-migration. The number increased from 855,943 to 2,062,171, or from 7.2 percent to 9.2 percent of the total urban population.

Table 1 Urban migrant population of 1999 and 2009

	1999		2009		Annual growth rate (%) ^a
	Population	%	Population	%	
Urban destination					
U-U migrant	971.486	8.2	1.719.056	7.4	5.9
R-U migrant	855.943	7.2	2.062.171	8.9	9.2
Urban non-migrant	10.089.625	84.7	19.413.699	83.7	6.8
Total	11.917.055	100	23.194.927	100	6.9

Most of the migrants are young people, aged between 19 and 35 years of age and their decision on moving was majorly based on pull factors such as job availability, better working conditions and life improvement (Vietnam General Statistic Office 2016, 6). Economic improvement is the main reason for migration in Vietnam since the economic

reforms, there are rising numbers of rural-urban migration caused by the growth of private enterprises and foreign investment which shifted the structure of labor demand.

Despite work in urban area promising improvement on living conditions and higher salary, most workers concentrate in low-paying occupations and living in limited conditions in the city. Unskilled labor represented the largest part of the labor force with technical qualification at 61.92 percent followed by worker without certificates/degrees at 14.41 percent. University or higher education who tend to earn higher salary represented only 9.48 percent (ILO 2018, 13). The rural-urban migrants are inclined to fall in the lower-income class in urban Vietnam since they usually have lower education level and potential than the local urban workers or urban-urban worker who have higher opportunities to be properly educated (Liu 2019, 136). Considering the reliability, there are only 30.9 percent of migrant workers that have formal labor contracts, 21 percent have verbal contracts and nearly 10 percent have no labor contact at all—they are prone to abuse and over-working problems (UNESCO 2018, 3). The most common problem is high rental price which forces them to live in poor conditions, and lower ability to access of cash.

Urban laborers are faced with poor living conditions in urban areas since they gain wages lower than the moderate cost of living. According to Global Living Wage Coalition, the average cost of living in Vietnam is at around 6.44 million VND or 290 USD per month, while the average income of workers in urban areas in the first quarter of 2016 was 4.20 million VND per month. (Ministry of Labour-Invalids and Social Affairs, 2016, 4) The main expenditure is food which costs about 58 percent of their wages. Workers tend to spend on ready-made food since they lack time and space to cook by themselves. With limited income,

their first concern is on the price of the products and their functional rather than aesthetically factors.

3.3.4 Development of tourism and the role of food and cuisine

Tourism appeared in Vietnam since before the socio-economic reform, but it did not have a major role since Vietnam was isolated from the other countries. The first wave of tourism development in Vietnam was mainly for political delegation during the time of the Vietnam war, from 1960 to 1975. The Vietnam Tourist Company was established under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and was moved to the Ministry of Public Security later. Tourism was a part of state management to show the capability of the state for political reasons –not for leisure time or relaxation. There were limited resources and options.

The second wave started since the war ended in 1975 and until 1990. There was some development of tourism in cities such as Hồ Chí Minh City, Huế, Đà Nẵng, Vũng Tàu and Cần Thơ. Tourism companies were established by state enterprises, primarily to promote patriotism and peace between north and south Vietnam as a part of the war's rehabilitation. The tourists who visited Vietnam at this time were the members of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) like U.S.S.R and Eastern Europe (NG 2003, 83), and some locals. In 1978, the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, the first organization to manage directly on tourism, was formed and took care of thirty state enterprise tourism companies.

However, with the launch of Đổi Mới, tourism was recognized as an economic sector in 1986. Gradually implementations of new economic policies which are more open for

foreign investment took place, and many investors poured into Vietnam expecting investment opportunities including in tourism sector. In 1989, the number of foreign tourists was increasing from three-hundred and sixty-nine thousand to two-hundred and fifty thousand, creating one-hundred and forty-million US dollars and with-thousand direct jobs. The major obstacle at that time was poor infrastructure, ineffective service and co-ordination. Also, in 1990, the state initiated the campaign ‘*Visiting Vietnam year,*’ yet it was considered unsuccessful due to their lack of facilities and poor services. (NG 2003, 84)

Nevertheless, in the third wave from 1991 to the present, the government put more attention on the tourism sector, and it has been making a progressive development since then. With higher stability of business laws, there is more foreign investment in the tourism sector, leading to higher standards of facilities and management. The establishment of the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT) which was placed directly under Prime Minister Lê Đức Anh's control in 1992 also marked an important role for tourism in Vietnam. Their policy directions were stated in Government Resolution 45/CP and the ‘renovation of tourism management and development’ issued on June 22, 1993, stressed;

“Concentration on overall planning for tourism development in the whole country, and the setting up of tourist centers with outstanding and attractive products for drawing domestic and foreign investment capital (Hall and Page 2000, 175)”

Economic equitation encourages tourism business to open up for more various types of enterprises (for example, collective, private-owned, family run, and foreign-invested). Some state-owned enterprises such as Hanoi Tourist Company, Saigon Tourist Company, and Ben Thanh Tourist Company became private enterprises (Hall and Page 2016, 7). Meanwhile, as

the benefit has been rising by year, congress announced the first master plan for tourism development in 1996, following with the second one in 2001 when tourism become the spearhead sector of Vietnamese economy. In the meantime, Vietnam: Destination for the new Millennium campaign was launched, contributing to the rising number of arrivals. In the national level, the congress approved the first National strategies for Tourism development 2001-2010 (NTSD) with the intention to make tourism as a spearhead industry, to achieve an average annual sectoral GDP growth rate of 11-15 percent to turn Vietnam into one of the important Asia destinations of 2010 with effective resource management (Truong 2013, 37). The NTSD was formulated and developed into two national action plans, used in fifty provinces. The National Action Plan for Tourism Development 2002-2005 was aimed at establishing the foundation for tourism to be a spearheading industry, focusing on the growth of domestic and foreign tourists' numbers. The second plan which was active from 2006 to 2010 also concentrated on the number of tourists and intended to improve the quality and diversification of tourism products and services as the policies wanted to enhance Vietnam in the international market (Truong 2013, 40-41).

The recent NSTD 2010-2020 insisted in modernizing tourism as it is going to become a key economic factor whilst expanding the realm of development to promote cultural tourism, sustainable tourism and social engagement. Economically, the plan aimed to push an average growth rate of the tourism industry to 11.5-12 percent per year and to receive 10-10.5 million international arrivals and 47-48 million domestic tourists and would create three million jobs, including eight-hundred and seventy-thousand employees working directly in tourism (Das 2019).

Tourism in Vietnam has been growing steadfastly due to improvements in economy and society since the socio-economic reform. By improving its economic stability, the former war battle ground was rehabilitated, readying itself to welcome numbers of tourists as the tourism was recognized as an economic sector. There are strategies and policies that came out to support the growth of tourism since it has been expected to make huge profit and create jobs, boosting in turn economic growth. At the same time, those strategies have not focused only on business but also helped enhance the identities within the country to promote their uniqueness.

Recently, food has become a major product which has been used to promote cultural tourism in Vietnam which –in turn – has received more and more attention since the beginning of tourism development. Firstly, the development focused only on tangible cultural heritage such as historical sites, historical matters in the museum and war remnants that served a political agenda. Intangible cultural material has just caught attention in this recent decade as the Law on Cultural heritage included preservation of intangible cultural heritage in 2009 and also revised the definition of cultural heritage. In the National Tourism Masterplan through 2020, with a vision to 2035, there are four main tourism products that are looking to be promoted; (1) Marine tourism, (2) Cultural tourism, (3) Eco tourism, (4) City tourism. Cultural tourism has become one of the major products since Vietnam contains diversified culture due to its fifty-four ethnic minority groups.

Though food is not the major product of Vietnam's tourism, it was marked as a priority in the development of cultural tourism by Prime Minister Phan Văn Khải –recorded in decision No.201/QĐ-TTg of January 22, 2013, approving the master plan on development of Vietnam's tourism through 2020, with a vision toward 2030 (2013, 64) – and considered an

important method for the international tourists to experience Vietnam. Food has been used to promote the country in many brochures and advertisements about tourism in Vietnam due to its attraction. For example, VNAT and VITA has seen that the Democratic People of Korea and the United States of America summit in Hà Nội on February 27-28, 2019, was a good opportunity to promote tourism. At the media centre, there was tourism information desk to provide information about traveling in Vietnam and also providing free local dishes for the press. All of the foods that they provided were selected by the government (Nguyễn, Mai. 2019. Interviewed by author. 22 March). Also, one-day tour hosted by Saigontourist and Hanoitourist was offered to all international press and tourists (Nhưng 2019).

