

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND MEDIA IN ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE TOURISM: THE CASE OF HUE FESTIVAL, VIET NAM

Ho Thi Dieu Trang*, Ho Dung

University of Science, Hue University

*Email: hothidieutrang@husc.edu.vn

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of creative and media industries in promoting sustainable heritage tourism through a case study of the Hue Festival. This cultural event is closely linked to the heritage space of the Hue Imperial Citadel Complex, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In the context of transforming heritage exploitation models towards sustainability, the Hue Festival is conceptualized as a creative platform contributing to the restructuring of the destination image and enhancing local value. The study employs a case study design. Data was collected through document analysis, media content analysis, and in-depth interviews with managers, media professionals, and tourists. The results show that the Hue Festival operates as a space for recreating heritage value through artistic performances, experience design, and community participation, thereby transforming heritage resources into sustainable tourism products. Media plays a crucial role in shaping the image of the destination and defining the discourse of “Hue as a sustainable heritage destination”. This study contributes to clarifying the integrated relationship between the creative industries, media, and sustainable heritage tourism development in Viet Nam.

Keywords: Creative industries, sustainable heritage tourism, media, Hue Festival.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, heritage tourism has become one of the most dynamic segments of the global tourism industry. This trend stems from the increasing demand from tourists for authentic experiences connected to the cultural identity and historical depth of the destination. In many regions, such as Europe and Asia, heritage destinations are no longer viewed simply as “static structures” [1]. Heritage tourism is gradually being repositioned as living cultural spaces. Simultaneously, sustainable tourism is increasingly becoming the dominant direction. The main goal of sustainable tourism is to emphasize the balance between heritage preservation, economic development, and ensuring benefits for the community. In Viet Nam, this trend is also evident. However, the transition from the traditional heritage tourism model to a sustainable model still faces many challenges. Therefore, integrating cultural preservation and innovation has become a top priority in the current context. In this context, creative industries are gradually asserting their important role in renewing and enhancing the value of heritage tourism [2]. Instead of merely recreating the past in a static way, creative industries have contributed to retelling heritage in more vibrant and relevant ways for contemporary audiences [2]. In fact, festivals like the Hue Festival have developed into a creative ecosystem, a gathering place for artists, communities, and international partners. These activities not only enhance the attractiveness of the destination but also contribute to boosting the local economy

and strengthening cultural exchange. However, the extent of the contribution of creative industries to the sustainable development of heritage tourism still needs further study.

Alongside the creative industries, media is increasingly playing a central role in shaping the image and perception of tourist destinations. Media not only reflects but also shapes how tourists perceive a place [3]. Events like the Hue Festival have received significant attention from various media channels, from mainstream newspapers to user-generated content on social media. This expands reach but also raises concerns about the consistency and depth of the communication message. Therefore, understanding how media interacts with creative industries to sustainably promote the image of a destination is crucial. Although there has been much research related to heritage tourism, creative industries, and media, most studies still approach these areas separately: (i) studies on heritage tourism often focus on conservation or economic development; (ii) studies on creative industries mainly emphasize economic value; (iii) communication is considered from an image and promotion perspective. The lack of studies integrating these three elements creates a significant gap, especially in the context of destinations moving towards green and sustainable tourism models. Furthermore, empirical studies in Viet Nam, particularly those on large-scale cultural events like the Hue Festival, remain limited and do not fully reflect local characteristics or the interactions between stakeholders.

Therefore, the research was guided by the following questions:

RQ1: How are the creative and media industries implemented within the framework of the Hue Festival to promote sustainable heritage tourism development?

RQ2: How do creative elements (cultural content, artistic forms of expression, technological innovation) influence the visitor experience?

RQ3: What role does the media play in shaping the image of Hue as a heritage destination?

RQ4: How does the combination of creative industries and media contribute to the sustainable development of heritage tourism (economic, cultural, social)?

Stemming from the above issues, this study aims to analyze the role of the creative and media industries in promoting sustainable heritage tourism development with the following specific objectives: firstly, analyzing the role of the creative industry in increasing the value and sustainability of heritage tourism; secondly, clarifying how media contributes to building and promoting the image of Hue as a green heritage destination; and thirdly, exploring the interaction between the creative and media industries in promoting sustainable tourism development.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Basic Concepts

2.1.1. Sustainable Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism is understood as a form of tourism in which the primary motivation of visitors is to experience cultural values that reflect both the past and present of a society. According to the World Tourism Organization, this type of tourism focuses on resources such as historical sites, cultural landscapes, and cultural practices associated with community identity [4]. Studies by Timothy, DJ, & Boyd, SW indicate that heritage tourism encompasses not only tangible elements but also intangible aspects such as traditions, rituals, and lifestyles [5]. Heritage can be broadly categorized into two main groups: tangible and intangible heritage. Tangible heritage includes architectural works, monuments, archaeological sites, and cultural landscapes, while intangible heritage comprises festivals, performing arts, traditional crafts, and oral traditions. The importance of heritage preservation is further emphasized in the UNESCO Convention [6].

