

TRADITIONAL CRAFT VILLAGES AS A MODEL FOR SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL TOURISM: EVIDENCE FROM HUE, VIET NAM

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Received: 10 April 2026; Revised: 25 April 2026; Accepted: 13 May 2026

ABSTRACT

This study examines how Hue's traditional craft villages can be more effectively integrated into sustainable cultural tourism in the context of digital transformation and green growth. A multi-stakeholder survey (N=100) covering artisans, local residents, tourists, and tourism professionals is used to identify key barriers and development levers. The findings suggest that limited promotion and marketing remains the most frequently reported challenge, while marketing enhancement is the most commonly recommended strategy, with respondents highlighting short-form social media content, storytelling, and hands-on workshops as practical tools to attract visitors and strengthen destination visibility. In addition, the study highlights sustainability-related constraints, including concerns about the continuity of craft skills and pressures on local resources, which may undermine long-term tourism quality and heritage value. Drawing on Sustainable Tourism Development and Community-Based Tourism frameworks and a creative economy perspective, the paper proposes a stakeholder-aligned roadmap emphasizing digital promotion, experiential product design, community participation, and heritage-sensitive governance. The study contributes empirical evidence from an emerging heritage destination and offers actionable implications for tourism authorities and creative industry actors seeking to foster inclusive, environmentally responsible craft-based tourism.

Keywords: Sustainable cultural tourism, craft villages, digital marketing, creative economy, Hue, Viet Nam.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural tourism has become one of the most dynamic segments of the global tourism economy, driven by growing visitor interest in authenticity, heritage, local knowledge, and meaningful experiences. In recent years, this demand has been reinforced by wider shifts toward slower travel, experiential consumption, and more responsible forms of destination development. For heritage-rich destinations, these changes create both opportunities and pressures: opportunities to diversify tourism products and strengthen local economies, and pressures to preserve cultural integrity while adapting to contemporary markets [1, 2, 3].

Viet Nam offers a particularly important context for examining these issues. As the country seeks to develop tourism in ways that balance growth with heritage preservation, cultural assets such as festivals, architecture, gastronomy, and traditional crafts have gained increasing policy and scholarly attention. Within this broader landscape, traditional craft villages represent a valuable but underutilized tourism resource. They are sites where tangible products and intangible heritage intersect: visitors can encounter objects, techniques, stories, rituals, and local lifeworlds in the same setting. Craft villages, therefore, provide a strong basis for cultural tourism development that is experiential, place-based, and potentially community-centered [4, 5, 6].

Hue is a compelling case. Known as Viet Nam's former imperial capital and a UNESCO-recognized heritage destination, Hue possesses a dense concentration of historical monuments, cultural practices, and artisanal traditions [7]. Its traditional craft villages, such as Phu Cam conical hat village, Thanh Tien paper flower village, Thuy Xuan incense village, and Phuoc Tich pottery village-are embedded in the city's cultural identity and heritage landscape. These villages preserve techniques and symbolic forms that are closely tied to Hue's historical and spiritual life. At the same time, they offer strong tourism potential because they can connect visitors to living heritage through observation, participation, and purchase. Hue's broader festival ecosystem, particularly events such as the Traditional Craft Festival and the Hue Festival, serves as an enabling cultural context for the integration of craft villages into tourism activities.

Despite this potential, craft-village tourism in Hue remains insufficiently integrated into the city's tourism strategy. Many villages still have limited visibility, uneven visitor flows, and modest digital presence. Infrastructure and interpretation are inconsistent. Some villages benefit from seasonal festivals or social media exposure, while others remain marginal in tourist itineraries. More importantly, the long-term sustainability of these villages is under pressure. Younger generations may be less interested in continuing traditional crafts, artisans face competition from cheaper mass-produced goods, and some production systems are vulnerable to local resource constraints. These problems suggest that the challenge is not merely how to attract more tourists, but how to design a tourism model that supports cultural continuity, community benefit, and environmental responsibility [8,9].

This paper addresses that challenge by asking how Hue's traditional craft villages can serve as a model for sustainable cultural tourism. It builds on survey data collected from multiple stakeholder groups-artisans, craft producers, local residents, tourists, and tourism professionals-and situates the findings within three complementary frameworks: Sustainable Tourism Development, Community-Based Tourism (CBT), and the creative economy perspective [8,9,10]. The goal is not only to identify current opportunities and barriers, but also to propose an actionable roadmap that aligns heritage preservation with tourism innovation.

This study contributes to the literature by developing a more integrated understanding of sustainable cultural tourism in traditional craft villages. By combining Sustainable Tourism Development, Community-Based Tourism (CBT), and Creative Economy perspectives, it demonstrates that sustainability is shaped by the interaction of stakeholder priorities, cultural preservation, and market dynamics.

The findings extend existing theory by showing that stakeholder interests are not inherently aligned, and that digital visibility and experiential design play a central role in shaping tourism outcomes. This highlights the need to view craft village tourism as a dynamic system, where sustainability depends on balancing cultural authenticity, community participation, and innovation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Cultural Tourism

In the modern era, alongside forms such as ecotourism, medical tourism, and adventure tourism, cultural tourism has become a global priority due to its significant economic and social benefits. Cultural tourism is broadly understood as travel motivated by the desire to explore and experience both tangible and intangible cultural elements of a destination. These include art, architecture, heritage, cuisine, literature, music, and lifestyles that reflect a society's values and traditions [1].

Different scholars offer varied interpretations. McIntosh and Goeldner define cultural tourism as travel that enables visitors to understand the history, heritage, and contemporary life of communities [11]. Similarly, European Centre for Traditional and Regional Cultures identifies key cultural tourism resources, including archaeological sites, historic architecture, arts, festivals, music, literature, religion, and traditional cultures [12]. Within this framework, traditional craft villages are essential cultural assets.

Clare J.A. Mitchell views cultural tourism both broadly-as travel enriching knowledge and experience-and narrowly, as travel driven by specific cultural activities such as festivals, heritage visits, and religious pilgrimages [13]. The narrower perspective better highlights its economic contributions. Richards further defines cultural tourism as travel to cultural sites outside one's usual environment to gain new knowledge and satisfy cultural curiosity [12].

2.2. Traditional Craft Villages

The term "craft village" is widely used in Viet Nam, though its definition remains debated. B. V. Vuong describes traditional craft villages as centers of production where skilled artisans and households engage in long-standing crafts, sharing techniques and collaborating in small- to medium-scale production [4,5]. Similarly, Pham emphasizes that craft villages are not only production sites but also communities united by shared occupations, cultural identity, and collective economic development [6].

According to Decree 52/2018/ND-CP, craft villages are rural communities engaged in activities such as handicrafts, processing, manufacturing, and related services [14]. A "traditional" craft must meet three criteria: over 50 years of existence, strong cultural representation, and association with artisans or village reputation. Recognition also requires participation of at least 20% of households, stable production, and compliance with environmental standards.

Craft villages are categorized into traditional and new ones, with newer villages emerging due to market changes [15]. However, policies do not formally distinguish between them, and "traditional" is often used to enhance product value.

Beyond economic roles, craft villages are vital cultural tourism assets. They preserve heritage, showcase traditional knowledge, and offer immersive experiences, contributing to tourism development, cultural exchange, and sustainable local economies [16].