In 2017, The Vietnam Culinary Conservation, Research and development Centre (CRDC) was established in accordance with Decision 62/QĐ-HHDLVN of the Vietnam Tourism Association. The centre is responsible for research about the specialty of Vietnamese dishes and also for identifying the long-term direction of Vietnamese cuisine under the goal delicious and healthy (Tu Anh, 2017). The culinary festival “Essence of Vietnamese food” took place in Hồ Chí Minh city on April 6-8, 2018, in order to promote food tourism in Vietnam. The workshop “Conservation and development of traditional Vietnamese cuisine” was hosted under the framework of Vietnam international Tourism fair, 2018. Vietnamese famous dishes are also carried along with Vietnam tourism promote roadshow in Europe organized by VNAT in Paris on September 27, 2018, Madrid on October 1, 2018, and Milan on October 3, 2018. Apart from expressing Vietnam tourism’s potential to welcome higher number of tourists with increasing luxurious facilities, the delegates attending the event also had a chance to try some famous Vietnamese dishes (Thanh 2018). These activities have shown the vital role of food and cuisine in Vietnam’s tourism. Food is not the main product in the large

scale of tourism development, however, food is considered an important element on promoting Vietnamese culture in both the domestic and international stages (Nguyễn, Mai. 2019. Interviewed by author. 22 March).

When the role of food in the tourism arena is enhanced, competition between restaurants is inevitable especially in the world of globalization where access to information, technologies and material is effortless. Most of phở in superficial image uses an imported beef from Australia or Japan, the countries globally known for high quality beef. With better means of communication and transportation, the restaurants can reach out beyond Vietnam to seek selective materials to add a gimmick for particular groups of customers.

Moreover, rising awareness on food safety in Vietnam is strengthened since it is a global concern and the measurement of modernity. The coming of foreigners stimulates Vietnam to improve their food safety standards due to scandal in the pasts that costed Vietnam \$740 in productivity and the top list of worries among public (World Bank, cited in Nguyen 2018). The Department of Food Safety has officially dispatched decree No. 4918/FHS-ND (2016) to the Department of Health of each province to effectively address three issues; (1) enhancing information and conducting food safety checks to prevent food poisoning at the tourist resorts, restaurants, hotels, catering and street food businesses, (2) directing the local government unit to actively build and implement food safety plans, especially on early detecting the violation of regulations in tourism resorts, hotels and restaurants, (3) directing the sub-department of Food Safety and Hygiene of the provinces under the Central government to establish coordination with the medical centers of the provinces, providing prompt medical treatment and monitoring food poisoning and diarrhea. Additionally, the Vietnamese Food Administration published the regulations for the restaurants located in

tourist attractions, including assessment in the quality of food, hygiene, cleanliness of the location and decoration.

Food is an element of local culture and an expression of the history, habits and traditions of a community or geographical area. It also determines and shapes the culinary history of a community and expresses itself into a tangible matter –yet, intangible matters are still embedded in a dish and the surroundings as scenery of local culture. Modern tourism is focused on more authenticity which lacks in modern society and lifestyle. Eating local foods provide a sense of joining into an authentic local community. Mai H. Nguyễn, the Deputy head of Research Management and International Cooperation Division, Institute for Tourism Development Research, informed that food and eating has been a major product in promoting the culture. Food tourism is not just only eating but it is a story telling of how people make or invent their culture, how they develop, etcetera. Now Vietnam is looking for innovative and creative tourism –the traditional tourism like sight-seeing is already stable. Now the trend is for the creative and innovative that enhances people's experience, therefore, to touch the new style of tourism and food is a good method to bring people in that experience (Interviewed by author. 22 March 2019).

In Vietnam, food and culinary tourism has received higher interest among tourist. Street food vendors, local restaurant and food shops were crowded with foreigners and tourists who wish to try the authentic experience. Even though Vietnam still does not have a solid strategy on food/culinary tourism, it has been revised in the master plan of tourism development 2010-2020 vision 2030 as the establishment of organizations related to preservation and development of food and cuisine has shown that it has gained overwhelming attention.

Globalization also enhanced the competition in restaurants creating various alternatives for the tourists and also encouraging the standard of food safety. Implementation of regulations on food safety —specifically for the tourist restaurants and resorts — implied the intention to improve food safety to the global standard, gaining trust from the visitors. It is obvious that food has been playing an important role on representing the Vietnam-ness to the eyes of foreigners through the image that has been created.

Several changes happened in Vietnam since the socio-economic reform was conducted. The policies supported market-based economy rather than centrally planned economy by supporting the role of private enterprise and foreign investment. Vietnam has participated in many international organizations which impelled Vietnam to meet with global standard. The enhancement of private enterprise and foreign investment spurred the numbers within the middle-income class who is now able to afford existential products.

The reform also offered the opportunity for the overseas Vietnamese to invest in Vietnam and restore their nationality. Their remittances have effectively supported the growing of investment since they possess knowledge and financial support to Vietnam's economy. The returning of the overseas Vietnamese has generated particular trends of consumption, influenced majorly from their western host countries.

Tourism has become a spearhead of Vietnam's economy since the reform was conducted. Their plan expanded from improving the quality of tourism to the commodification of cultural products to be promoted in the tourism sector. Food has gained more attention in the tourism sector as a product to express Vietnam's identity to eyes of the

outsider. With the responsibility food has within tourism, thus, it has been adapted and recreated in a particular form in order to send the message based on what Vietnam wanted to be perceived. Two major changes, the socio-economic reform and the development of tourism has shaped and varied the presentation of pho. This will be explain in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Presentation of phở: forms, context, and consumption after 1986

Socio-economic reform has altered the presentation of phở due to the changes in the groups of people and the growth of the tourism sector. The rising numbers among the middle class have offered opportunity for the Vietnamese to enjoy consuming products beyond its utilitarian function, including food products. The retuning of overseas Vietnamese whether as tourists or permanent residents has changed the trend of serving and consumption. Meanwhile, the growth of tourism has put more emphasis on cultural product as a brand of the country, including food.

In this chapter, the presentation of phở will be introduced in two arenas; domestic consumption and tourism consumption which has different character and presentation formed by unlike implications. In domestic consumption, the purpose of serving is based mainly in its utilitarian function, yet several options are introduced for existential consumption. Phở has been related to the sense of commodity that contained cultural value, implying the way it is served and consumed in existential consumption. Meanwhile in tourism consumption, phở has been adapted and crated for tourism purposes.

4.1 Phở as a Cultural Commodification

The term “Cultural Commodification” is a combination of two essential terms: culture and commodification. According to anthropological views, culture is defined as “whatever is distinctive about the way of life of people, community, nation or social group. (Hall, 1997, cited in, Maccarrone-Eaglen 2009)” Commodification, rooted from ‘commodify’ which appeared since the 1980s, means the process that use-value goods or services are changed to

be bought and sold in the market as the product has to benefit for daily consumption as well as bringing profit from trading. From the meaning of culture and commodification, when it comes together, it defines to make something with group identity become a good which can be bought and sold in the market. Cultural Commodification has existed since the middle of the nineteenth century and become more intense when the globalization and capitalism, the drivers of capitalism, were spread toward the world. Everything is able to become profitable goods whether it is tangible or intangible.

According to Greenwood (1977), culture as commodity is *a thing which is made from factors of production; land, capital, labor, entrepreneur* as these intangible elements can be used profitably. However, commodification suspended culture into capitalism where everything is valued and tradable as *“we are seeing the transformation of cultures into ‘local color,’ making peoples’ cultures extensions of the modern mass media. Culture is being packaged, priced, and sold like building lots, rights-of-way, fast-food, and room service, as the tourist industry promises that the world is his/hers to use. All the ‘natural resources,’ including cultural traditions, have their price, and if you have the money in hand, it is your right to see whatever you wish. (131)”*

On the other hand, June Nash (2000) argued by looking upon neoliberalism nationalism that cultural commodification supports nationalist ideology when, sometimes, the definitions of stuff intervened by the state, adding national identity spontaneously. Cultural commodification is, therefore, able to be propelled by politics and economy and majorly expected to make more money from zero budget. The word “cultural goods” was defined by UNESCO in the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression as “those goods, which at the time are considered as a specific attribute, use or



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purpose, which embody or convey cultural expressions, irrespective of the commercial value they may have (2005, p.6).”

Halewood and Hannam (2001) expressed two aspects about commodified culture which are;

1. Cultural commodification is related to nostalgia which contributes to maintain cultural values and diversity. Sometimes nostalgia is not created by the truth in the past but is selected or invented in accordance to the prospected ideology or belief.

2. Cultural commodification identifies culture with the concept of inauthenticity. It was blamed for devaluating its original culture since to commodify is to reproduce culture for business interests rather than to fulfill social needs. This would create the new form of culture which is too twisted to see its original value and function.