Sustainable heritage tourism refers to a form of tourism development that utilizes cultural and natural heritage resources in a manner that ensures a balance among three key dimensions: heritage conservation, economic development, and social and environmental responsibility [5]. The objective of this approach is to meet the experiential needs of current tourists while safeguarding the long-term value and viability of heritage for future generations.

2.1.2. Creative Industries

Creative industries are increasingly recognized as important drivers in heritage tourism development [7]. These industries exploit creativity, skills and individual talents to create economic and cultural value through the exploitation of intellectual property. Fields such as design, media, advertising, music, film and digital content play an important role in enhancing the visitor experience and shaping the image of tourist destinations [8]. In heritage tourism, integrating elements of creative industries such as storytelling, digital technology and experience design helps transform both tangible and intangible heritage into attractive, interactive and immersive tourism products [7,8]. In addition, creative industries also support the reinterpretation and renewal of heritage values, helping destinations maintain competitiveness and cultural relevance in the context of globalization. However, scholars also emphasize the importance of balancing innovation and preserving the authenticity of heritage to ensure sustainable tourism development [8].

2.1.3. Multimedia Communication

Multimedia communication plays a crucial role in shaping destination image and influencing tourist behavior [9]. In the digital age, multimedia communication in tourism has expanded to online platforms and social networks, where users can actively participate in creating and sharing content. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have transformed how destinations are promoted and experienced through their interactive features and rapid information dissemination [9]. This transformation has shifted communication from a one-way model to a co-creation process among multiple stakeholders [9].

2.2. Theories of Approach

2.2.1. The Theory of Creative Industries

The theory of creative industries was developed from studies in cultural economics. The theory emphasizes the role of industries based on creativity, skills, and talent in creating economic value through the exploitation of intellectual property. In the field of tourism, Greg Richards extends this approach by arguing that cultural activities, especially festivals, play an important role [10]. They can function as “creative platforms” where cultural resources are mobilized, restructured, and transformed into new products and experiences [10]. In terms of content, this theory emphasizes three main elements: (i) the participation of many stakeholders (artists, communities, organizations, international partners), (ii) the process of transforming cultural resources into creative products, and (iii) the ability to create economic and symbolic value. In this study, the creative industry theory is applied to analyze how the Hue Festival mobilizes cultural resources, connects creative entities, and organizes experiential activities. The festival has transformed heritage into tourism and economic value in Hue. This approach clarifies the role of the festival not only as a cultural event but also as an intermediary mechanism in the process of creating and distributing value in the creative industry [10].

2.2.2. The Theory of Cultural Production

The theory of cultural production is developed in the field of cultural industry and media research. David Hesmondhalgh argues that cultural products do not exist naturally or fixedly but are formed through processes of organization, staging, and interpretation in specific social and economic contexts [7]. In terms of content, the theory emphasizes that culture is the result

of a production process involving many elements such as creative subjects, material conditions, technology, and social context [11]. In this process, traditional cultural elements can be selected, restructured, and combined with modern elements to create new forms of expression [11]. Therefore, cultural products not only reflect existing values but are also constructive and dependent on the way production is organized [7]. This study applies the theory of cultural production to analyze how heritage elements are organized, staged, and transformed into performance products within the framework of the Hue Festival. Thus, the research clarifies the mechanisms through which heritage is restructured and integrated into contemporary life in the form of cultural experiences.

2.2.3. The Theory of the Experience Economy

The Experience Economy, proposed by B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, posits that economic value in contemporary society is derived not only from goods and services but is increasingly created through consumer experiences [12]. In the field of tourism, this means that tourists not only observe but also participate, feel and interact with cultural products. This theory emphasizes elements such as role-playing, participation and emotion. The more personalized and interactive the experience, the greater the value created. In this study, the experience economy theory is applied to analyze how the Hue Festival creates experiences for tourists and transforms those experiences into tourism value as well as the competitiveness of the destination [12]. These transformations contribute to positioning Hue as a “living” heritage city.

2.3. Analytical Framework

Based on the three theories above, the study proposes a multi-layered analytical framework. A notable point is that this process involves feedback and regulatory mechanisms. Factors such as market demand, characteristics of the media platform, and the level of community participation can inversely impact the creative process and how heritage is recreated. Therefore, this study approaches heritage tourism as a dynamic system, in which heritage values are continuously recreated through the interaction between culture, creativity, and media. This analytical framework shows that the creative and media industries are two central components in the transformation and dissemination of heritage values. The creative industry shapes how heritage is restructured into experiences, while media expands and redefines these experiences in public spaces, contributing to the sustainable development of heritage tourism.