2.3. Previous relevant studies

Thang Nguyen Phu and Hien Nguyen Thi Thu evaluated tourism service quality in traditional craft villages in Da Nang, identifying key factors influencing visitor satisfaction [17]. Their findings show that while tourists expect high-quality services, actual performance often falls short. Human-related aspects, such as friendliness and responsiveness, and safety concerns, including food and property safety, are particularly valued. The study proposes 23 criteria tailored to craft village tourism, building on the SERVQUAL framework by Parasuraman et al., and recommends applying models like IPA and SERVQUAL to assess

service quality. Suggested improvements include infrastructure investment, staff training, safety assurance, stakeholder collaboration, and regular tourist satisfaction surveys.

Hieu Vu Minh and Rasovska Ida examined the role of craft villages in tourism development in Phu Quoc Island [5]. Their study highlights significant economic benefits, such as job creation and increased tourist revenue, alongside socio-cultural contributions like preserving cultural heritage. However, challenges remain, including limited effectiveness and a lack of comprehensive development strategies. The study suggests expanding research scope and improving implementation to enhance sustainability.

Tran Thi Hoai Diem focused on cultural and spiritual tourism in Thua Thien Hue, proposing a linkage model between Sinh and Thanh Tien villages [18]. This model aims to preserve traditional crafts while promoting economic growth through immersive cultural experiences, reinforcing both heritage preservation and tourism development.

Nguyen Phuong Anh analyzed the effects of peri-urbanization on Hanoi's craft villages, particularly Cu Da Village [19]. The study identifies issues such as loss of traditional architecture and declining craft practices due to urban expansion. It recommends integrated strategies involving heritage conservation, tourism development, and improved governance.

Dr. Do Thi Yen and Dr. Trieu Thi Trinh explored the integration of craft villages into Hanoi's tourism sector [20]. Despite strong potential, challenges such as poor infrastructure, weak marketing, and limited coordination persist. The study suggests enhancing facilities, promoting tourism, and strengthening stakeholder collaboration to ensure sustainable development.

2.4. Research Gaps

Although previous studies highlight the importance of traditional craft villages in cultural tourism, several research gaps remain, particularly in the context of Hue City. First, no empirical study on Hue's craft villages has adopted a multi-stakeholder design. Existing work focuses on single villages or single groups (e.g., only tourists or only policy analysis), missing the comparative perspectives of artisans, residents, tourists, and officials together.

Second, policy analysis remains underexplored. While Vietnamese national decrees define the criteria for "traditional" status, there is a lack of scholarly analysis on the divergence between formal policy recognition and local tourism reality. Specifically, the literature has not addressed why tourism officials remain less familiar with smaller villages despite high-level heritage designations, indicating a breakdown in stakeholder-aligned governance.

Third, research on tourist experiences and expectations is insufficient. Understanding visitor motivations and satisfaction is crucial for improving tourism offerings. Additionally, there is a lack of studies on linking craft villages with broader tourism networks in Hue.

Fourth, While Sustainable Tourism, Community-Based Tourism (CBT), and Creative Economy frameworks are well established individually, their joint application to craft-village settings has not been tested empirically. It remains unknown whether these frameworks generate consistent or conflicting recommendations when applied to living heritage sites where production, tourism, and community life overlap.

Fifth, community empowerment lacks practical strategies, and comparative studies across regions are limited. Identifying best practices could support more inclusive tourism development.

Finally, digital transformation and long-term impacts are under-researched. There is an unexplored paradox in heritage tourism where high "photogenic" appeal (as seen in Thuy Xuan village) leads to social media visibility but does not translate into infrastructure satisfaction or

repeat visitation. Existing research fails to provide a model for how digital marketing can bridge the gap between online curiosity and physical accessibility in rural craft settings.

To address these gaps, this study adopts a multi-stakeholder approach and applies an integrated theoretical framework combining Sustainable Tourism, Community-Based Tourism, and the Creative Economy. It examines the alignment between policy, stakeholder perceptions, and visitor experiences, while also exploring the role of digital visibility in shaping tourism outcomes. In doing so, the study provides a more comprehensive and practice-oriented understanding of how craft villages in Hue can function as sustainable cultural tourism systems.

2.5. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in key theoretical frameworks to analyze cultural tourism in Hue's craft villages. The Sustainable Tourism Development Theory emphasizes balancing economic growth, environmental sustainability, and cultural preservation [8]. Sustainable tourism emerged from global sustainability debates initiated by the World Commission on Environment and Development's 1987 *Our Common Future* and the 1992 Earth Summit, gaining traction through frameworks like Agenda 21. While widely embraced by institutions such as the World Tourism Organization and reflected in numerous policies, sustainable tourism remains difficult to define and implement due to its conceptual vagueness and the complex, fragmented nature of tourism itself. Tourism is a massive and growing global economic sector, yet it does not fit neatly into traditional definitions of an industry or product, as it encompasses diverse services, experiences, and stakeholders. This complexity, combined with conflicting interests and the intangible, composite nature of tourism products, complicates efforts to apply sustainability principles. Although sustainable tourism is promoted as a way to balance economic, environmental, and social goals, critics argue it raises more questions than answers, particularly what should be sustained, for whom, and under what conditions [21].

Dabphet et al. argue tourism is a rapidly growing industry that brings significant economic benefits but also creates environmental and socio-cultural challenges, leading to widespread support for sustainable tourism development as a way to balance these impacts [22]; however, its implementation remains hindered by unclear understanding among stakeholders and weak communication channels. Different stakeholder groups (governments, businesses, communities, and tourists) prioritize different aspects of sustainability, further complicating consensus and implementation. Dabphet et al. identify interpersonal communication (e.g., community interactions) as the most influential channel, supported by mass media, while key actors such as government bodies, educators, opinion leaders, and social networks play crucial roles in disseminating knowledge [22]. The diffusion of sustainable tourism is constrained by conceptual ambiguity, uneven knowledge, and communication gaps, underscoring the need for clearer definitions, better information-sharing mechanisms, and stronger stakeholder engagement to enable effective and coordinated implementation [22].

Strydom et al. find that beyond minimizing negative impacts, sustainable tourism aims to generate economic and social benefits for communities, promote conservation, and ensure long-term resource sustainability, although tensions may arise with other sectors competing for natural resources [23]. Core characteristics of sustainable tourism include cultural preservation, environmental protection, community participation, and education, supported by principles such as stakeholder involvement, local economic linkages, cooperation, monitoring, accountability, and capacity building. The concept is closely linked with community-based tourism, which emphasizes local participation and aligns with sustainable development goals by integrating economic viability with social, cultural, and ecological compatibility. Despite

diverse definitions and approaches, there is broad agreement that sustainable tourism should harmonize environmental responsibility, social equity, cultural integrity, and economic viability, positioning tourism as a tool for development-especially in developing countries-while addressing its historically negative impacts through more inclusive, community-oriented and sustainable practices [23].

In Hue, this involves managing tourism benefits alongside challenges such as resource depletion and cultural commodification, while promoting solutions like experiential tourism and digital marketing.

