

INTERNAL — BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Proposal on the Strategic Direction of JRIEI

Adopting VIIH (Viral Idolized Hype) and Controlled Virality as the Institute's guiding framework

To: Board of Directors and Co-Founders

From: Co-Founder & Director of Reality

Date: Founding period

Purpose: Decision on the Institute's strategic direction

Classification: Internal

Note: The thresholds, metrics, and evaluation items in this proposal are provisional. I propose that they be confirmed through the pilot program described in Section 15.

Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
1. Definition and Background.....	3
2. The VIIH Cycle (Five Phases).....	4
3. Actor Structure	4
4. Types of VIIH (D Types)	5
5. Two Outcomes of Failure (Type A / Type B)	5
6. Structural Risks	5
7. Amplification Mechanisms	6
8. The Proposed Solution: Controlled Virality.....	6
9. Four Principles of Controlled Virality	6
10. Local Validation and Self-Protective Compliance.....	7
11. Enhancement Acceptance Test (EAT).....	8
12. Metrics.....	9
13. The CV-DMO Model	9
14. Philosophy.....	9
15. Proposed Pilot Program and Open Questions	9

Executive Summary

Regional tourism promotion in the social media era carries a structural risk that current practice does not measure: promotion creates expectations that the actual visit cannot support. Visitors arrive, are disappointed, and say so publicly. The damage falls on the destination, on the local businesses that cooperated, and ultimately on the credibility of whoever designed the promotion.

This proposal describes that risk, which I call VIIH (Viral Idolized Hype), and recommends that JRIEI adopt Controlled Virality as its guiding approach: promotion that remains attractive and effective while keeping expectations calibrated to reality.

The question this Institute should ask of every project: Did the visitor actually leave satisfied?

Decisions requested from the Board

- Adopt Controlled Virality as the Institute's guiding principle for all regional promotion work.
- Make post-visit satisfaction, measured against pre-visit expectation, a core KPI alongside reach and visitor numbers.
- Approve a pilot program to validate the methods in this proposal before they are applied at scale (Section 15).

1. Definition and Background

VIIH (Viral Idolized Hype) refers to the phenomenon in which images, editing, and storytelling on social media idealize (idolize) a destination, and that idealized version of reality spreads (goes viral), producing a gap between the promoted image and both the on-site experience and wider public perception. It also refers to the structural mechanism behind this phenomenon.

Unlike overtourism, which is a problem of volume, VIIH concerns the qualitative gap between expectation and reality. It is a way of analyzing the "illusion economy" of the social media era.

Core question: Did the visitor leave satisfied? Conventional social media marketing stops measuring at acquisition (reach, engagement, bookings). This perspective is missing.

2. The VIIH Cycle (Five Phases)

Reality → Idolization → Hype → Disillusionment → Trust Loss

Phase	What happens	Triggers
Reality	The actual regional experience and physical environment	Infrastructure, landscape, residents' daily life
Idolization	Idealization through editing, staging, music, and selective framing	Advertising copy, editing, retelling
Hype	Spread and imitation through social and traditional media	Viral structures, algorithms
Disillusionment	The gap with actual experience becomes visible; negative reviews	Expectation > Reality
Trust Loss	Criticism, reputational damage, declining visits	Erosion of brand trust

Addendum: campaigns designed to go viral often turn into a secondary VIIH cycle, in which disillusionment leads to backlash and the backlash itself spreads again.

3. Actor Structure

Code	Actor	Motivation	Main VIIH risk
A1	Program owner (municipality, national tourism agency, DMO)	Accountability for results, visitor targets	Wrong KPIs, structural design errors
A2	Agency or production company	Contract revenue, deadline pressure	Pushing exaggeration, excessive staging
B1	Professional influencer	Revenue, maintaining reputation	Idolization through editing and retouching
B2	Approval-seeking user-generated content	Recognition, followers	Unconscious exaggeration, accidental idolization
C1	Local residents (honest voices)	Local pride, sharing the truth	Turning into defenders or critics
C2	Agitator users	Desire to provoke and spread	Amplifying exaggeration
C3	Disillusioned visitors	Disappointment at the expectation gap	Spreading critical sympathy

4. Types of VIIH (D Types)

Type	Main source	Nature of risk	Reference examples
D1 Institutional VIIH	A1	Message misread or colliding with social context	Tourism New Zealand “Everybody Must Go”; Tourism Authority of Thailand
D2 Commercial VIIH	A2 → B1	Over-beautified staging diverging from the site	Venice “Enjoy Respect Venezia”
D3 Targeted VIIH	B1 / B2	Deliberate editing, excessive idealization, post-visit disappointment	Footage of a silent Gion, Kyoto
D4 Reality-Gap VIIH	B2 / C3	No intent to exaggerate, but infrastructure cannot cope (goodwill-triggered)	Trolltunga (Norway); Blue Pond, Biei

Targeted Viral Amplification: a derivative pattern in which content explicitly designed to spread succeeds, and the exaggerated ideal overwrites social reality. Because exaggeration, spread, and disillusionment chain together fastest here, I regard it as the highest-risk area. It is a structure in which the defeat begins while the campaign still looks successful.