Figure 1. Analytical framework of heritage tourism development through creative transformation and media dissemination

Source: Authors

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods case study approach, combining qualitative content analysis and quantitative survey methods to examine the role of the creative and media industries in the development of heritage tourism. The research was conducted in Hue, a prominent heritage tourism center in Viet Nam, where tangible and intangible cultural values converge. The Hue Festival was chosen as a case study because it integrates cultural heritage, performing arts, technology applications, and media. The research was based on observational surveys of festival events, analysis of media articles on Hue Today online, Tuoi Tre online, Hue TV, and social media platforms such as Facebook and TikTok. The selection of media outlets was based on their strengths and diversity, including online newspapers, television, and social media. Simultaneously, the study conducted 16 semi-structured in-depth interviews with relevant groups, including managers, experts, artists, and tourists. All data were then processed using thematic analysis, including coding, thematic construction, and interpretation steps, to ensure the reliability of the research results.

The research methods described above aim to test a theoretical model of the role of the creative and media industries in promoting sustainable heritage tourism. A quantitative approach was chosen to measure the relationships between variables through empirical data and to test research hypotheses using statistical techniques.

3.2. Sample Selection and Data Collection

For the quantitative component, the research sample was selected using convenience sampling combined with direct access at the event and online surveys, with 150 participants being domestic and international tourists attending the Hue Festival. The surveyors met the following criteria: (i) had participated in at least one activity during the Festival, and (ii) were capable of evaluating the experience and communicating it. Data were collected through direct questionnaire distribution and via Google Forms (via QR code at the event or on social media). A total of 145 responses were received, of which 126 were valid.

In addition to the quantitative survey, qualitative methods, including document analysis, media content analysis, and in-depth interviews, were employed. Secondary data included 6 official reports from management agencies and 170 media products from the 2024–2025 period on media outlets such as Hue Today Online, Tuoi Tre Online, Hue TV, and social media platforms such as Facebook and TikTok. The selection of these media outlets was based on their diversity, encompassing online newspapers, television, and social media. Additionally, the study conducted in-depth interviews with 16 participants, including tourists, managers, and journalists involved in Hue Festival events. Interview data were coded according to subject groups (tourists: C1–C7, managers: L1–L4, media professionals: M1–M5).

3.3. Variables and Measurement

The variables in the research model were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree), adapted from previous studies. The study includes seven key variables. Creative elements (CE) were measured through indicators such as creative content, originality, and cultural value. Technology application (TA) refers to the use of digital technologies, interactive experiences, and performance effects. Multimedia communication (MC) was assessed based on social media communication, multi-platform integration, and communication reach. Tourism experience (TE) was measured through emotional experience, cognitive experience, and satisfaction level. Destination image (DI) reflects perceptions of cultural image and destination attractiveness. Behavioral intention (BI) includes intention to

revisit and intention to recommend. Finally, sustainable heritage tourism (ST) was evaluated through economic benefits, cultural preservation, and social impacts.

3.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis based on descriptive statistics using the SPSS application aims to measure the degree of centralization (mean, median, and mode), measure the degree of dispersion (standard deviation, variance, and range), determine the frequency (number of occurrences of values or percentage), and analyze the minimum and maximum values of variables.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Descriptive statistical results

4.1.1. Levels of Concentration and Dispersion

Table 1. Descriptive statistics (Mean, SD, Variance)

Variable	N	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Variance	Min
Creative Elements (CE)	126	4.10	4.00	4	0.66	0.436	3
Technology Application (TA)	126	3.95	4.00	4	0.72	0.518	3
Multimedia Communication (MC)	126	3.88	4.00	4	0.75	0.563	3
Tourism Experience (TE)	126	4.18	4.00	4	0.61	0.372	3
Destination Image (DI)	126	4.05	4.00	4	0.68	0.462	3
Behavioral Intention (BI)	126	4.12	4.00	4	0.64	0.410	3
Sustainable Heritage Tourism (ST)	126	4.00	4.00	4	0.70	0.490	3

Source: Authors

At the concentration level, descriptive statistics show that all variables in the model achieved relatively high mean values, ranging from 3.88 to 4.18 on a 5-point Likert scale. Among them, tourism experience had the highest mean value ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.61$), followed by behavioral intention ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.64$) and creative elements ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.66$). Destination image ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.68$) and sustainable heritage tourism ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.70$) were also rated positively, while technology application ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.72$) and multimedia communication ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.75$) had relatively lower but still above-average ratings. Notably, all variables had medians (Median = 4.00) and modes (Mode = 4), indicating a strong concentration of data at the “agree” level. This reflects a high level of consensus among tourists regarding the positive role of the creative and media industries in enhancing the tourism experience at the Hue Festival.