The Community-Based Tourism (CBT) Framework highlights local empowerment and equitable benefit distribution [9]. It supports stakeholder collaboration and community-led initiatives, such as apprenticeships, to sustain traditional crafts and address youth disengagement, drawing on successful examples like Oaxaca [24]. Community participation is widely regarded as essential to sustainable tourism development because it helps balance tourism's impacts, improve local benefits, and strengthen long-term viability, yet its practical implementation faces significant challenges. Participation is not only about sharing economic benefits but also about redistributing power, knowledge, and decision-making among stakeholders. Nonetheless, community-based approaches remain critical because local support directly affects tourism success, resource protection, and project sustainability. Okazaki emphasizes that effective participation requires empowerment, collaboration among stakeholders, and the development of social capital-networks, trust, and shared norms that enable collective action [25]. Integrating these elements, CBT models highlight the dynamic relationship between participation, power redistribution, collaboration, and social capital, suggesting that sustainable tourism outcomes depend on gradually strengthening both internal community capacity and external partnerships, even though progress is often uneven and context-dependent [25].

Agung Prakoso et al. note that CBT is widely recognized as a key approach to achieving sustainable tourism development by placing local communities at the center of planning, management, and benefit-sharing processes [26]. Drawing on definitions of community as a socio-spatial unit characterized by shared identity, locality, and interaction, scholars emphasize that effective tourism development must align with community values and adaptive capacities. Core principles such as participation, empowerment, ownership, and social capital are consistently identified as foundational to community development, while CBT is conceptualized as a participatory model capable of generating economic opportunities, preserving cultural heritage, and enhancing social cohesion. Agung Prakoso et al. reveal important tensions between normative ideals and practical implementation. In many cases, local communities remain constrained by limited capacity, unequal power relations, and dependence on external stakeholders, which undermines genuine participation and control. These challenges suggest that, although CBT holds significant potential as a tool for sustainable and inclusive development, its success ultimately depends on strengthening local institutional capacity, ensuring equitable power distribution, and fostering meaningful stakeholder collaboration [26].

Additionally, the Creative Economy Framework views traditional crafts as valuable cultural and economic assets. It encourages innovation and entrepreneurship while maintaining cultural authenticity [10].

Within the theoretical framework of traditional craft villages as a model for sustainable cultural tourism, Horjan demonstrates the CRAFTATTRACT project provides an illustrative case of how intangible cultural heritage can be mobilised as both a cultural and economic resource [27]. Originating from practical experience in the Kumrovec open-air museum in Croatia, where heritage preservation is embedded within a living community, the project

highlights the potential of integrating traditional crafts into tourism development through authentic, place-based approaches. It conceptualises traditional crafts not merely as static heritage, but as dynamic assets that can generate sustainable livelihoods, diversify tourism beyond seasonal patterns, and strengthen local identity. By fostering cross-border cooperation between Croatia and Slovenia, the project advances a model that combines heritage research, capacity building, education, and stakeholder collaboration to enhance the value chain of craft-based tourism. At the same time, it exposes structural tensions within sustainable cultural tourism, particularly the imbalance between heritage-oriented approaches and market-driven tourism actors, who often prioritise standardised and low-risk products over authentic experiences. Therefore, CRAFTATTRACT contributes to the theoretical understanding that traditional craft villages can function as sustainable tourism models only when supported by integrated governance, active community participation, and a careful balance between authenticity, innovation, and market viability [27].

Furthermore, Dragicevic Curkovic (2021) states that traditional handicrafts are conceptualised as a core component of intangible cultural heritage that contributes not only to cultural preservation but also to community development and tourism diversification [28]. Drawing on theories of experiential authenticity, cultural tourism is increasingly oriented toward participatory and immersive experiences, where tourists engage directly with local crafts and cultural practices, thereby enhancing both individual experience and collective identity. Traditional crafts embody cultural knowledge, creativity, and livelihood systems, yet they face significant threats from urbanisation, industrialisation, and shifting labour preferences, leading to a decline in artisan participation and potential loss of heritage. At the same time, global market dynamics demonstrate that handicrafts can remain economically viable when integrated with innovation, modern technology, and effective market strategies, as seen in cases such as India and other Asian contexts. Empirical evidence from Dubrovnik further indicates that while local communities recognise the cultural and tourism value of traditional crafts, their level of touristic valorisation remains insufficient, highlighting a gap between cultural potential and market realisation. This suggests that sustainable cultural tourism models based on craft villages require stronger institutional support, capacity building, networking, and targeted market segmentation, particularly focusing on culturally motivated tourists who seek authentic, co-creative experiences. Consequently, traditional craft villages can function as sustainable tourism models when they successfully integrate heritage conservation with market-oriented adaptation, community participation, and experiential tourism development [28].

Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive approach to promoting sustainable, inclusive, and adaptive cultural tourism in Hue.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

This study adopts a case-study approach centered on Hue's traditional craft villages and uses a structured survey as the main instrument of data collection. The objective is to capture stakeholder perceptions of the opportunities and barriers involved in integrating these villages into sustainable cultural tourism. The research also incorporates document analysis of policy materials, tourism reports, and secondary sources on Hue's heritage and craft sectors in order to contextualize the survey findings. A multi-stakeholder design was selected because craft-village tourism is shaped by overlapping interests and responsibilities. Artisans experience the realities of production, income, and skill transmission. Residents observe social and environmental effects at the community level. Tourists evaluate attractiveness, accessibility, and experience quality. Tourism professionals and officials bring perspectives on planning,

policy, and destination development. Bringing these groups together offers a fuller picture than a single-actor study.

3.2. Sample and participants

The survey included 100 respondents drawn from four main stakeholder categories: artisans and craft producers, local residents, domestic and international tourists, and tourism professionals or government officials. The sample was designed to reflect different types of engagement with Hue's craft villages and to ensure that both supply-side and demand-side perspectives were captured. The respondent profile was relatively young and educated. A majority were aged 18 to 30, and most had tertiary education. The stakeholder distribution also reflected meaningful diversity, with both local actors and visitors represented. This composition is useful for identifying how younger and more digitally engaged audiences perceive craft-village tourism, though it also has implications for the interpretation of findings, as discussed later.

3.3. Data collection and questionnaire structure

The questionnaire was structured around six themes: respondent background; awareness and perceptions of craft villages; visitor experiences and infrastructure; cultural, economic, and social impacts; challenges; and recommendations for future development. Both closed and open-ended items were included. Closed items enabled descriptive analysis of patterns across stakeholder groups, while open-ended responses provided contextual insight into concerns such as authenticity, generational continuity, and environmental pressure. The questionnaire was distributed to respondents with informed consent and with attention to confidentiality and voluntary participation. Data collection focused on capturing perceptions of key craft-village issues rather than measuring objective tourism performance indicators such as visitor counts or sales revenue.

3.4. Data analysis

The analysis relied primarily on descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, supported by comparative interpretation across stakeholder groups. The aim was not to test causal relationships, but to identify dominant themes, perceived opportunities, and recurrent barriers. Quantitative patterns were triangulated with open-ended comments and document analysis to improve interpretive depth.