5. Two Outcomes of Failure (Type A / Type B)

	Type A: Disillusionment	Type B: Diffusion
Structure	Expectation » Reality	Multiple appeal points coexist with no clear hierarchy
Outcome	Disappointment, backlash, trust loss	Confusion, indifference, wasted investment
Emotion	Strong (anger, disappointment)	Weak (“What was that about?”)
Characteristic	Brand damage	No damage, but no lasting brand asset either

Diffusion Risk: when several value propositions (product, region, story, talent) coexist without a clear hierarchy, none of them comes across and the effect is diluted. This should be treated not as a failure but as room for optimization.

6. Structural Risks

6.1 Infrastructure Gap Risk

Even when the content is accurate, transport, access, or receiving capacity may be unable to support the promise (for example, “explore both towns easily”). Separate from content

checks (Local Validation), this requires feasibility checks (Infrastructure Validation).

- Items to check: frequency, travel time, and transfers; whether a car is assumed; how often roads close due to weather; receiving capacity; alternatives.

6.2 Incentive Amplification Risk

Point-based incentive schemes, which became common in Japan after the Go To Travel campaign, raise expectations and add a sense of financial loss to any disappointment. The most dangerous combination is infrastructure constraints × a requirement to visit multiple locations × financial incentives.

- Design principle: make schemes work on “A or B,” not “A and B.” Treat visiting both as a bonus only, and state transport conditions in advance.

7. Amplification Mechanisms

- **Algorithms:** they reward engagement (surprise, emotion, visual intensity), not accuracy. Exaggerated footage spreads more easily.
- **Curators:** roundups, rankings, and travel media pick the most dramatic image and re-edit it, reinforcing idolization a second time.

8. The Proposed Solution: Controlled Virality

Controlled Virality = maximizing the appeal of an experience or destination without causing Disillusionment.

This does not reject buzz. It calibrates the speed and scale of buzz, and the level of expectation it creates.

Reality → Calibrated Idolization → Controlled Virality → Sustained Satisfaction

9. Four Principles of Controlled Virality

Principle	What it means	Examples of implementation
1. Capacity-Matched Amplification	Match the speed and scale of spread to local receiving capacity	Group size limits, staged release, waiting lists
2. Reality Anchor Pre-Loading	Build real-world information into the message from the start	Stating “20 minutes on foot from the station” or “not a party”
3. Feedback-Responsive Modulation	Measure satisfaction and adjust messaging in real time	Collecting pre-visit expectation and post-visit satisfaction; revising copy
4. Local Validation	Check content through local residents’ eyes before release	Video review by a local panel (EAT)

Relationship to the five strategic axes

The five strategic axes from earlier internal drafts (Structural Design, Ethical Buffer, Reality Anchor, Post-Viral Nudge, Structural Resilience) organize who controls the process and at which stage. The four principles organize what is controlled. The two should be used together.

- **Post-Viral Nudge:** during the one-to-three-day cooling-off period after content spreads, the municipality or tourism association adds real-world information in a tone of thanks, supplement, and empathy, never correction. Example: “Thank you for featuring us. It’s a 20-minute walk from the station, and the quiet is part of the charm.” A distance close enough to be seen as riding the wave causes the least friction.
- **Structural Nudge:** optimize the environment rather than manipulate people. Examples: official accounts posting reality-aligned examples first, hashtags that gather honest posts, titles that redirect the desire for recognition, and automatic reality checks when buzz crosses a threshold.

10. Local Validation and Self-Protective Compliance

10.1 Local Validation

Before release, promotional material, especially video, is checked through the eyes of local residents: Is this exaggerated? Will visitors be disappointed? The purpose is not approval but an honesty check. Its greatest strength is that residents take part as quality managers rather than as an audience.

- Panel guideline: 10–15 local residents, mixed ages and occupations, five or more years of residence; tourism operators (stakeholders) excluded in principle.

10.2 Self-Protective Compliance

When a specific local shop or restaurant has fully cooperated in production out of goodwill, that collaborator is also a stakeholder, which makes Local Validation difficult to apply. Yet if the content exaggerates, it is the shop, not the company, that faces disappointed visitors directly.

The communicating party (company or agency) is therefore responsible for calibrating its own content through a VIIH lens, so that the collaborator’s trust and the area’s brand are not damaged or distorted.