Though food commodification seems to have distinct historical background from the other sort of culture, it still contained the sense of nostalgia and concept of authenticity. Most scholars including Fred Magdoff (2008) and José Luis Vivero-Pol (2017) agreed that food commodification has been commoditized along with the settlement of nomadic communities when people found surplus in their own production and started patronizing each other. Capitalism, in addition to social transition, is another acceleration to highly intensify commodification of this necessity product as well as industrial revolution which expanded farming land and increased yield. Soon after, the mass production took place leading to highly intense competition of commodities. In spite of this fact, food has gone beyond the basic needs to relate with various alternatives for selection and convenient approach.

After the socio-economic reform, Vietnam has absorbed an intense idea of capitalism and adapted it to the economic plan. Cultural commodification, therefore, gradually occurred

to various things including food, while people also have several choices to choose what they want to eat. Apart from utilitarian consumption, existential consumption of phở on a daily basis could express the social status and preference of each person. Meanwhile, in the tourism arena phở has been obviously commoditized through recreation in order to express the identity of Vietnam.

4.2 Daily consumption

From last chapter, phở has been perceived as a simple dish everyone can have whenever and wherever they want. It is a comfort food for Vietnamese people as stated in some literature whether its major consumer is the labor due to its reasonable price and sufficient calories. However, after the American-Vietnamese war ended, the unification of north and south Vietnam was not going well due to ideological differences. Also, war damage left Vietnam in serious economic recession. These led Vietnam to the socio-economic reform which was aimed to bring back the economy and create peace in the unification between the two parts. Đổi Mới, though it was launched in 1986, remains the fundamental basis of Vietnamese society and economy in the present. Its policies affect on both macro and micro economic levels, society, and culture of the Vietnamese, and have impacted the way people consume products and foods. Since then phở has been consumed in a different way.

Consumption behavior of Vietnamese people is impacted by two issues; cultural trends and spending power (Luong 2016). Cultural trends are dynamic, influenced by personal factors such as education level, atmosphere of society and flow of information which affect the decision making of a person when he/she have to select the best product. Power of purchasing is interrelated with the economic growth, suggesting how much one is going to

earn from his job. Nonetheless, there is no exact pattern or grammar in food consumption behavior of people in each class but there are options in food and limitations based on power of purchasing that each class possesses. The labor or lower income class consumes food on their income which is not high, therefore, their concern relies more on the quantity rather than quality. Meanwhile, the middle-income and high class have less limitations on spending money on quality food. However, that does not mean they will always eat expensive foods, but they can access more options.

Many scholars suggest that there are two types of semiotic of consumption based on consideration of the customer (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Kehret-Ward 1998; Adomaviciute 2013) which are utilitarian consumption and existential/hedonic consumption. Utilitarian consumption refers to the consumption behavior where the consumers consider a product by its functions and quantity or price per unit, while existential/hedonic consumption refers to the facet of consumption where the consumers have considerations beyond the fundamental usage of the product to multi-sensory images, fantasies and emotional arousal. With this facet the products are not perceived as objective entities but rather as subjective symbols. Consumers who purchase this product tend to focus on what they will physically or emotionally gain from the product rather than the price they are required to pay.

In this part, recommended phở shops and vendors in Hồ Chí Minh City and Hà Nội were observed in three aspects; shop location and decoration, appearance of phở, and customer behavior in order to understand form and consumption of phở in modern –post war – Vietnam. These shops are popular among domestic and international websites and guidebooks. They are located in the heart of the city since it is considered an area of dynamic sphere and modernity, therefore, changes would be spotted easier than in shops located in the

rural area. From the observation, we can categorize the identity of shops in three categories: street vendors, shops and franchises. Street vendors offer phở as a utilitarian product while restaurants and franchises tend to serve phở as an existential/hedonic product.

4.2.1 Street Vendors (25-40K VND)

Phở street vendors continue to operate on the street and function as they have since the past. It is found everywhere, especially in communities such as along small streets or in the markets. Some of the shops are portable, located on the side walk using gánh to contain the ingredients and utensils. Only eight to fifteen short-leg chairs are provided without tables –while some are located in the market within a properly arranged space, providing a long table with six to ten seats for the customer to share.

In Thái Bình fresh market (chợ Thái Bình), located close to the city center of Sài Gòn, Hồ Chí Minh City, there is only one phở stall located in the food zone along with Bún and Miền shop. This stall sells beef phở (phở bò) with various options of beef including sliced rare beef (tái), lean brisket, flank (nam), fatty brisket (gầu), tendon, and meatball (bò viên). The menu is similar to another phở shop located on Võ Văn Tần street except for the availability of meatballs. In Lương Thế Vinh street, Thành Xuân Bắc, Hà Nội low-price phở is sold around 25-40K VND and similar options of menu are provided with the addition of red soup phở (phở sốt vàng) and the absence of phở bò viên. They also serve other kinds of food like fried rice (cơm rang), Vermicelli noodle (bún), hot pot (lẩu), etcetera. However, when ordering lean brisket, the meat still has some fat on it. The amount of bánh phở is huge compared to that of

meat in the bowl. The soup tastes fairly plain compared to other two kind of shops described below.

In the South phở is always served along with a side of vegetables; cooked beansprout, Thai basil, Vietnamese mint, Vietnamese coriander along with chili, lemon, hot sauce, black bean sauce and chili paste. In Hà Nội there is less options of spices and side vegetables; only lime and chili are provided along with hot sauce, fermented-garlic and fermented fish sauce. Various kinds of spices like chili sauce, pickle garlic and black bean sauce are provided on the table.

The customers seemed to know the owner of the shop quite well since they were talking about daily things before ordering. Some people —dressed in office uniforms — walked to the shop to eat, implying they worked nearby. Usually, the customers spent only fifteen to twenty minutes eating and left immediately after they finished.



Picture 1
Phở shop in Thái Bình market, Hồ Chí Minh City, Vietnam
(taken on 22 January 2019)



Picture 2

Phở from street vendor shop in Thái Bình market, Hồ Chí Minh City, Vietnam (taken on 22 January, 2019)



Picture 3

Phở shop on the street in the old town area (Phở cổ) of Hà Nội (taken on 24 January, 2019)



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Picture 4
Side vegetables provided in phở shop in Thái Bình Market
(taken on 22 January, 2019)

4.2.2 Phở Shops

Restaurant phở refers to the shop located in a building with a certain number of tables and seats. They would normally be recommended in guide books or in both, international and local websites. There are seven shops in Hồ Chí Minh City and five shops in Hà Nội which were observed and which are; (Hồ Chí Minh City) Phở 2000, Phở Hoà Pasteur, Phở Tàu Bay, Phở Bình, Phở Lệ, Phở Cao Vân and Phở Chay như, (Hà Nội) Phở Thìn, Phở Bát Đàn, Phở Lý Quốc Sư, Phở Sương. These shops have a long history and are very well-known among the locals and some groups of tourists.

All shops are located within a building with separate cooking and eating areas. There are more than four members of staff taking orders, serving, and handling payments. Their main product is phở, however, a shop in Hồ Chí Minh City which is very popular among the tourist –phở2000 or phở Hoà Pasteur – sell another kinds of food apart from chicken and beef phở; for example, gỏi cuốn or cơm gà, rice vermicelli noodles and sweets. Phở2000

began in 1995 but gained popularity since former president Bill Clinton and his daughter's visit in 2000. This is also the reason why the shop is named phở2000 and the slogan “*phở for the president (Interview Huynh2019.)*” Phở Hoà Pasteur opened in 1975 as a street vendor phở (ganh), and became one of people's favorite in a short time due to its unique taste of broth. Eventually, they became a *must-try* in Hồ Chí Minh City that both, locals and tourists cannot miss (Anh 2017).

Meanwhile, shops located in commercial areas or close to residential areas usually sell only phở with options. Phở Cao Văn located on Mạc Đĩnh Chi Street, District 1, Hồ Chí Minh City is surrounded by many restaurants and office towers; it has been open since 1952 and has become well known among the locals. The shop serves both chicken and beef phở. Phở Tàu Bay moved from Hà Nội in 1954 and served only Northern style phở (clear broth, no side vegetables) until 1980 when the second generation owner decided to extend the shop, selling southern style phở (more side vegetables and tastier soup). Thus, there are two branches of phở Tàu Bay, the one that served southern style has staff wearing red shirts while the other branch —serving northern style phở — has their staff wearing yellow shirts. The shops are located next to each other on Lý Chính Thắng Street, District 3, Hồ Chí Minh City, close to the hospital and commercial buildings.