4. STUDY CONTEXT: HUE'S TRADITIONAL CRAFT VILLAGES

Hue occupies a distinctive position in Viet Nam's cultural geography. As the former imperial capital and a UNESCO-recognized heritage destination, it possesses a layered cultural landscape that includes royal architecture, ritual traditions, festivals, cuisine, music, and handicrafts [7]. In addition to its monuments and intangible heritage, Hue is associated with a number of traditional craft villages that continue to produce items linked to the region's aesthetic and spiritual identity. Among the best-known examples are Phu Cam conical hat village, where artisans produce the iconic non la associated with Hue; Thanh Tien paper flower village, famous for its colorful ritual and decorative flowers; Thuy Xuan incense village, known for hand-rolled incense and vibrant displays that have become highly photogenic; and Phuoc Tich pottery village, a more fragile but culturally significant site with historic ceramic traditions. The thesis documents these villages in detail, showing how each is tied to Hue's cultural memory, symbolic landscape, and local livelihoods. Thanh Tien, for example, is rooted in folk belief and ritual practice, while Phu Cam hats contain iconic images of Hue such as the Perfume River, Ngu Mountain, Thien Mu Pagoda, and the Imperial Citadel [29]. Their relevance for tourism lies in several features. First, they offer craft-making processes that can

be demonstrated and interpreted. Second, they produce highly place-specific objects that serve as souvenirs and cultural symbols. Third, they are embedded in social and spiritual practices, which gives them narrative depth. Fourth, they can diversify Hue's tourism offer beyond the imperial core, helping distribute visitor attention across a wider cultural landscape. At the same time, their tourism integration is uneven. Some villages, especially those with strong visual appeal or festival connections, attract more visitors and more online attention than others. In some places, workshops and demonstrations exist but are not systematically packaged as tourism products. In others, signage, amenities, transport access, or interpretation remain weak. These uneven conditions make Hue a useful case for examining not only whether craft villages matter for tourism, but what kinds of governance and marketing arrangements are needed to support them sustainably.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Demographic Overview of Respondents

A thorough understanding of the demographic profile and engagement patterns of respondents is essential for interpreting their perspectives on Hue's craft villages and their potential as cultural tourism destinations.

Table 1. General respondents characteristics

Characteristics		Percentage
Age Distribution	Under 18 years old	2%
	18-30 years old	63%
	31-45 years old	17%
	46-60 years old	14%
	Above 60 years old	4%
Gender distribution	Male	54%
	Female	44%
	Other	2%
Education Levels	No formal education or primary school or secondary school	8%
	High school	13%
	Vocational training	7%
	Bachelor's degree	48%
	Postgraduate degree	24%
Roles in Survey	Artisans/craft producers	20%
	Local residents	20%
	Domestic tourists	34%
	International tourists	9%
	Tourism officials	17%
Engagement with Hue's Craft Villages	Never	28%
	First-time visitor	20%
	Occasionally (1-2 times per year)	26%

About age distribution: The majority of respondents were young, with 63% falling within the 18–30 age group, followed by 17% aged 31–45, 14% aged 46–60. Also, there were 2 respondents under 18 years of age and 4 respondents aged 60 or older. The predominance of younger respondents (18–30) reflects a demographic that is likely to be tech-savvy, socially engaged, and interested in modern tourism trends, such as experiential and cultural tourism. This aligns with global trends where millennials and Gen Z are increasingly drawn to authentic, community-based travel experiences [1]. However, the limited representation of older age groups (60+), who may have deeper historical and cultural connections to traditional crafts, suggests a potential gap in capturing perspectives from those with long-standing ties to Hue's craft heritage. This age distribution may influence the types of tourism strategies that resonate with respondents, favoring modern, interactive approaches over more traditional ones.

The gender distribution was nearly balanced, with 54% identifying as female, 44% as male, and 2% preferring not to disclose their gender. The near-even split between male and female respondents ensures that the survey captures a balanced perspective, avoiding gender bias in perceptions of craft village tourism. This inclusivity is particularly important given that cultural tourism often appeals to diverse audiences, and gender may influence preferences for activities (e.g., women might be more drawn to hands-on workshops, while men might prioritize historical learning). The small percentage of respondents who preferred not to disclose their gender adds a layer of diversity, reflecting modern survey practices that accommodate non-binary identities.

Education levels among respondents varied widely: 48% held a bachelor's degree, 24% had a postgraduate degree, 13% completed high school, 7% had vocational training, 8% had no formal education or finished primary school or high school. The high proportion of respondents with tertiary education (72% with bachelor's or postgraduate degrees) suggests that many participants, particularly tourists, students, and officials, may have a strong awareness of cultural heritage and its economic potential in tourism. This educated demographic is likely to value the historical and cultural significance of Hue's craft villages, as evidenced by their responses in later sections. Conversely, the 8% with primary or no formal education likely includes artisans and local residents, whose perspectives may focus more on practical challenges, such as economic sustainability and resource availability. This educational diversity provides a well-rounded view, capturing both the intellectual appreciation of cultural tourism and the lived experiences of those directly involved in craft production.

The survey included a diverse range of stakeholders: 20% were artisans/craft producers, 20% were local residents, 34% were domestic tourists, 9% were international tourists, and 17% were tourism officials. This distribution aligns with the stratified sampling strategy outlined in research design, ensuring representation across key stakeholder groups involved in or affected by craft village tourism. The combined proportion of tourists (43%) meets the intended target of 30% (30 out of 100), providing a balanced perspective from visitors. Domestic tourists (34%) outnumber international tourists (9%), which may reflect the accessibility of Hue's craft villages to local travelers and the challenges international tourists face in discovering these destinations. Artisans and local residents, who together make up 40% of the sample, provide a robust local perspective, crucial for understanding the challenges and opportunities from those directly involved in craft production. Tourism officials (17%) offer insights into policy and institutional barriers. This composition ensures a comprehensive multi-stakeholder perspective, though the lower proportion of international tourists may slightly limit insights into their specific needs and preferences.

Engagement levels with Hue's craft villages varied significantly: 28% had never visited or engaged with the villages, 22% lived or worked in a craft village, 20% were first-time visitors, 26% visited occasionally (1 - 2 times a year), and 4% visited frequently (more than 3 times a year). The 22% of respondents who live or work in craft villages - primarily artisans and local

residents - demonstrate deep, ongoing engagement, offering valuable insights into the day-to-day realities of craft production and tourism integration. However, the 28% who have never visited, including a notable portion of tourism officials (5 out of 17, based on the updated data) and potentially some in other roles, indicates a significant awareness gap among key stakeholders who could influence tourism development. The 50% who have visited (first-time, occasional, or frequent) provide direct feedback on visitor experiences, but the low frequency of repeat visits (only 4% visit frequently) suggests that craft villages may not yet offer compelling reasons for return visits, potentially due to limited activities, infrastructure, or marketing.

5.2. Opportunities for Promoting Cultural Tourism

The survey findings reveal several opportunities for promoting cultural tourism in Hue's craft villages, emphasizing their cultural significance, potential for visitor engagement, economic and social benefits, and appeal to specific demographics.

5.2.1. Cultural Significance as a Tourism Asset

Hue, recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site for the Complex of Hue Monuments, encompasses a range of cultural landmarks, including the Imperial City, royal tombs, and pagodas [7]. Craft villages such as Thanh Tien (paper flowers) and Phu Cam (conical hats) contribute to Hue's cultural heritage, complementing the city's broader tourism offerings.