In terms of dispersion, the standard deviation ranged from 0.61 to 0.75, indicating low to medium variability. Multimedia communication had the highest standard deviation ($SD = 0.75$), suggesting differences in participant ratings, while tourism experience had the lowest dispersion ($SD = 0.61$), reflecting high consistency in perceptions.

4.1.2. Extreme Values

Table 2. Minimum and maximum values of variables

Variable	Min	Max
Creative Elements (CE)	2	5
Technology Application (TA)	2	5
Multimedia Communication (MC)	2	5
Tourism Experience (TE)	3	5
Destination Image (DI)	2	5
Behavioral Intention (BI)	3	5
Sustainable heritage Tourism (ST)	2	5

Source: Authors

Results show that all variables have maximum values (Max = 5), reflecting that tourists highly value (the “completely agree” level) the aspects of the Hue Festival. This reinforces the conclusion that the creative, experiential, and destination image elements are perceived most positively on the scale. Regarding minimum values, most variables have Min = 2, including CE, TA, MC, DI, and ST, indicating that a small group of tourism experiencers still have low ratings (the “disagree” level), particularly related to technology, media, and sustainability awareness. Notably, the Tourism Experience and Behavioral Intention factors have Min = 3, demonstrating that there are no overtly negative evaluations of the experience, even the lowest-rated group remains neutral or above. The Hue Festival has created a minimum acceptable experience for all tourists.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics (Mean–SD + Min–Max)

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Creative Elements (CE)	126	4.10	0.66	2	5
Technology Application (TA)	126	3.95	0.72	2	5
Multimedia Communication (MC)	126	3.88	0.75	2	5
Tourism Experience (TE)	126	4.18	0.61	3	5
Destination Image (DI)	126	4.05	0.68	2	5
Behavioral Intention (BI)	126	4.12	0.64	3	5
Sustainable heritage Tourism (ST)	126	4.00	0.70	2	5

Note: SD = Standard Deviation; All variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

Source: Authors

The results show that the data are reasonably distributed across the entire scale, with no negative extreme values appearing. Notably, the two variables related to experience and behavior did not record low ratings, reflecting stability in tourists' perceptions and indicating that the Hue Festival ensured a minimum acceptable level of experience quality. Conversely, the variables related to technology and media had a wider range of ratings, implying differences in perceptions among tourist groups. This suggests that the effectiveness of technology deployment and media content was not entirely uniform. Overall, the data distribution shows that the output factors (experience, behavior) are more consistent than the

input factors (technology, media). This result suggests that optimizing the input factors will further enhance the quality of experience and the sustainability of heritage tourism.

4.1.3. Communication Factors

A total of 170 media products related to the Hue Festival were analyzed, including online newspapers, television programs, and social media content. The results showed that the media content mainly focused on promoting tourism, heritage/conservation, creative elements, and issues related to sustainability.

Table 4. Frequency of media themes in festival coverage (N = 170)

Topic	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Tourism promotion (T)	111	65.3%
Heritage / Preservation (H)	102	60.0%
Creative element (I)	85	50.0%
Sustainable heritage tourism (S)	51	30.0%

Source: Authors



Figure 2. Distribution of media topics in Hue Festival coverage, source: Authors

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of media content (Binary Coding: 1 = appears, 0 = does not)

Topic	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max
Tourism promotion	0.65	0.48	0	1
Heritage / Preservation	0.60	0.49	0	1
Creative element	0.50	0.50	0	1
Sustainable heritage tourism	0.30	0.46	0	1

Mean $\approx$ the proportion of occurrences (e.g., 0.65 = 65%); *SD* reflects the degree of dispersion among the articles; *Min* = 0, *Max* = 1 (binary variable)

Source: Authors

The results show that media coverage of the Hue Festival focuses strongly on promoting tourism and heritage values, with more than half of the articles mentioning these topics. This reflects the role of the media in positioning the Festival as a tourism product linked to cultural identity. The element of creativity appears at an average level (50%), indicating that the media has begun to integrate content related to art, performance, and innovation, contributing to enhancing the experiential value. Meanwhile, content on sustainable tourism accounts for a lower percentage (30%), suggesting that this is still a developing topic in media discourse. However, its significant frequency indicates that the media has begun to play a role in shaping awareness of sustainable development. The average standard deviation values show diversity in how topics are presented across articles, reflecting the flexibility and multifaceted nature of media in building content about the Hue Festival.