Regardless of the different style, they serve only beef phở with a few options. Similarly, Phở Lê, opened since the 1970s and served southern style beef phở with more options including meatballs and egg yolk. The shop has been well-known for the southern taste of phở and their huge establishment which is bustling day and night. There are two branches, one is located on Nguyễn Trãi Street, District 5 which is a commercial area and another branch located on Võ Văn Tần Street, District 3 Hồ Chí Minh City close to many

restaurants and a Primary School. Phở Bình is the shop with a history of being a place for Viet Cong to meet up and hide weapons during the US-Vietnam war. It just revealed the secret a few decades ago and become famous from it. Phở Bình serves both beef and chicken phở with options of beef and with quẩy.

In Hà Nội, Phở sướng is located in small alley in Hoàn Kiếm District which is a major tourist area very popular among the local. Some people claimed that this is the original Hà Nội phở. The shop serves only beef phở with a few options of meat. It opens only in the morning and in the late afternoon as phở is considered a breakfast and a break snack. The decoration is very simple and traditional; short tables and chairs. Although the seats are arranged individually, people (mostly local) who come to this shop always sit together due to the excessive number of customers. Phở Gia truyền located on Bát Đàn Street which was once the famous art and cultural area of Hà Nội always has long queue of customers who come early to eat phở. The shop is an old house aged for a hundred years with shortage of space so seats are limited and are excessed to the pavement. The seats inside the building are made from wood but the outside seats are short plastic tables and chairs. Customers have to queue to get the food and pay before they carry their own bowls to find a seat. They serve only beef phở with some beef cooking option and also quẩy. The shop is always so crowded that people in Hà Nội get familiar with the long line from the building out to the street. Phở Thìn located on Lò Đú Street —which is next to many office towers and a commercial area — is always crowded with people. Most of them are office workers while tourists are coming in constantly. They serve only one kind of phở which is phở tái, therefore, the customers do not need to order; they come in, sit and the phở will be served in a few minutes. The shop looks like a

small canteen; long tables arranged horizontally for people to sit together. They offer quẩy for free on the table with spices; garlic, lime and chili. On the wall hang pieces of columns from magazines and newspapers talking about phở and phở Thìn. The shop has been open for forty years since Thìn the owner was only sixteen years old and the shop remains crowded since then.

There is evidence of an attempt to systemize the shop as the staff has a uniform; polo shirts with printed name, phone number and the branches' address (in case there are other branches). Also, the way tables are arranged is more individual and there is a number for each table. However, each shop still has one long table where people who came alone will sit together. Cutlery is stored in particular vessels. Phở 2000 which served the most expensive price of phở compared to the other shop wrap their spoons in plastic.

Shops in Hồ Chí Minh City always provided a huge amount of side vegetables on the table or with the dish such as bean sprout, cilantro, Thai basil, Vietnamese mint, Vietnamese coriander along with chili, lemon, hot sauce, black bean sauce and chili paste. In the soup, there is some coriander and sliced-onion on top. Reversely, in Hà Nội, they do not provide side vegetables, only hot sauce, fermented-fish sauce and fermented garlic, chili and lime are given on the table but in the soup they have put in a heavy amount of short and long chopped-scallions and coriander. Fried bread sticks (quẩy) are available separately for the price of 5000-7000 VND in Hồ Chí Minh City and 2500-3000 VND in Hà Nội. These shops give around 10 pieces of well-selected meat in phở chín with a huge amount of bánh phở. Shops in south Vietnam served more bánh phở than in the North.

These shops are normally located in commercial areas or close to office places like phở Lê, phở Cao Vân, phở Tàu Bay, phở chay như, phở Sướng, phở Thìn, therefore their customers are the people who are working in the office or the areas close by. They spend around twenty to thirty minutes eating at a moderate speed and talking, however, they left the shop as soon as they finished the bowl. Customer dress formally, for example, they were wearing shirt and slack or working dress with heels or cushed shoes. Yet, in shops which are famous among tourist such as phở2000 or phở Hoà Pasteur, there is round and long table for the tourists who would like to talk and spend longer time in the shop, approximately forty minutes to an hour.



Picture 5

Phở 2000 table arrangement, Bến Thành Market branch, Hồ Chí Minh City, Vietnam (taken on 21 January, 2019)



Picture 6
Appearance of phở 2000 at Ben Thanh market branch, Hồ Chí Minh City, Vietnam (taken on 21 January, 2019)



Picture 7
Appearance of phở Bình, Hồ Chí Minh City, Vietnam (taken on 22 January, 2019)



Picture 8
Atmosphere of phở Cao Văn, Hồ Chí Minh City, Vietnam (taken on 22
January, 2019)



Picture 9
Atmosphere of Phở Sướng shop, Hà Nội, Vietnam (taken on 24
January, 2019)



Picture 10
Customers were queuing at Phở Gia Truyền Bát Đàn, Hà Nội, Vietnam (taken on 25 January, 2019)



Picture 11
Appearance of Phở Thìn, Hà Nội, Vietnam (taken on 24 January, 2019)



*Picture 12
Appearance of Phở 10 Lý Quốc Sư, Hà Nội, Vietnam (taken on 24
January, 2019)*

4.2.3 Franchise phở

Phở24 and phở ông hùng are two franchise brands observed in this research. They have similar characteristics which is clean and well-ordered. Their branches are usually located buildings within a bustling area. Phở 24 seemed to present the authentic Vietnamese identity as they use wooden chairs and tables, decorating their shop with Vietnamese style paintings. They began in 2003 under the Nam An Group which had experience with many franchise businesses like Maxim's and Terrace café; in 2011, phở24 had fifty-two branches all over Vietnam and twenty-one stores overseas (Asia and Oceania) (Frazer and Merrilees 2012, 298-299). Meanwhile, phở Ông Hùng focuses on the modern style, decorated with a plain black and white tone. There are fifty-four branches located majorly in Hà Nội and Hồ Chí Minh City. They use proper plastic tables and chairs. Both shops seal the cutlery with paper wrappers and side-vegetables with plastic. For phở24, customers have to order and pay at the

counter, then wait for the food. At Phở Ông Hùng, the customers have to order at the table and take their receipts to pay at the counter after they have finished eating.

Both brands offer additional options for premium beef. At phở24, the customers can manage their own bowl by adding eggs yolks, more bánh phở, premium beef or more than one kind of meat (well-done beef, special beef, meatball, and chicken). They also serve chicken rice and side dishes like fried spring rolls or fresh spring rolls and desserts such as yoghurt, caramel flan and chè. Phở Ông Hùng provides similar options, small or big size with US premium, eggs yolks, meatballs and tendon meatballs.

Their major customers are locals, however, phở 24 has a number of tourists coming as it has been recommended in several guidebooks and traveling websites. The locals who were eating there were dressed in formal clothes or uniforms. They spent around 15-20 minutes eating. Customers who go in groups are likely to spend more time talking and surfing the internet while customers who go alone are likely to leave immediately after they finish eating. Both brands offer free wifi for the customers which makes some of them spend longer time in the shop.



Picture 13 Shop decoration of Phở 24 at VINCOM Center Đồng Khởi, Hồ Chí Minh City, Vietnam (taken on 21 January, 2019)



Picture 14
Appearance of medium size phở at Phở 24 Lý Tự Trọng Branch,
Hồ Chí Minh City, Vietnam (taken on 23 January, 2019)



Picture 16
Appearance of phở at phở Ông Hùng, Hoàn Kiếm Branch, Hà Nội, Vietnam (taken on 25 January, 2019)



Picture 15
Side vegetables at phở Ông Hùng, Hoàn Kiếm Branch, Hà Nội, Vietnam (taken on 25 January 2019)

From observation, there are two influences related to form and consumption of phở; price and location. Price implied the group of customers; phở street vendors offers the lowest price per bowl, serving the inhabitants and workers. It has been found frequently in close-distance neighborhoods or in fresh markets. Franchise phở offer higher prices with various

food options. The appearance of the food and shop is similar to fast-food places like McDonalds or KFC, systematic and well-order. Cleanliness, standard of taste, and speed of serving are their main concerns. Meanwhile, phở restaurants offer the highest price and are usually located in commercial areas where people can afford the cost. Moreover, the price of phở in Hồ Chí Minh City is higher than in Hà Nội where the cost of living is lower – appearance of the establishments are also formal. Shops located in arranged spaces or inside buildings use high chairs, while in Hà Nội, some vendors carrying phở can still be seen in many areas. Location of the shops also attracted a particular group of customers. The street vendors –which are located close to established community – are suitable for customers who live or work around the area. As for the restaurants, customers are more varied; some are from the area close by and some come from further away due to the reputation of the shop. Phở franchises are more approachable for many types of customers since there are many branches around the city.