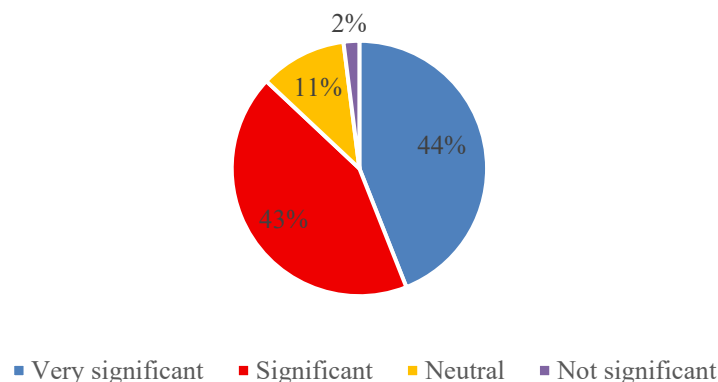


Figure 1. Cultural Significance of Hue's Craft Villages

When asked to evaluate the cultural significance of Hue's traditional craft villages as part of the city's tourism and heritage landscape. A substantial 87% of respondents viewed the cultural significance of Hue's craft villages, with only 11% rating it as neutral and 2% as not significant. The strong recognition of cultural significance across all stakeholder groups underscores the potential of Hue's craft villages to serve as a cornerstone of cultural tourism. This is in line with global trends, where cultural tourism - defined by the UNWTO as tourism driven by the wish to discover, understand, and connect with cultural attractions - is increasingly centered around experiential and community-oriented activities [1].

When asked about the main attributes of Hue's craft villages, 73.1% identified "*Rich cultural and historical value*" as a key feature, followed by 50.5% who highlighted the "*Preservation of traditional craft techniques*" and 47.3% who noted "*Unique handmade products*." Artisans and local residents were particularly likely to emphasize cultural value, with 90% (18 out of 20 artisans) and 85% (17 out of 20 residents) rating it as "Very significant" or "Significant." The findings suggest that Hue's craft villages are primarily perceived as cultural assets rather than purely economic products. The strong emphasis on cultural and historical value, particularly among artisans and local residents, highlights the central role of cultural preservation in shaping tourism development. This aligns with sustainable tourism

theory, which emphasizes the importance of safeguarding cultural heritage. However, the lower emphasis on preservation practices compared to perceived cultural value indicates a potential gap between recognition and implementation. This discrepancy suggests that while stakeholders acknowledge the importance of cultural heritage, practical mechanisms for its preservation may be constrained by economic pressures, generational shifts, or limited institutional support.

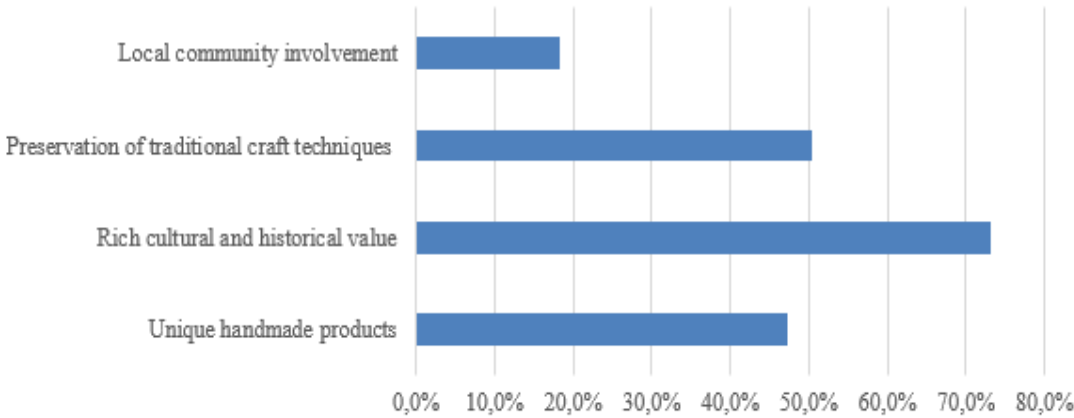


Figure 2. Main Attributes of Hue's Craft Villages

Furthermore, the strong valuation of cultural and historical significance-particularly among artisans and residents - positions Hue's craft villages as viable "living heritage" destinations. These sites offer visitors an immersive and authentic connection to local traditions, enhancing experiential tourism. Strategically integrating craft villages into broader heritage tourism circuits - for instance, linking them with prominent sites such as the Imperial City of Hue - could significantly increase their attractiveness and economic viability. Comparable approaches can be observed in Kyoto, where the so-called "Kyoto model" fosters a balanced relationship between tourism development, cultural preservation, and community well-being, as highlighted in joint reports by UNWTO and UNESCO (2019) [3]. The high valuation by artisans and residents also highlights their role in preserving and sharing Hue's cultural traditions with visitors, fostering mutual understanding and cultural transmission, a practice that aligns with the emphasis on strong community involvement in sustainable cultural tourism [2].

5.2.2. Interactive Visitor Experiences

The Hue Traditional Craft Festival, held as part of the broader Hue Festival, provides a platform for showcasing traditional crafts through workshops and demonstrations, such as incense rolling at Thuy Xuan and pottery making at Phuoc Tich. The Hue Festival Week 2024, held from June 7 to 12 in Thua Thien Hue province under the theme "Cultural Heritage amid Integration and Development," drew approximately 100,000 visitors [30].

To better understand visitor preferences, respondents identified the activities they found most engaging when visiting craft villages as the following figure.

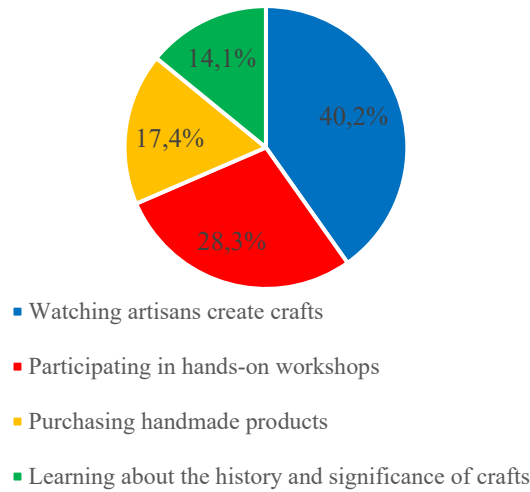


Figure 3. Most Engaging Activities in Hue's Craft Villages

Survey findings indicate that 40.2% of respondents preferred watching artisans at work, while 28.3% expressed interest in participating in hands-on workshops. This pattern underscores the growing importance of experiential tourism, a key concept within Cultural Tourism, where visitors increasingly seek immersive and educational experiences rather than passive consumption. Such preferences are consistent with global tourism trends identified by UNWTO, which emphasize engagement, authenticity, and co-creation of experiences [1]. By allowing visitors to directly interact with production processes, these activities deepen their understanding of the cultural, historical, and technical dimensions embedded in traditional crafts. Comparative evidence from Oaxaca, Mexico, demonstrates that integrating hands-on experiences into craft tourism can significantly enhance both visitor satisfaction and the economic sustainability of local communities [24]. In this context, the relatively higher level of interest among tourists suggests considerable potential for expanding workshop-based offerings in less-visited craft villages such as Sinh Village or Phuoc Tich. Such spatial diversification could help alleviate pressure on more popular sites while distributing tourism benefits more equitably and encouraging longer visitor stays. Additionally, 17.4% of respondents indicated an interest in purchasing handmade products, pointing to a viable market for authentic, locally produced souvenirs. This demand could be further leveraged through the development of curated retail spaces, improved product branding, and the integration of digital sales platforms to reach broader markets. While this percentage is lower than engagement in experiential activities, it nonetheless represents an important complementary revenue stream that reinforces the economic value of craft heritage. The significant attendance at the Hue Festival Week 2024 suggests that similar events, perhaps on a smaller scale throughout the year, could sustain visitor interest and engagement.

5.2.3. Economic and Social Benefits

Perceptions of the economic contribution of craft villages to local communities were also examined.