4.2. Discussion

4.2.1. Creative Elements and Value Creation in Heritage Tourism

The high average values of creative elements ($M = 4.10$) and tourism experience ($M = 4.18$) reflect the key role of the creative industry in creating tourism experiences. This result is consistent with the view of John Howkins, who argues that value in the creative economy is formed through the transformation of ideas and cultural content into experiential products [13]. This result is consistent with the creative industries theory [10], which conceptualizes cultural activities particularly festivals as “creative platforms” where cultural resources are mobilized and transformed into experiential and economic value. In the context of the Hue Festival, cultural heritage is not limited to preservation; it is also reinterpreted and developed through artistic programs and performance activities, leading to the emergence of new forms of cultural expression. This approach is similar to the argument of David Hesmondhalgh, who views cultural industries as a system for producing and distributing symbolic content [7], thereby generating both cultural and economic value.

Qualitative evidence from in-depth interviews further supports this finding. A participant noted that the programs at the festival were “very creative, especially in the way traditional music was combined with modern lighting, making the heritage more vibrant and engaging” (C1). This perspective indicates that creative elements are not only embedded in program design but are also directly perceived by tourists as enhancing the vibrancy and attractiveness of heritage experiences.

Table 6. Mechanisms of heritage restructuring at the Hue Festival

Mechanism	Practical manifestation	Main events at the Hue Festival	Meaning	Theoretical basis
Recontextualization	Heritage placed in a new space	Performances at the Imperial Citadel and the Perfume River	Transform heritage into a living experience	Heritage is redefined through social context and cultural practices [10]
Hybridization	Combining tradition and modernity	Court music combined with lighting	Refresh the form of expression	Cultural fusion creates new forms of expression in globalization [11]
Theatricalization	Enhance the performance element.	Nighttime live show	Increase emotional sensitivity	Stage performance and “performance society” emphasize the role of images and experiences [14]
Narrativization	Organized by story	“Royal Palace Night”	Make it more accessible to the public	Heritage is constructed through discourse and narrative [15]

Source: Authors

In fact, this transformation process does not occur in isolation but through multiple interactive mechanisms. The mechanisms for transforming heritage into tourism experiences at the Hue Festival can be summarized in table 6. First, heritage is repositioned in new expressive spaces. Art programs are held directly at the Imperial Citadel or along the Perfume River. This approach transforms heritage from a static state into a vibrant experience. At the same time, it creates a high level of immersion for visitors. Next, the combination of traditional elements and contemporary artistic language contributes to increasing creative value.

Elements such as court music, the Ao Dai, and imperial architecture are restructured through modern performance technology. This process helps expand the accessibility of heritage to the public. In addition, the trend of theatricalization continues to enhance emotional depth. Heritage is organized as a multi-sensory storytelling space. In this space, light, sound, and movement all contribute to the creation of meaning. Ultimately, constructing content using a narrative structure helps link cultural elements into a unified experiential flow. As a result, visitors' ability to understand and remember is significantly improved.

These mechanisms form the basis for the transformation of creative elements into tourism experiences, thereby contributing to explaining the high TE value in the research results. In this logical framework, the high TE results indicate that creative elements have been effectively transformed into memorable experiences. This contributes to increasing the attractiveness of the heritage tourism destination. At the same time, the Hue Festival is no longer a standalone cultural event. The festival operates as a platform connecting creativity. Many stakeholders participate in the value creation process, including artists, local communities, and international partners. This interaction expands the creative space and promotes cultural exchange. As a result, Hue's heritage is connected to the global cultural network. Cultural values are also transformed into concrete economic outcomes, as evidenced by the increase in visitor numbers and tourism revenue during the festival.

However, this process still has certain limitations. Some activities tend to simplify cultural content to better align with market demands, reflecting increasing pressures of commercialization. In addition, the seasonality of festivals suggests that continuous creative products have not been sufficiently developed. Qualitative evidence from in-depth interviews also highlights inconsistencies in innovation across performance programs. A participant noted that “while some performances are highly impressive, others appear repetitive and lack genuine innovation” (C5). This observation indicates unevenness in the level of creativity applied across different festival activities. Therefore, despite notable achievements in innovation, there remains a gap in the continuity and depth of creativity in certain programs. These limitations underscore the need for a long-term strategic approach aimed at strengthening the relationship between creativity and tourism experiences in a more sustainable manner. Overall, the creative industry plays an intermediary role in transforming heritage into valuable tourism experiences. Through mechanisms such as spatial repositioning, creative hybridization, dramatization, and narrative construction, heritage is not only preserved but also reinterpreted as a dynamic resource. This contributes to enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of heritage tourism in the contemporary context.