The differences and the changes of the dish, may be explained as an effect from the socio-economic reform or Đổi Mới, which created various changes in the economy. The reform has been considered successful as it helped eliminate poverty and improve Vietnam's economy for over thirty years. The individuals are allowed *to pursue freely of their private gains* instead of receiving what the government considers sufficient. Their consumption style represents a certain social status.

Considering all three type of establishments, the street vendor shops remain serving phở due to its utilitarian function by offering cheap phở in the amount that is able make one's stomach full. Their concerns are based more on quantity –serving a number of bánh phở to

make up for the small amount of meat – rather than quality in order to make it affordable for the labor and working class. The portions are aimed at satisfying hunger; it is a sufficient amount of food for a very affordable price available to every class. Its presence is essential for the rural-urban migrant and also for those who earn lower incomes but have to live in the city for employment reasons – all of them are looking for cheap food to match their salary.

On the other hand, evidence of cultural commodification appears on the phở restaurants and franchises. The restaurants have paid attention to the quantity but also to the quality and aesthetic value. As Parasecoli (2001, 67) said ‘there is something more to food, something connected to experience, cultural belonging and the way food is ordered within our cultural world,’ a distinguished character of phở restaurant is how each shop has uniqueness related to the authenticity and history of phở and this element has been used for marketing purposes –concerning the quality of food rather than the quantity. For example, phở Sướng is known as the original version of phở Hà Nội so when the customer eats at phở Sướng they are not only eating phở but they are enjoying the authenticity of phở Hà Nội. Phở2000 is famous as the phở that president Bill Clinton ate, so similarly the customers visit the establishment to experience the taste of phở in the same scene where the president did. Additionally, phở has been related to the concept of healthy food as it is light in fat and contains all three major sources of energy: carbohydrates, proteins and vegetables with only 350-500 kilocalories. The representation of phở as a healthy food has come up since 2010, along with the promotion of Vietnamese food’s healthy aspect and the global boom of healthy eating trends. Many articles were published on the topic of Vietnamese food being good –*eating phở is good for health* (ăn phở tốt cho sức khỏe)— in order to promote the consumption of Vietnamese food.

With more selection put in each bowl, phở restaurants charged more expensive prices, normally between 40k-100k which is considered unusual for daily food consumption, yet they are still affordable for the middle class which is now rising in merely the same amount as the phở street vendors; however, the ingredients are more selective as the meat has no fat at all and the soup has a juicy taste of bone. Additionally, some shops attempt to show their concern regarding hygiene and the systematization of service.

The returning of overseas Vietnamese is urging the value of these shops since they are introducing the new food consumption scene in Vietnam which is inclined to be more western-like. Khải Huỳnh, the owner of phở2000 –and the overseas Vietnamese who came back to Vietnam to inherit the famous phở shop – explained that phở2000 intends to offer a modern tradition of eating. This place is the first phở shop concerned with cleanliness, packaging their cutlery and providing proper tables. There was nothing like this in Vietnam before (Interviewed by author. March 8, 2019).

Similarly, phở franchises are not only concerned with serving food as a matter to solve hungriness, but they provide predictable taste and service. According to Ly Qui Trung, the former owner of phở24, the concept of the place is changing from simple street food presentation into modern style and higher price, equivalent to western food product presentation such as McDonalds or KFC (Frazer and Merrilees 2012, 9). It is obvious that franchise businesses serve phở as a hedonic/existential product since their focus has expanded to systematize and standardize each bowl in order to impress their customers with more than a simple eating experience. George Ritzer's study on *McDonalds-ization* (1983) perceived food franchise business as a part of rationalization which happened intensively in the globalization era where people are looking for

reasoned, stable and convenient options. At McDonalds and other fast-food restaurants, four dimensions of rationalization appeared at once to fulfill the customers which are;

1. Efficiency: providing the best result as the customer gets full by spending the least amount of time. Staff works on their best potential according to the organization regulation; simple, speedy and perfect.
2. Predictability: Every branch provides the same quality, packaging, taste, and service.
3. Calculability: same amount of product (streamed line).
4. Great control: nonhuman technologies that control people.

Apart from serving quality and systemized phở, availability to self-customize allows customers to get whatever they want whether in terms of the amount of each ingredient or adding higher quality of meat. Franchises also provide modern trends for eating, they offer convenient space (air-conditioner, individual table, free wifi) for talking and eating. However, it is the most expensive option among the three types of shops. Even if there are only one-hundred and six branches over the whole country, phở franchises keep growing with positive tendency.

In the commodification process, the aesthetic value is compulsorily added in the bowl they serve as a part of phở which comes in a higher price. Eating phở in the restaurant or franchise, therefore, implies an ability to consume phở for more than its utilitarian function to enjoy its existential function. The middle-income class is willing to pay for more expensive phở to get better quality as they can enjoy individual seating arrangement within a proper space in the building. Eating in the modernly decorated restaurant also displays the customer's social status showing they are willing to spend more for quality food rather than eating at a street vendor stall which is considered a characteristic of underdevelopment (Nguyen L. 2012,

94). Higher purchasing power allows them to meet their expectations of the most basic daily need.

Apart from the setting of the shops, the return from overseas as permanent resident or tourists has fueled the aesthetic value of phở through authenticity. For the overseas Vietnamese, phở is the symbol of their homeland, once they travel to Viet Nam they want to enjoy the authenticity of Vietnamese culture including phở which fulfills their nostalgia. Phở restaurants are able to cover this desire since most of them contain the uniqueness and story which is explained relatively to the character of phở shops in Vietnam.

Table 2 Categories of phở shop from the observation

	Utilitarian product	Existential product	
	Street Vendor (25-40K)	Restaurant (45-90K)	Franchise
Location/Decoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Located along the streets and small eating corners in the (morning) fresh markets. - Stainless or wooden tables and chairs - Only six to ten seats are available. - There is only one seller which is the owner of the shop. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Located in proper building in residential and commercial areas - Properly arranged spaces for kitchen and eating areas - Systematized: A number of staff responsible for different tasks and they are wearing uniforms - The tables are arranged for individual sitting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are around fifty branches all over Vietnam - Most of the branches are located in the bustling area of Hà Nội and Hồ Chí Minh City - All of the tables are arranged individually - There are more than ten seats in a branch

<p>Appearance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are many options on the part of beef or way of cooking and also meatballs. - They serve smaller portions and pieces of meat with fat with huge amount of bánh phở. Some shops have quẩy, some have none. - Some shops also sell fried rice and others kinds of noodles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most of the shops sell only phở bò and phở gà. Some shops located in commercial or tourist areas sell other appetizers and other kinds of food - Cutlery is stored properly in the vessels - In Hồ Chí Minh City, it is served with side vegetables. - While in Hà Nội, there is only lime and chili - Quẩy could be seen commonly in Hà Nội for 25-30K 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are options in size, meat and additional ingredients (egg yolks and meatballs). - The broth is clear, served with a moderate amount of bánh phở and meat (six to seven pieces) - Side vegetables are sealed in separate plates, but come with the dish.
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<p>Customer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most of the customers are workers or laborers, wearing their uniforms. - Coming from neighboring residential area in informal or working uniforms. - They usually come on foot and seem to know the shop owner very well. - They spend around fifteen to twenty minutes eating and leave right away after finishing. - Only one or two staff members take care of everything in the shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Middle class: Office workers and students dressed in proper office clothes - Some tourist come here possibly because some of these shops are recommended on travel websites and guide books - Spending approximately twenty to thirty minutes for eating and chatting - There are four to five staff members working and serving together. The shop owner takes care of the cashier. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appear to have both local and foreign customers dressed in proper clothes. - Locals spend fifteen to twenty minutes, less than the tourists who spend about thirty minutes - There are a number of staff members, taking care of different tasks.
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4.2 Phở amid the Growth of Tourism

4.2.1 National dish

Tourism contained an image of the country *which mediates ideas about places and contributes to the social construction of space and spatial identities (Jokela 2014, 7).* The image was created from abstract interpretation of how does a nation want to be perceived, becoming a single unity that represents the entire country at once; national identity. It is important to differentiate one country from another, to be prominent with a unique story for the guest to explore. Tourism is a symbol that helps to construct and to convey national

identity through things and places. It is merged with the history and heritage of a country which, eventually, leads to creation of national identity. In many cases, it has played an important role on the expression of nations and helps strengthening identity through the concept of territory.

Creating the identity in tourism is not only expressing the image that a country wants to be seen but also interplay with what the guests expect to see. Anholt called this formation of the image as *nation-branding* where a product explained that nation-branding help shaping a one prospect image of the country and commercialize it for promotion from what they are expected to be, and, in the other hand, it is based on what the guests expect to see (2013, p. 7-8). It is in part reflected in its tourism image, or destination image, which is a composite of distinctive characteristics of that place as experienced by tourists (Wantanee Suntikul 2017, 1080).