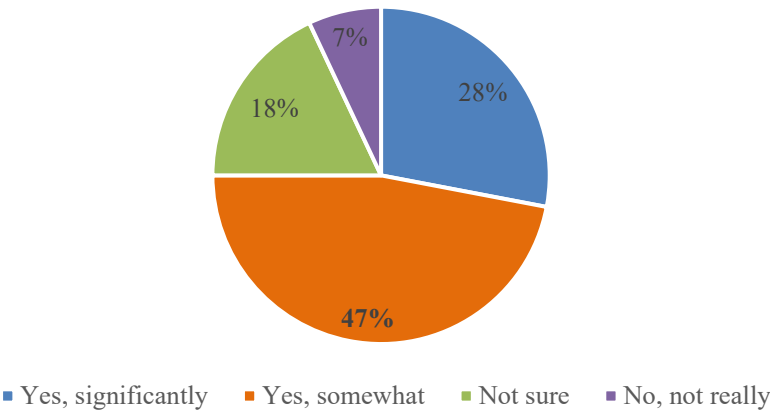


Figure 4. Economic Contribution of Hue's Craft Villages

The survey findings indicate that 75% of respondents believe Hue's craft villages contribute to the local economy, highlighting their potential to support rural livelihoods. The recognized economic and social advantages highlight the capacity of craft villages to play an essential role in Hue's tourism-based economy, especially in rural regions where other income opportunities are scarce. The optimism among artisans, with 62% rating the economic contribution as significant, suggests that tourism provides a meaningful revenue stream, though the more tempered views of tourism officials may reflect concerns about sustainability and infrastructure, as discussed later.

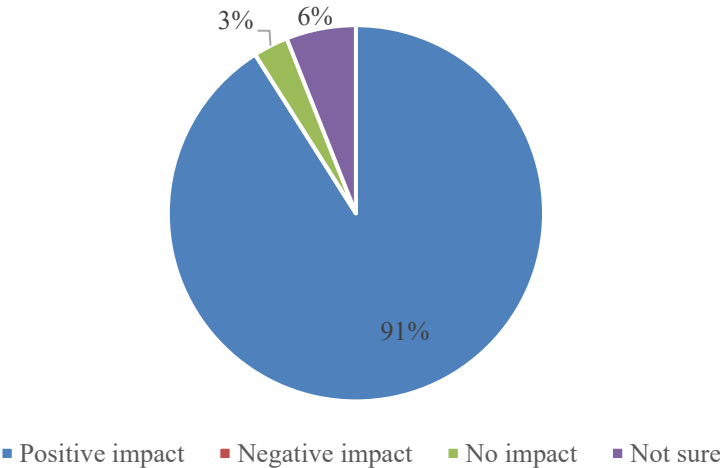


Figure 5. Impact of Tourism on Local Communities in Hue's Craft Villages

Respondents were further asked to assess the broader social and community impacts of tourism development in craft villages. The overwhelmingly positive view of tourism's social impact, with 91% of respondents noting benefits like income generation, job creation, and cultural preservation, suggests that craft villages can enhance community pride and cultural preservation. This presents an opportunity to position craft villages as a model for sustainable tourism, balancing economic gains with cultural and social benefits, similar to successful examples in Oaxaca, Mexico [24]. The high positivity among local residents, with 95% noting a positive impact, suggests that community-led tourism initiatives, where residents play an active role in tourism development, could further enhance these benefits, fostering a sense of ownership and pride.

5.2.4. Targeting Younger Demographics

With 63% of respondents aged 18-30, this demographic showed notable interest in craft villages, with 35% (22 out of 63) being first-time or occasional visitors. Among this age group, 32% (20 out of 63) participated in or valued hands-on activities like workshops, and 50% (31 out of 63) identified “Unique handmade products” as a key attribute. Open-ended responses from younger respondents frequently mentioned digital platforms, with suggestions like “Put them on TikTok” and “Advertise through TikTok, Facebook, Instagram.”

The survey findings reveal that 63% of respondents are aged 18-30, indicating a strong presence of younger demographics interested in Hue’s craft villages. The predominance of younger respondents aligns with global trends in cultural tourism, where millennials and Gen Z seek to learn, discover, and experience cultural attractions through interactive activities [1]. Their interest in hands-on activities (28.3% prefer workshops) and unique products (47.3% identify unique handmade products as a key attribute) suggests that craft villages can appeal to this demographic by offering modern, interactive experiences such as workshops tailored to social media sharing and by enhancing their online presence. The emphasis on platforms like TikTok in open-ended responses indicates a clear opportunity to leverage digital marketing to reach this audience. Creating content that showcases the craft-making process, such as short TikTok videos of artisans at work, could resonate with this demographic, encouraging both visitation and online engagement.

5.3. Challenges in Promoting Cultural Tourism

Despite the opportunities, the survey reveals significant challenges that hinder the sustainable development of Hue’s craft villages as cultural tourism destinations, spanning awareness, infrastructure, economic pressures, and marketing gaps.

5.3.1. Limited Awareness and Visitation

The survey measured respondents’ overall level of familiarity with Hue’s traditional craft villages as the following figure:

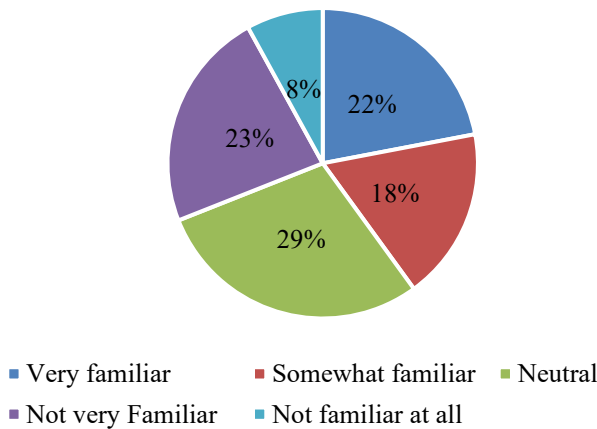


Figure 6. Familiarity with Hue’s Traditional Craft Villages

Overall familiarity with Hue’s craft villages remains relatively low. Only 22% of respondents reported being “very familiar,” while 23% were “not very familiar” and 8% were “not familiar at all.” This limited awareness is reflected in visitation behavior, with 28% of respondents indicating that they had never visited any craft village.

Participants were also asked which craft villages they had previously visited.

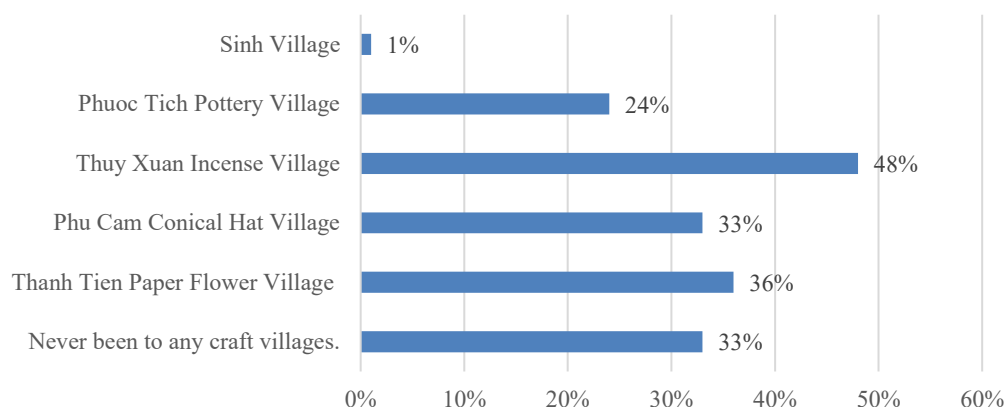


Figure 7. Visitation to Specific Craft Villages in Hue

Among those who had visited, tourism activity was highly concentrated in a few well-known locations. Thuy Xuan emerged as the most frequently visited site (48%), followed by Thanh Tien (36%) and Phu Cam (33%). In contrast, Phuoc Tich, despite its historical and cultural significance-attracted only 24% of visitors.