4.2.2. The Role of Technology Application and Multimedia Communication in Cultural Production

Although technology application ($M = 3.95$) and multimedia communication ($M = 3.88$) were both rated positively, the lower average and higher dispersion indicate that these two factors have not been optimally exploited. The experience economy proposed by Pine and Gilmore [12], cultural products are formed through the interaction of factors such as technology, organization and communication systems. In this case, digital technology and communication play an intermediary role in shaping how cultural content is produced and consumed.

The experience at the Hue Festival shows that technology and media have begun to be integrated into the experience design process, although they currently play primarily a supporting role. Many art programs, particularly nighttime activities and light shows, are designed with strong visual effects to serve both live audiences and digital dissemination. Spaces such as the Perfume River bank, pedestrian streets, and historical sites are organized in an open manner, creating opportunities for visitors to capture and share their experiences. However, the application of technology in these cases largely remains at the level of enhancing

performance effects and has not yet become a driving force for creative content development. In addition, the media ecosystem has expanded with the growing presence of digital platforms such as Facebook and TikTok, where festival experiences are disseminated through short-form videos and personalized content. Qualitative evidence from in-depth interviews further supports this trend. A participant noted that they had learned about the festival through social media platforms such as Facebook and TikTok, where visually appealing content influenced their decision to attend (C6). This finding indicates that digital media not only provides information but also directly shapes tourists' participation decisions, particularly in a context where social media increasingly influences travel behavior.

The results also show that the application of technology in the Hue Festival is still more supportive than leading, while the effectiveness of communication is uneven across different target groups. This may reflect limitations in content strategy, the level of platform integration, and audience accessibility. These findings are consistent with the general trend where many cultural events are still in the process of partial digital transformation, not yet reaching a level of comprehensive integration between creativity and communication.

4.2.3. The Relationship between Tourism Experience, Destination Image, and Behavioral Intention

The results showed a clear relationship between tourism experience ($M = 4.18$), destination image ($M = 4.05$) and behavioral intention ($M = 4.12$). This indicates that positive experiences contribute to building a favorable destination image, thereby influencing tourists' intention to return and recommend. This finding is consistent with the experience economics theory of B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, according to which memorable experiences create lasting impressions and promote customer loyalty [12].

In the case of the Hue Festival, creative and interactive experiences have played a significant role in enhancing visitors' emotional engagement. Experiential spaces such as nighttime activities, interactive areas, and community spaces not only attract large numbers of visitors but also contribute to extending their length of stay. These experiences enable visitors to actively participate rather than passively observe, thereby increasing their immersion and personal understanding of heritage. At the same time, the experience extends beyond the physical setting and continues to be reconstructed in the digital environment through the sharing of images and videos. Activities along the Perfume River, pedestrian streets, and programs such as the "Royal Palace Night" are frequently recorded and widely disseminated. This process contributes to shaping the image of Hue as a "living" heritage destination, where cultural values are not only preserved but also experienced and reinterpreted in a contemporary context. Qualitative evidence from in-depth interviews further illustrates this dynamic. A participant described the festival as an immersive cultural space in which the boundary between observation and participation becomes increasingly blurred, making visitors feel as though they are living within the cultural environment rather than merely watching a performance (C7). This reflects the characteristics of the experience economy, where value lies not in the cultural product itself but in the level of participation and immersion of the visitor. Moreover, the continued circulation of digital content helps sustain public interest beyond the duration of the festival and influences long-term perceptions of the destination. Visitors not only retain their personal experiences but also continue to engage with the destination through digital platforms. This process strengthens the destination image and promotes both revisit intention and word-of-mouth behavior.

In this context, the relationship between experience, destination image, and tourist behavior is evident not only in the physical space but also extends to the digital media environment. However, this process also requires a balance between enhancing attractiveness and maintaining cultural depth, ensuring that the destination image built is not only widely disseminated but also accurately reflects heritage values.

4.2.4. Implications for Sustainable Heritage Tourism Development

The sustainable heritage tourism variable has an average value of 4.00, indicating that tourists perceive the Hue Festival as making a positive contribution to sustainable development. However, this value is lower than TE and BI, suggesting that awareness of sustainability is not yet truly prominent. Sustainable tourism requires a balance between economic, cultural, and social factors. While the creative industries contribute to enhancing the value of the experience and economic efficiency, sustainability also depends on governance mechanisms, the level of community participation, and the ability to preserve cultural resources.