Nowadays, tourism is more related to intangible products by experiencing through tangible mediums. In order to make a clear distinction of one destination, national identity is the best item to maintain the uniqueness of a place. In tourism, national identity cannot be used alone, yet along with nation branding which contains a sense of commercializing would fulfill the goal of becoming a favorite destination.

One product which has come to be a representative of a nation is food—or cuisine. As a daily necessity and means through which to explore other cultures, food has taken an increasingly important place in that market: not only individual cultures but the food-ways of entire nations may be promoted as part of the tourist experience. Food is the most basic fundamental of life as every person has to eat in order to survive no matter where they are so,

in this way, ‘food occupies and unravels centrality in all of our lives’ (Bell and Valentine 1997 cited in Wilson 2012, 18).

The concept of national cuisine or national dish emerged intensively during the development of European nations, used for distinguishing one nation out of its rivals (Howes and Lalonde 1991, 129). However, it has been developed intensively along with globalization. On one hand, globalization projected the homogenization of culture, erasing boundaries between countries; on the other, food has been used to enhance the concept of nationalism by differentiating one nation from the others (Ichijo and Ranta 2016, 109). Chapple-Sokol work on culinary diplomacy has suggested that food is an ideal example of a nation’s soft power. He quoted Nye on how soft power *usually “arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies* (Nye 2004 cited in Chapple-Sokol, 2013, p. 167)” Eating is a daily routine for surviving and although not everybody asks for the origin of food, they are craving for it at least three times a day. Therefore, the power is reemphasized quietly everyday by the thing that people are familiar with most. This is what Billig called banal nationalism: nationalism is reproduced daily at the very basic level, rising through familiarity in everyday routines so that it has been ignored –through daily activities, not always only in the obvious government promotion (1995, p. 174).

Considering food as an identity that is repeated every day, it eventually works alongside with the nation-branding concept, creating a strong image and reputation for one country and showing what they want to be. It is not only about what the insider wants to become but also related to how the outsider (foreigner) expects to see them. Atsuko Ichijo and Ronald Ranta exemplified the role of food on promoting national identity through branding;

The promotion of the nation's food as a brand helps link together banal and everyday aspects of nationalism with the private sector, the state and international relations. It is also useful for the state as a means of exploiting its appeal for economic growth and trade and supporting its tourism industry (2016, 109).

When it comes to tourism, Vietnamese cuisine has been playing an important role by being a mean for the tourist to experience the country. From Duc Hoang's surveys, 42 percent of the tourists said they visit Vietnam because of cuisine and after the visiting, 72 percent said that their favorite foods are local Vietnamese dishes. On purchasing 48 percent of overall budget is spent on traditional food and drinks. Hoang Duc has let the interviewee predict a possible Vietnamese nation brand. The highest point also goes to cuisine with 5.7 out of 7. Phillip Kotler once stated that Vietnam should become the kitchen of the world (2013).

There is no clear evidence or announcement specifying when did phở become the national dish of Vietnam; however, its popularity has been found gradually related to the image of the country through online travel blogs and articles since 2000 —which is incidentally the same year Bill Clinton, the former President of United States ate at phở 2000. Before that, phở had been gradually introduced outside Vietnam by the overseas Vietnamese as a part of their homeland culture. From 2000-2007, there are plenty of articles that related phở to Vietnamese national identity (Loh 2002; Renton, 2004; Gross 2007; Kellet, 2006), using words such as; a national frenzy, national obsession, more or less, the national dish of Vietnam. In 2007, the official Oxford dictionary added the word “phở” along with a new series of words which make people no longer recognize phở just as a Vietnamese noodle but as phở. Along with the socio-economic improvement and speedy growth and development in the

tourism sector, after 2008, phở gained more attention from travelers and food critics. It has been overwhelmingly stated as a national dish of Vietnam along with other dishes without any sense of curiosity.

Apart from its unique taste and delicate method of cooking that requires more than eight hours of broth preparation, phở is the pride of Vietnam. Though each place tells different stories about the origin of phở, one thing they have in common is *‘phở is a simple dish but rich in nutrients’* and *‘it has been in Vietnam for so long that every person bonded with it’*. Despite explaining its international root; beef from the French and Chinese style noodles; it has been always made clear that phở belongs to Vietnam, the menu created by the Vietnamese, making the best out of their circumstances (Nguyen A. 2016b; McKeever 2017; Rodgers 2017; VNAT 2019). Erica J. Peters (2001) has purposed once critics about Vietnamese elite food consumption that elite Vietnam consumed French food with the feeling that they can eat equally as the colonizer. The use of beef in phở —which is a French influence — implies that being under the French colonial regime for a long period of time, they began to eat beef daily as their colonizer did. It signals that whatever the French could afford, so could the Vietnamese.

Vietnamese cuisine is regional, roughly divided into three parts which are north, central and south. Each place has its own style of cooking due to the long shape of the country and the differences in weather conditions. However, unlike other dishes, phở can be commonly found everywhere from north to south and they are different in taste, herbs and ingredients. It is adapted to each region. When it comes to the promotion Vietnamese tourism abroad, phở has been selected to represent Vietnamese eating culture. The Vietnamese tourism sector usually brings phở along with them, explaining that the dish is easy to prepare,

and it represents the simplicity of Vietnamese cuisine. Moreover, it is everywhere in Vietnam. (Nguyễn, Mai. 2019. Interviewed by author. 22 March). VNAT (2018; 2019) has reported that phở has appeared in several food festivals which took place overseas; for example, at Kuala Lumpur cuisine week, where the Vietnamese Embassy of Malaysia arranged the booth 'Just PHO you' to serve phở—featuring in the food exchange and promotion activity. In December 2018, phở participated in the ASEAN culinary festival in Seoul, Republic of Korea. In Canberra, Australia, phở was introduced as a traditional food of Vietnam at the Vietnam Culture festival hosted on the March 4, 2019. Recently, during the summit between United States President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, the Vietnamese government arranged the International Media Center, providing co-working spaces and Vietnamese food for the press. Phở was served there along with other traditional dishes (Wei 2019).

Although there is no official announcement about the national dish of Vietnam, phở has been recognized widely on the media as a food that represents the country. Phở has appeared more frequently in the last decade, as a presentation of Vietnamese cuisine, a combination of French and Chinese influence but known as a Vietnamese dish since people know *phở as phở*, not just as a Vietnamese noodle. It distinguishes Vietnamese culture while expressing Vietnamese-ness which does not have any foreign influence.

4.2.2 Tourism commodities

Phở has been known as the national dish of Vietnam, one of many famous street foods that people have to try when they visit the country. It is recommended in many guidebooks from trustful publishings such as Lonely Planet, National Geographic and Pocket



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Precincts, calling it a must-try dish of Vietnam. CNN travel (2018) has ranked phở in the world's fifty best foods. Equally, online sources have been recommending phở on travel websites about Vietnamese food. Plenty of cooking classes offer phở cooking lessons.

Food plays a significant role in choosing a travel destination. It has been gaining more and more attention recently when groups of tourists can experience a country's history and culture through its cuisine, whereupon, food and cuisine —as a part of culture — are commoditized, taking advantage of the profit over its objective and sold in the market. Vietnam has an obvious policy in using the culture as a tourism product. The perception of the Vietnamese communist party on culture before 1975 was related to culture preservation, an opportunity to preserve their history and cultural heritage in order to present their national identity (Saltiel, 2014: 899). However, after the socio-economic reform, culture and heritage are also comprehended as a market profit as many ancient remains have been developed in response to tourist demand, being used to spearhead their tourism strategies.

From a cultural perspective, food and cuisine contain plenty of meanings and implications as resources for survival or as a means to express nature culture and religious belief. Most scholars agree that with these number of meanings, food and cuisine will not be able to be commoditized (Jose Luis Vivero-Pol 2016, 183). However, in the tourism sector, exploring food and cuisine through activities is to buy a lifestyle commodity. It is a product for entertainment, an activity for the tourists to enjoy during their stay in one destination. Mitchell and Hall (2000) suggest that culinary products gain interest and are becoming influential motivation for the tourists to travel to particular destinations as they can introduced to the culture, history and people of their chosen destination.

Hjalager and Corigliano (2000) has suggested four ways that foods are commodified and used in tourism which are complementary, inventory, superficial and disconnected. From the observation in the tourist district in Hồ Chí Minh City and Hà Nội along with tourist websites and guidebooks, the appearance of phở has been related to the complementary and superficial ways of cultural commodification used in tourism.