This uneven distribution of visitation highlights a broader issue in destination promotion. Provincial tourism strategies tend to prioritize globally recognized heritage attractions, particularly the Imperial City of Hue, which is part of UNESCO World Heritage listings. While such prioritization strengthens Hue's international branding, it inadvertently marginalizes craft villages, which remain underrepresented in official marketing materials and tourism itineraries. Even though large-scale events like the Hue Festival provide some exposure, smaller villages such as Sinh Village continue to receive limited visibility.

The data suggests a clear awareness gap that directly impacts tourism flows. The concentration of visitors in a few prominent villages indicates that current marketing efforts are both selective and uneven, leading to spatial imbalances in tourism benefits. This issue is further compounded by the relatively low visitation rates among government officials, despite their awareness of these sites. Given their influence over policy formulation and resource allocation, this disconnect may hinder the development of comprehensive support mechanisms for craft village tourism.

Addressing these challenges requires a more inclusive and strategic approach to destination marketing. Targeted promotional campaigns - particularly those leveraging digital platforms - could significantly enhance the visibility of lesser-known villages. Additionally, integrating these villages into broader tourism circuits, such as thematic routes linked to the Imperial City, or embedding them more systematically into festival programming, could help diversify visitor flows. Such measures would not only improve awareness but also contribute to a more balanced and sustainable distribution of tourism across Hue's craft village network.

5.3.2. Inadequate Infrastructure and Facilities

Infrastructure and accessibility remain critical constraints in positioning craft villages in Hue as competitive cultural tourism destinations. Survey responses reveal a generally moderate but not strongly positive perception of accessibility. Specifically, 47.9% of respondents rated access - across dimensions such as transportation, road quality, and directional signage - as "neutral," suggesting an absence of clearly satisfactory experiences. Meanwhile, 17% evaluated accessibility as "poor" or "very poor," indicating that a notable segment of visitors encountered tangible difficulties in reaching these sites. In contrast, 26.6% and 8.5% rated accessibility as "good" and "very good," respectively, reflecting a degree of unevenness in infrastructure quality across different locations.

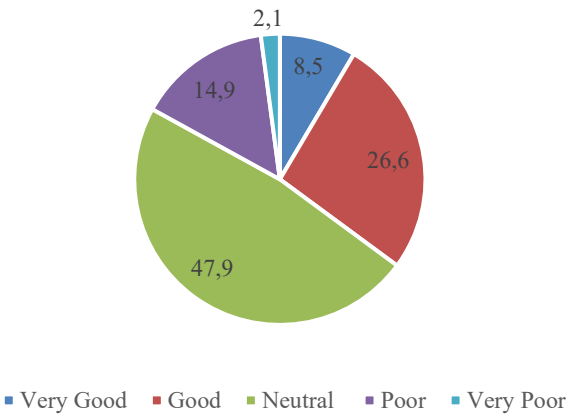


Figure 8. Accessibility of Hue’s Craft Villages

This distribution points to a structural inconsistency in transport connectivity and wayfinding systems. While some villages - particularly those closer to central attractions such as the Imperial City of Hue - may benefit from relatively better access, more remote or less-promoted villages likely face infrastructural limitations that reduce their tourism appeal. The high proportion of “neutral” responses is especially significant, as it suggests that accessibility is not a defining strength of the destination, but rather a latent weakness that may become more pronounced as visitor expectations increase.

Visitor satisfaction with on-site facilities presents a slightly more positive yet still moderate outlook. A combined 44.1% of respondents reported being “satisfied,” while 38.7% remained “neutral.” Only 5.4% expressed dissatisfaction, and none indicated being “very dissatisfied,” implying that while facilities are generally acceptable, they fall short of delivering memorable or high-quality experiences.

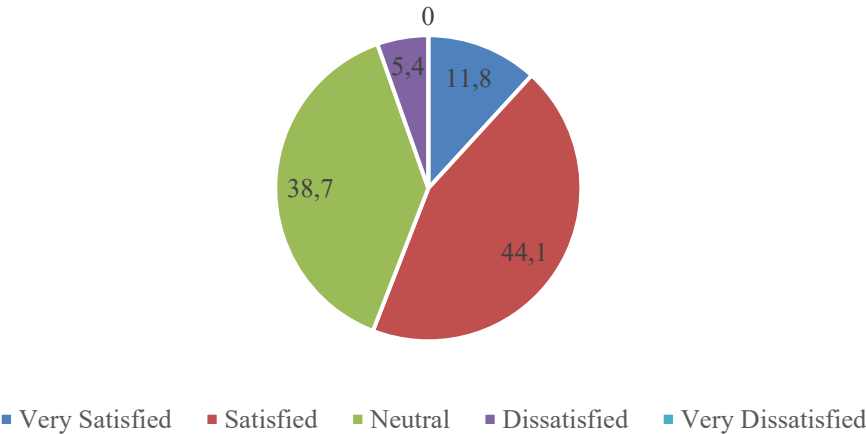


Figure 9. Satisfaction with Facilities in Hue’s Craft Villages

The survey identified several major challenges affecting the sustainable development of Hue’s craft villages.

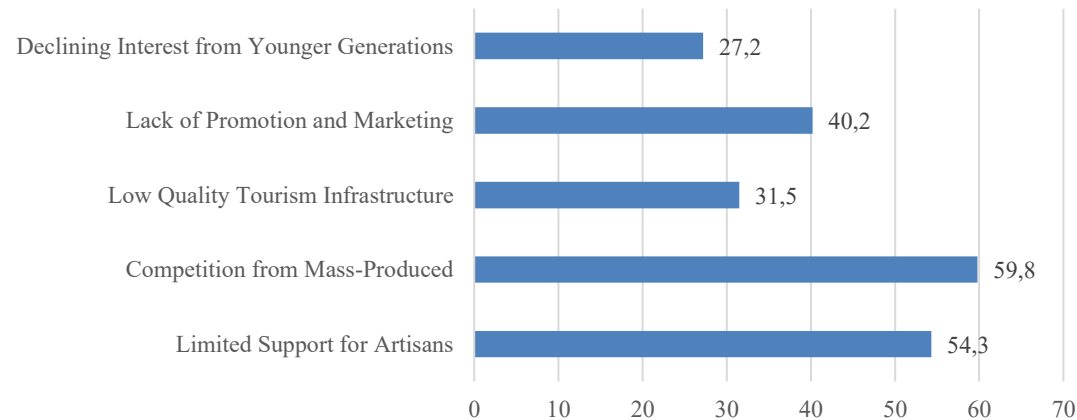


Figure 10. Challenges Facing Hue’s Craft Villages

From a strategic perspective, these findings suggest that infrastructure and facility development in Hue’s craft villages currently meets basic functional requirements but lacks the quality and distinctiveness necessary to enhance visitor experience and competitiveness. The predominance of neutral evaluations indicates untapped potential: improvements in transportation links, clearer signage systems, and upgraded visitor amenities (such as rest areas, interpretive centers, and sanitation facilities) could significantly elevate overall satisfaction.