The experience at the Hue Festival indicates that creative activities have contributed to enhancing the attractiveness of the destination; however, sustainability has not yet been clearly established as a core value within the tourism experience. Experiential spaces and interactive activities primarily emphasize attractiveness and visitor participation, while the integration of conservation values, community responsibility, and balanced development remains inconsistent. This creates a gap between the intrinsic value of heritage tourism and tourists' perceptions of sustainability [15]. Qualitative evidence from in-depth interviews further highlights this issue. A local manager emphasized that the festival "attracts a large number of visitors and creates business opportunities for local people" (L2). While this perspective underscores the recognized economic benefits of the festival, it also suggests that these benefits are not yet fully aligned with long-term sustainable development mechanisms. From a media perspective, although digital platforms have expanded communication reach and facilitated the dissemination of tourism experiences, the integration of sustainability-related messages remains limited. Therefore, media content should be more strategically oriented toward linking tourism experiences with conservation values in order to raise public awareness and support the long-term development of heritage tourism.

From the above analysis, several key implications can be drawn. First, sustainability should be integrated into the product and experience design process, rather than being merely an additional message. Creative activities need to be linked to the preservation and promotion of heritage values, while limiting the tendency to simplify cultural content to serve short-term tastes. Next, the role of local communities as central actors in the tourism ecosystem needs to be strengthened by creating conditions for their deeper participation in decision-making and benefit distribution. Finally, sustainable heritage tourism development should be approached as a continuous adjustment process, in which cultural elements, creative industries, and media are integrated into a unified structure. In this context, media emerges as a particularly important factor in shaping perceptions of sustainable development and needs to be considered more deeply.

4.2.5. Communication as a Driver of Awareness in Sustainable Heritage Tourism

From the perspective of Richard A. Peterson's cultural production theory [16], media functions as a key component of the cultural production system, in which technological, organizational, and market forces interact to shape cultural content. In practice, content related to heritage and creativity appears frequently, contributing to shaping public perceptions of the Hue Festival as a dynamic cultural space rather than a purely performance-oriented event. Qualitative evidence from in-depth interviews further supports this perspective. A media professional emphasized that producing content about the Hue Festival involves not only documenting events but also constructing narratives that convey cultural depth (M3). This suggests that media does not merely perform a reporting function but actively participates in the process of creating and reproducing cultural meaning through processes of representation [17]. As a result, heritage is not only preserved but also reinterpreted in forms that align with contemporary patterns of cultural consumption.

Notably, the increasing presence of sustainability-related content indicates a gradual shift in media discourse. Although not yet central, such content has begun to shape public perceptions of the relationship between tourism, culture, and social responsibility. From the perspective of the experience economy, media not only transmits information but also contributes to shaping expectations and values associated with tourism experiences [12]. Therefore, the way media interprets heritage can directly influence how tourists perceive and evaluate the sustainability of a destination. In this context, media can be understood as a cognitive intermediary mechanism through which cultural values are selected, reconstructed, and disseminated within specific interpretive frameworks. This helps explain why, despite the Hue Festival incorporating elements of sustainable development, tourists' awareness of this aspect remains limited. Qualitative insights from the management group further reinforce this argument. A local manager emphasized that development is necessary but must be accompanied by the preservation of cultural identity to ensure long-term value (L4). This highlights the close relationship between communication practices and heritage governance in shaping public awareness of sustainable tourism development. From a practical perspective, these findings indicate that communication should not be viewed solely as a promotional tool but also as a strategic component in shaping awareness of sustainable heritage tourism. Orienting media discourse to emphasize the interconnections between creativity, heritage, and sustainability will contribute to raising social awareness and supporting the balanced and long-term development of heritage tourism.

4.2.6. Integrated Model for Sustainable Heritage Tourism Development

Based on the analysis and discussion above, this study proposes an integrated model to generalize the relationship between the creative industry, media, and sustainable heritage tourism development. This model is built on a synthesis of empirical findings, clarifying how creative elements, communication processes, and tourism experiences interact within a dynamic structure to create sustainable heritage tourism value.