Complementary is when food is used as eye-catchers in brochures, video and television programs or being promoted as the identity of one destination. In this regard, food becomes an additional activity for tourists while they are enjoying the main activity (Hjalager and Corigliano 2000,281-282). Based on online sources, Lonely Planet Vietnam has published a video named Vietnamese favorite street food, introducing phở on the first page; while on National Geographic Travel, phở has appeared in the video Five Vietnamese street foods you have to try (Phan, 2017) and the article stating the history of phở and some famous phở restaurants you should try in Hà Nội (Bond, 2015). When looking for the list of '*Vietnamese food you should try*,' phở is always mentioned as an authentic Vietnamese food that the tourists must-try when they visit Vietnam. However, the picture and footage of phở that appears on media was well-composited by fresh herbs, thick pieces of meat, crystal clear broth, and portrayed in a pretty vessel. It is unrealistically more beautiful than what it really is.

Food tours are another way for tourists to experience the taste of Vietnam and phở is always on the list. Most guides will bring you to eat at proper phở restaurants, but they also take their customers to markets and to the streets where phở vendors can be seen. Similarly, plenty cooking classes offered in Vietnam always include phở on their list. Participation is now trending in Vietnam and some schools even offer phở cooking classes alone, teaching how to select the ingredients, how to cook perfect broth and also telling the history of the dish

and its relation to Vietnamese history and tradition (Hanoi Cooking Center, Blue Butterfly Cooking Class, Hidden Hanoi). Though each place tells a different story about the origin of phở, one thing they have in common is ‘phở is a simple dish but rich in nutrients’ and ‘it has been in Vietnam for so long that every one bonded with it.’ The dish has been carried along with tourism promotion campaigns conducted by Vietnamese National Administration of tourism to various regions as it displays the eating culture of Vietnamese people.

Phở has appeared on various channels: websites, books, cooking in pleasant, clean and well-decorated appearance with meaningful stories related to the outstanding character of Vietnam. It has been used to promote tourism and as an activity for pleasure. This implies a role in the process of cultural commoditization in which culture has been recreated according to the country’s promising image. The dish, perceived in the media, is created as the image of the country; well-decorate with a simple style —yet systematized and full of history.



Picture 17

Picture of phở on the Hà Nội street food brochure from Vietnam Daily Trips (retrieved from https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g293924-d11963032-Reviews-Vietnam_Daily_Trips-Hanoi.html)



Picture 18

Picture of phở being recommended on Lonely Planet introduction video about Vietnam travel (retrieved from <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/vietnam>)

Superficial refers to when the connection between food and tourism have a minor role when compared to the excuse for socializing and the context. This can be seen in the restaurants serving fusion or luxurious foods and desserts, decorating in modern style with traditional gimmicks. According to Howarth HTL's report on the future of luxury tourism, luxurious travel is actively developing well in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam (2011, p. 23). This includes development of five-star hotels, high-end tours and the serving of superficial foods. On the other hand, Hoàng Anh Đức and Sơn Ho theses, studying high-end tourism and nation branding, suggest that Vietnamese food and cuisine are considered a possible nation branding product for Vietnam's tourism, including in high-end tourism since it has impressed the majority of tourists (2013, p. 72).

Phở is rarely spotted in luxurious restaurants but when it is, it has been presented with opulent appearance, adding high quality and selective ingredients, claiming a special method of cooking. The shops that provide superficial phở are mostly located in the city center or tourist district where many hotels are gathered up. One particular example is phở with lobster in Hồ Chí Minh City at Đào Place restaurant. The dish costs 550,000 VND which is ten times more expensive than normal phở. It is served in a high-end restaurant located next to Bến Thành market in the city center. Most of their customers are foreign travelers and rich Vietnamese which dress properly.

Vietnamnet (2019) published an online article about an expensive phở at the Landmark 81, skyscraper in Hồ Chí Minh City, which costs 920,000 Vietnamese Đồng for a bowl. It is called phở chộc trời, composed of speciality meat —Australian oxtail and wagyu beef with special herbs. It was made for the tourists since Landmark 81 is the tallest building in Vietnam and the twenty-third tallest building in the world. It contains a residential section, hotel, department store, movie theatre and other entertainment facilities, expected to help boost domestic and international tourism in Hồ Chí Minh City. Meanwhile, from the same source, the most expensive phở in Hà Nội is served by Capital Garden Hotel, costing 850,000 VND for a bowl. They use Kobe beef imported from Japan which normally costs 4,000,000 VND per kilogram. Same as the Landmark 81, Capital Garden is one of the famous 5-star hotels in Hà Nội and it has reputation in for restaurant and café, offering unique taste with quality of ingredients and hygiene.



Picture 20

Lobster phở at Đào Place (retrieved from <https://angelotheexplorer.com/2019/01/lobster-pho-dao-place-ho-chi-minh-vietnam.html>)



Picture 19

Special phở, using Kobe beef, served at Capital Garden Hotel, Hà Nội (retrieved from <https://news.zing.vn/xon-xao-to-pho-gia-920000-dong-o-toa-nha-cao-nhat-viet-nam-post941407.html>)



Picture 21

Special phở, using Wakyu beef at Landmark81, skyscraper in Hồ Chí Minh City (retrieved from <https://news.zing.vn/xon-xao-to-pho-gia-920000-dong-o-toa-nha-cao-nhat-viet-nam-post941407.html>)

Within the tourism arena, there are two types of phở. The complementary aspect is when phở has been selected as a method for tourism promotion campaign. It needs to be well-decorated and meaningful in order to represent the meaning of the tourist. Superficial aspect is where phở is created with fancy and luxury ingredients, serving in an opulent looking presentation which allows customers to express their ability to spend.

Apart from the socio-economic reform, tourism is another reason for the changes in appearance and meaning of phở in the present day. Food in the tourism arena is different from food being consumed daily since it is created to meet the demand and curiosity of the tourist. It needs a story, (the sense of) authenticity and specialty to gain attention. Phở in the complementary image exhibits a tidy appearance of Vietnamese food that is commonly seen on the street while phở in the superficial image offers the variety of consumption choice and gimmicks for people who has the ability to afford more. The new images are evolving among the locals, so it offers them an opportunity to relish or even imitate the dish.

The development in economy caused by the launch of the socio-economic reform has an effect on the changes in the economy of Vietnam. Principle ideology shift from centrally planned to market-based, encourages people to compete freely in the market. The foreign sector is blooming due to favorable laws and environment, and also the return of the overseas Vietnamese which help the bridge between international companies and the local. The country is more exposed to global trends and culture causing changes in the lifestyle of the new generation. Phở has dynamically changed to fit with the new image of Vietnam as it can be seen in various presentations. Beyond its role as a common street food, phở has been commoditized —being sold along with the existential function such as the story of the place, self-customize options or special ingredients to meet with customer expectations beyond its utilitarian function.

In daily consumption, there are three presentations of phở regarding the customer demand. Street vendor is the basic option which is affordable for everyone since it is cheap and easily to find on the street. It is served to fulfill the hunger as the utilitarian function of phở. Meanwhile phở restaurants and franchises offer higher quality and various options for the customer. Each phở restaurant contains gimmicks related to history or popularity in the past. Some places pay more attention to hygiene which is the common concern in the modern food consumption. Franchises have reliable standards in taste, serving and service. The shops offer self-customized options so their customers can get as close to what they are expecting. These two types of presentations are the result of cultural commoditization where consuming phở is not just about hunger, but also about enjoying with other composition and surrounding.

While the rising number of middle-class has enhanced the possibility for Vietnamese to enjoy beyond the utilitarian function of the product, the return of overseas Vietnamese has



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an important role in introducing the modern food scene in the city, urging the local to upgrade their standards in their shops. This caused the establishment of various presentations of phở after 1986, which will be explained in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

Although the origin of phở is arguable, it is certain that the dish appeared since the early twentieth century in North Vietnam. Its popularity raised among the members of the labor class who were looking for cheap food to fill their stomachs. Before 1986, phở had been through some changes by adding or complementing ingredients; substituting beef with chicken, adding quail or phở without beef.

Vietnam was faced with economic recession during the reunification time. Controversial ideology between the North and the South forced the government to reconsider their goal to follow a socialist pathway. With growing poverty rates, and a lack of tools and skills to manage the country out of this crisis, the socio-economic reform was launched. The reform focuses on creating a socialist-orient market economy by focusing on the private sector, thus, their strategies provide a favorable environment for private enterprises to grow. Although Đổi Mới intentionally focuses on reforming the economy, its effects on social issues are unavoidable. It caused several changes in the social structure, especially to the economic status of the Vietnamese, major consumer of phở.