Moreover, infrastructure development should be approached in alignment with sustainable tourism principles, ensuring that upgrades do not compromise the cultural authenticity or environmental integrity of the villages. Thoughtful investment in “soft infrastructure” such as interpretive services, guided experiences, and digital navigation tools, could complement physical improvements, creating a more holistic and accessible visitor journey. Ultimately, addressing these infrastructural gaps is essential not only for improving accessibility but also for enabling a more balanced distribution of tourism flows across both well-known and lesser-visited craft villages.

5.3.3. Economic and Sustainability Pressures

Survey findings reveal a set of interrelated economic and sustainability pressures that threaten the long-term viability of craft villages in Hue. The most prominent concern identified was the “declining interest from younger generations,” reported by 54.3% of respondents (50 out of 92). This was followed by “competition from mass-produced goods” (40.2%, 37 out of 92) and “limited support for artisans” (27.2%, 25 out of 92). These concerns were even more pronounced among artisans themselves, with 75% (15 out of 20) highlighting generational disengagement and 60% (12 out of 20) emphasizing competitive pressures from industrial products. Additionally, 40% of local residents (8 out of 20) raised environmental concerns, particularly the depletion of natural resources such as clay in Phuoc Tich.

Collectively, these findings point to a structural vulnerability within the craft village system, where economic, social, and environmental challenges intersect. The declining interest among younger generations represents not only a labor supply issue but also a disruption in the intergenerational transmission of intangible cultural heritage. This trend reflects a broader national pattern in Viet Nam, where traditional occupations increasingly struggle to compete with urban employment opportunities and modern career aspirations. The issue is particularly concerning given that a majority of survey respondents (63%) fall within the 18–30 age group, yet only a small proportion demonstrate strong familiarity with craft villages. This suggests a widening cultural disconnect between younger populations and traditional heritage systems, which, if unaddressed, may lead to the gradual erosion of artisanal knowledge and identity.

At the same time, competition from mass-produced goods further undermines the economic sustainability of craft villages. Industrial products, often cheaper and more standardized, challenge the market positioning of handmade goods, especially in villages that rely heavily on tourism consumption, such as Thuy Xuan and Thanh Tien. This dynamic creates a paradox: while tourism increases demand for souvenirs, it can also incentivize the commodification and simplification of traditional crafts to meet price expectations, potentially diluting their cultural authenticity.

The issue of limited institutional support further compounds these challenges. Although policy frameworks such as Decree 52/2018/ND-CP aim to provide financial assistance and training for artisans, the relatively low engagement of tourism officials - evidenced by their limited visitation - suggests gaps in policy implementation and local-level coordination. This disconnect may reduce the effectiveness of support mechanisms, leaving artisans with insufficient resources to innovate, market their products, or adapt to changing market conditions.

Environmental sustainability presents an additional layer of complexity. Resource depletion, particularly the scarcity of raw materials like clay in Phuoc Tich, reflects broader patterns of overexploitation observed in craft villages nationwide. Such challenges align with concerns raised by MONRE, which emphasize the need for sustainable resource management to ensure the continuity of traditional production systems [15]. Without careful regulation and alternative sourcing strategies, environmental degradation may not only increase production costs but also threaten the very existence of certain craft traditions.

Tackling these challenges will demand a comprehensive approach, involving initiatives such as youth engagement programs (like craft apprenticeships), financial assistance for artisans (such as material subsidies), and strategies for sustainable resource management (including the use of alternative materials or recycling efforts).

5.3.4. Marketing and Promotion Gaps

The most frequently cited challenge was “Lack of promotion and marketing” (59.8%, with 69% recommending “Increase marketing and promotion” as a key strategy for improvement. Open-ended responses emphasized digital platforms, with suggestions like “Put them on TikTok,” “Advertise through TikTok, Facebook, Instagram,” and “Operate more workshops/short movies for tourists.” Tourists were particularly vocal about marketing gaps, with 52% of domestic tourists (11 out of 21) and 44% of international tourists (4 out of 9) citing lack of promotion as a barrier.

The Hue Festival promotes some craft villages, such as Thuy Xuan and Thanh Tien, but smaller ones like Sinh remain largely absent from promotional campaigns, contributing to their low visibility. The emphasis on marketing gaps by respondents highlights a critical barrier to increasing the visibility of Hue’s craft villages. The lack of promotion contributes to the low familiarity, with 31% of respondents being “Not very familiar” (23%) or “Not familiar at all” (8%), and visitation rates, with 28% having never visited any craft village. This is particularly relevant for international tourists, who may face additional barriers due to the lack of multilingual content in promotional materials. The call for digital marketing aligns with the preferences of younger respondents (63% aged 18–30), who are active on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, as noted in open-ended responses. Developing a comprehensive digital marketing strategy, including multilingual content and short videos showcasing craft-making processes, could address this gap, as suggested by respondents. Additionally, the focus on short movies and workshops in open-ended responses aligns with the preference for hands-on activities (28.3% prefer workshops, see Figure 5.8), suggesting that experiential marketing-where visitors can see and feel the craft-making process-could further enhance visibility and interest.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the potential of Hue's traditional craft villages to function as a model for sustainable cultural tourism through a multi-stakeholder lens. The evidence shows that stakeholders strongly value these villages as heritage assets and believe they can contribute to local economies, cultural continuity, and visitor experience. Importantly, these perceptions are not uniform across stakeholder groups, but reflect differing priorities between local actors and external stakeholders, highlighting the need for more differentiated and coordinated development approaches. At the same time, their tourism integration remains constrained by limited awareness, weak promotion, uneven visitation, infrastructure gaps, and deeper sustainability pressures related to youth succession, artisan support, and resource management.

The most important finding is that marketing, especially digital promotion, is currently the most critical barrier and the most actionable development lever. Respondents see storytelling, social media visibility, and experiential formats such as workshops as practical tools for increasing attractiveness and strengthening destination identity. This suggests that digital visibility should be understood not merely as a promotional tool, but as a structural factor shaping tourism flows, destination competitiveness, and long-term economic viability. Yet the paper argues that promotion alone is not enough. Sustainable craft-village tourism requires a broader model that aligns digital visibility, experience design, community participation, and heritage-sensitive governance.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that sustainable craft-village tourism operates as a dynamic system shaped by the interaction of stakeholder priorities, cultural preservation, and market forces, rather than as a static balance between these elements. Hue's craft villages can serve as a meaningful model for sustainable cultural tourism not because they are untouched relics of the past, but because they are living cultural spaces capable of adaptation. Their future depends on whether tourism can support that adaptation without severing the social and cultural roots of craft practice. In this regard, the combination of sustainable tourism, community-based participation, and creative economy thinking offers a promising direction for policy and practice.

Future research should build on this exploratory study by using larger samples, comparative designs across multiple Vietnamese heritage destinations, and mixed methods that include interviews, ethnography, and longitudinal assessment. Such work would help clarify how craft-village tourism evolves over time and under what conditions it genuinely supports cultural resilience. More broadly, this study shifts the focus from recognizing the cultural value of craft villages to understanding the conditions under which that value can be sustained, adapted, and effectively integrated into contemporary tourism systems.

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