- Recognize the structure: collaborators find it hard to act as objective evaluators.
- Apply the EAT perspective internally; when in doubt, choose SE.
- Strengthen Reality Anchors (size of the shop, distance, operating conditions).
- Monitor feedback after release, share it with collaborators, and adjust together.
- Where possible, add supplementary checks by residents who are not collaborators.

Principle: protecting collaborators’ trust > maximizing engagement

11. Enhancement Acceptance Test (EAT)

Enhancement always exists. The question is not whether to enhance but how much. EAT does not aim for zero enhancement; it finds the acceptable level of enhancement.

	Peak Enhancement (PE)	Subdued Enhancement (SE)
Position	Reality enhanced to the maximum	Restrained enhancement
Color	Vivid, high contrast	Natural
Sound	Dramatic music	Quiet music plus ambient sound
Editing	Short cuts, highlights only	Slower pace, includes travel and distance
Text	Catchphrases	Information: travel time, distance, group size

Procedure

- Produce a PE version and an SE version from the same footage.
- Show both to the Local Validation Panel.
- Collect five-point ratings on the items below.
- Decide which version to use, and what to revise, from the scores and comments.

#	Evaluation item	What it measures
Q1	Does this represent the area accurately?	Accuracy
Q2	Would visitors who saw this be disappointed?	Disillusionment risk
Q3	Is this exaggerated?	Degree of exaggeration
Q4	Would you support this being shared on social media?	Local approval
Q5	Would you use this to introduce the area to a friend?	Sense of ownership
Q6	Is the purpose clear?	Diffusion Risk
Q7	After watching, is it clear what to do next?	Clarity of action

Provisional thresholds: an average of 4.0 or above means the content can be released; 3.5–3.9 means revise; below 3.5 means remake. If Q6 or Q7 is below 4.0, narrow the message. Thresholds will be reset based on actual data.

Why existing approaches are not enough

- **Post-visit satisfaction research:** measures the gap after the experience. EAT controls it before release.
- **Destination image work:** analyzes how promotional and first-hand information mix. EAT turns this into a way of setting the strength of enhancement.
- **Discussions of authenticity:** the industry has long talked about how much staging visitors accept. EAT makes it measurable.

- **Advertising creative testing:** focuses on purchase intent and likability, not on how much gap from reality is acceptable.
- **Responsible marketing:** has the principles but no method. EAT is a way to implement them.

12. Metrics

- **Expectation alignment (KQI):** post-visit satisfaction ÷ pre-visit expectation. A value of 1.0 or above means expectations were exceeded.
- **CVQI (Controlled Virality Quality Index), proposed:** expectation alignment × stability of visitor flow (low monthly variation). It shows whether a destination satisfies visitors consistently, rather than spiking and fading.
- **Minimum record set:** at the start of an experience, ask for expectation (1–5); at the end, ask for satisfaction (1–5); then spend five minutes noting impressions, adjustments, and concerns.

13. The CV-DMO Model

Item	Conventional DMO	CV-DMO
Decision-making	Top-down	Bottom-up, with a clear framework
Local residents	Passive (survey respondents)	Active (quality managers)
Promotion	Tends toward beautification and exaggeration	Reality-aligned (EAT, Local Validation)
Metrics	Visitor numbers, reach	Satisfaction, expectation alignment
Sustainability	Tends to end with one-off events	Continues as a structure

This model applies the logic of participatory development (community-based needs assessment, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation) to tourism.

14. Philosophy

Your Smiles Make Me / Us Smile

A project succeeds only when visitors, local businesses, residents, and the communicator are all satisfied. “Me” applies when an individual runs the work; “Us” applies to a region or an organization, including this Institute.

15. Proposed Pilot Program and Open Questions

The thresholds, metric formulas, and evaluation items in this proposal are provisional and should be revised based on field data.

I propose a pilot program to answer the following before the approach is applied at scale. It will require budget for site visits, local panels, infrastructure review, and visitor feedback collection.

- Validity of the EAT thresholds and evaluation items
- Whether the difference between PE and SE actually affects post-visit satisfaction
- Final formula for the CVQI
- Representativeness of Local Validation Panels (who counts as “local”)
- Implementation cost, including a minimum version that small municipalities can run
- Avoiding the perception that nudges amount to censorship or intervention

Recommendation

I recommend that the Board approve this direction and the pilot program. Measuring outcomes before scaling will cost money. Not measuring them will cost more, and the cost will be paid by the destinations and the people who trusted us.

© JRIEI. The Institute retains the copyright. It did not retain the ideas.

JRIEI is a fictional institute.

This document may be freely copied and redistributed in its original, unmodified form, including this notice.