The socio-economic reform brought Vietnam into an intense capitalism by shifting from centrally planned to a market-based economy. Private enterprises and foreign investment became the leaders of the economic development instead of the state-owned enterprise. Therefore, to provide efficient support, the government have reformed the law of enterprises and expanded their diplomatic relations beyond the communist countries –who incidentally were also faced with economic recessions. Vietnam participated in many international



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economic organizations which dilated their opportunity in the global stage and forced them to heighten the level of transparency, attracting more investment to the country. Along with the economic development, the country is confronted with globalization where information and technologies are more approachable.

Economic development has affected the growth of specific groups of people in Vietnam which have a role in determining the serving and consumption of phở in daily life. Their character and purchasing power have caused utilitarian or existential consumption which led to the adaption of the presentation of phở after 1986. They are middle class, overseas Vietnamese and rural-urban migrants and lower-income class in urban Vietnam

Middle class Vietnamese gained more opportunities to grow since the reform has favored the role of private enterprises and foreign investment. Most of them possess moderate to high purchasing power due to high education level and particular skills which allowed them to get better jobs. Doi Mo let them pursue what they want according to the level of income. Middle class' desire has led to various choices of consumption beyond the product utilitarian function—but also to the existential function related to aesthetic value and pleasure.

Similarly, the returning of overseas Vietnamese who have significantly contributed to Vietnam's economic development has raised the existential consumption. Since they were relocated to developed western countries, overseas Vietnamese possess high and specific skills which give an advantage in the foreign investment sector. After the economic reform, the Vietnamese government has seen their potential in boosting the country's economy, thus, visa exemption and nationality restoration are provided in order to attract them back home. The returnee introduced modern and western lifestyle and working patterns to Vietnam which have strong influence especially in the food and restaurant business.

Nonetheless, an increase in rural-urban migrants and lower-income class in urban Vietnam was caused by the growth of the private sector and foreign investment which are concentrated in the urban area. The two groups are struggling with insufficient income compared to the high cost of living. They are limited to consume products for their utilitarian rather than existential function.

In addition to economic development in general, the development of the tourism sector has an important role on sharing the meaning of phở. Vietnamese tourism development paid more attention to cultural products as it is one of four major tourism products. Although, food is not included in the National Tourism Masterplan through 2020, with a vision to 2035, it has made a huge contribution to cultural tourism promotion, represented as an identity of Vietnam to the outsider's eyes. In order to do so, particular food is recreated to fit with the message and meaning expected to be told.

From the study based on documentary and field observation, this thesis answers three questions regarding the adaption of phở in Vietnam after 1986;

1. How phở has developed from 1986 to the present?

According to the changes caused by the socio-economic reform, phở has been commodified and perceived as a product for sale rather than just a food product. There are two areas where the presentation of phở has been adapted; the daily consumption and the tourism consumption. In daily consumption, there are three types of phở places selling the dish with a different function. Firstly, street vendors serve phở as a utilitarian product, providing sufficient amount for a cheap price. It is mainly purchased to solve one's hungriness. In order to keep the price low, there is a huge amount of bánh phở with few pieces of meat. The broth is quite plain and the side vegetables are provided in limited amount. However, one bowl can

fill up one's stomach. The second and third types are phở served in the restaurant and franchise establishment. At the restaurant, phở has better quality but also higher price. The shops are well decorated and provide proper space for the customer to eat. The most of famous restaurants discussed in this thesis have gimmicks and stories to be told –phở Sướng, for example, is the taste of Hà Nội; phở Bát Đàn is famous for its long queue every day; and phở 2000 runs the slogan “phở for the president”. Their distinguished character and unique taste makes the customer feel special when eating in one of these places. Meanwhile, the phở franchise shops provide reliability as everything and every branch is systematized with the same standards. Customers can create their own bowls of phở, choosing better quality meats, adding special ingredients or adding/cutting the amount of bánh phở or meat. Therefore, we can see that phở in restaurants and franchises is served as an existential product. It does not only function as a food, but also provides pleasure and aesthetic value which meets the expectation of the customers.

After the socio-economic reform took place in Vietnam, it shifted the centrally planned market to market-based economy, there was a prominent rising in numbers among the middle class, implicating a higher purchasing power. Meanwhile, modern lifestyle introduced by overseas Vietnamese also urged the local restaurants to adapt and upgrade their standards to meet the higher expectations of clients. This exhorted a soaring of existential consumption. Phở as an existential product is more expensive and goes beyond necessity onto express the social status of a person. It is an option that is available for the middle-income class who have sufficient purchasing power and seek to consume more than the food but also the atmosphere, the stories, the taste or the reliability to assure their satisfaction.

On the other hand, phở as an utilitarian product still appears to serve for the rural-urban migrants and lower-income classes who do not have enough to access the existential function. They are seeking cheap food that just meets their needs and phở street vendors are an acceptable option.

In the tourism arena, phở is commoditized in two ways, complementary and superficial. Complementary phở refers to the situation in which the dish has been promoted in tourism campaigns, on brochures, books and videos selling the idea of Vietnamese tourism. Superficial phở refers to phở with exotic and luxurious options such as lobster phở or kobe meat phở served at the more expensive restaurant in the city. This allows the consumer to express their social status while exploring the culture of the destination.

2. Why is phở represented as a national dish of Vietnam?

In the tourism sector, it is essential for the country to have products which are able to represent their identity for distinguishing their boundary. Cultural and historical places are branded as products which only exist in a particular destination to allure the tourists to come experience it. Phở is recognized as a national dish but it was never officially set by any organization. Instead, the statement has been gradually recognized through the local and the tourist perception via its popularity and familiarity only in the past decade.

The statement that phở is the national dish of Vietnam has developed along with its history and its presentation. It is usually stated that the origin of phở is the combination of French and Chinese influences, yet it is unlike both of them. It is a Vietnamese dish created and consumed in Vietnam. Moreover, Vietnam is known for differences in each region, but phở still manages to appear in every region as a common food for all Vietnamese. This emphasizes the sense of shared culture which Vietnam, the country that has been reunited for

forty years, needs to claim for the single unity. Nowadays, its servings expand to any requirement; cheap phở, old phở, luxurious phở —there is always waiting for people to consume it.

Tourism plays a significant role in forming phở as a national dish since the role of food in Vietnam's tourism arena is enhancing while globalization heightens the sense of nationality. Vietnamese food and cuisine, as part of culture, are able to capture the tourists' attention whilst phở has been chosen to be the spearhead product to express *Vietnamese-ness*. As a result, the bowl of phở represents Vietnam in the visitors' eyes as a national identity.

3. What are the factors of change and development for phở after 1986?

There are three factors related to the development of phở as follows:

I) The socio-economic reform (Đổi Mới) which shifted Vietnam from the centrally planned market to the market-based economy, strengthening the role of private sector over the role of Stated-owned enterprise (SOEs). All enterprises are allowed to compete freely on the market mechanism. Enterprise law reform and economic integration also stimulate foreign investment that comes along with advanced technology that is useful to develop basic facilities. The reform has resulted in the growth of the middle class, the returning of the overseas Vietnamese and the increasing of rural-urban migrants and lower-income class in urban Vietnam who are the major consumers in the market. With higher purchasing power, they consume more existential products as the number of phở restaurants is rising.

II) Globalization has played an important part on cultural influence which has an effect on the consumption behavior. As Vietnam is more exposed to free-flow of information,

people are absorbing global trends and culture of consumption from the outside world in both the individual and organizational levels. For example, there is an increasing concern about food safety as the country wants to pertain their good image of qualified food consumption.

III) Tourism helped develop phở as an image of the country as the dish can be used to represent the identity of the whole country and attract foreign visitors. Although the familiarity of phở is majorly an effect of the daily consumption arena, tourism enriches phở with the concept of national identity and treats it as merely a commodity.

The study of adaption of phở in Vietnam's after 1986 has implied the development of food in globalization. It is impossible to find grammar or fixed codes to explain the adaption process since the change has brought many results. Phở after 1986 has been interpreted through two fields, as a daily consumption and a tourism consumption. On each field, the changes are various and fluctuate due to increasing factors of change in the economic and social aspects.

Presentation of phở, like the other foods, has gone beyond solving hunger. It is tied to national identity consumption in the tourism arena and the selected image is based on expectations of what the Vietnamese want to become. In daily consumption, presentations of phở are varied due to the social status and expectation of customers. In this scenario, it is very difficult to answer who you are from what you eat as the consumption contains hidden meaning. It might be what one wants to eat, or expect, or what they really are.



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Interviews

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- Mai H. Nguyễn (Deputy head of Research Management and International Cooperation Division, Institute for Tourism Development Research). Interviewed by Kunyarat Saengul at Hà Nội, Vietnam, March 22, 2019)



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