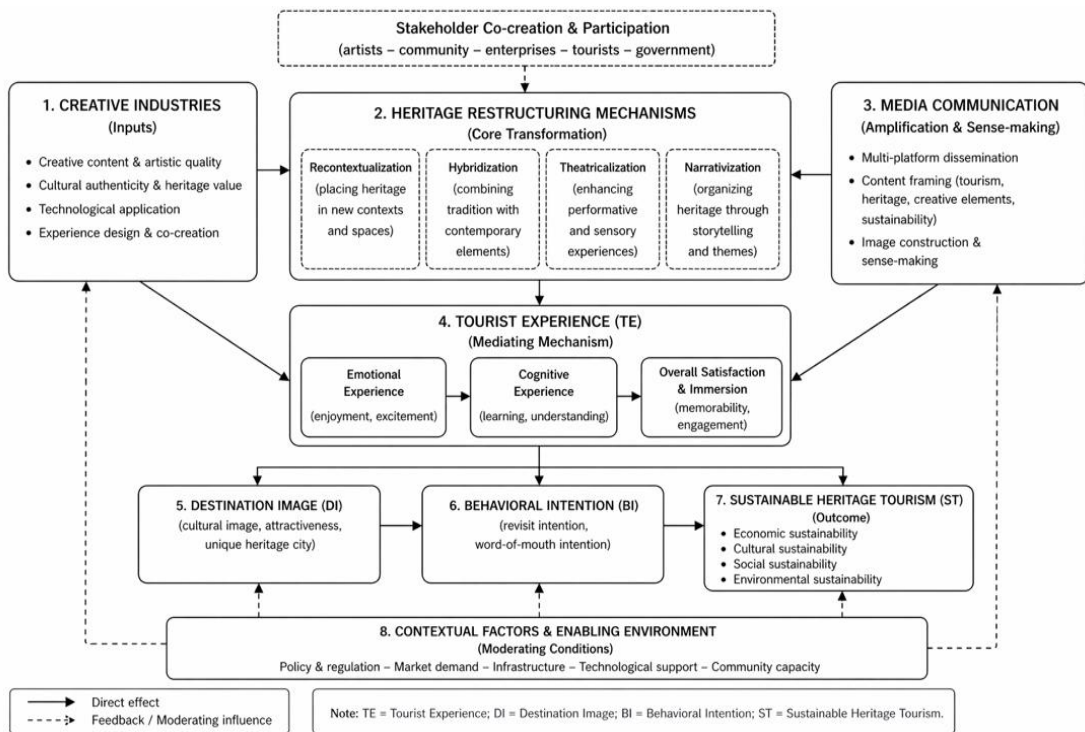


Figure 3. Proposed model for sustainable heritage tourism development through creative industries and media, source: Authors

In this process, communication acts as a system for amplifying and constructing meaning, contributing to the expansion and reshaping of heritage values in both physical and digital spaces [17]. Tourism experiences are considered a key intermediary mechanism, connecting the creative transformation and dissemination of communication with tourism outcomes [18]. The model shows that tourism experiences contribute to shaping destination images and tourist behavioral intentions, thereby influencing the development of sustainable heritage tourism. These relationships do not operate linearly but exist within a dynamic system, where feedback from the public and the market continuously impacts the creative and communication processes. Overall, the model emphasizes the interconnectedness and co-evolution between cultural production, communication, and tourism development within the context of heritage destinations.

5. CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that creativity plays a core role in enhancing the tourism experience. Technology and media are identified as important supporting factors; however, they have not yet been fully and optimally exploited. The findings further reveal that tourism experiences have a strong influence on destination image as well as tourist behavior, while sustainable tourism emerges as a positive outcome that still requires strengthening. Overall, these findings confirm that the integration of creative industries and media can serve as a crucial driver for promoting sustainable heritage tourism. However, achieving long-term sustainability requires a more comprehensive approach that combines innovation, effective communication, and the development of an inclusive cultural production ecosystem.

More importantly, the research shows that the transformation of heritage in the Hue Festival does not occur in isolation but through specific restructuring mechanisms. Heritage is repositioned within new expressive spaces, combined with contemporary artistic elements, organized in a way that enhances performance, and linked within oriented narrative structures. These four mechanisms demonstrate that heritage does not exist as a static entity but is continuously restructured to adapt to the context of contemporary cultural consumption and tourism.

Furthermore, the study clarifies the role of media in promoting sustainable heritage tourism through the case of the Hue Festival in Viet Nam. By combining media content analysis and survey data, the results show that media is not only a promotional tool but also a value-creating agent, contributing to shaping the perceptions, experiences, and behaviors of tourists. The findings indicate that media has contributed to disseminating heritage values and creative elements, thereby enhancing the tourism experience and the destination image.

The research findings simultaneously reveal a clear chain of impacts from media to experience, from experience to destination image, thereby influencing behavioral intentions and perceptions of sustainable tourism. This chain of relationships shows that experience plays an intermediary role in the transformation of cultural values into tourism values and reflects the close link between the creative industry, media, and tourist behavior. Based on this, the study proposes an integrated model in which mechanisms for restructuring heritage, media, and experience interact within a dynamic system to promote sustainable heritage tourism development. This model shows that the relationship between culture, the creative industry, and media is not linear but operates as a multidimensional interactive system in which elements continuously influence and adjust each other through feedback mechanisms.

Finally, while sustainability and community-related themes are not yet dominant, their increasing presence indicates a shift in how heritage tourism is being developed. However, to ensure long-term sustainability, it is necessary to strengthen the integration of conservation

values, social responsibility, and community participation into both experience design and communication strategies.

This study extends existing literature on creative industries and heritage tourism by developing an integrated analytical framework that connects creative elements, multimedia communication, and tourism experience within a dynamic cultural production system. It contributes to the experience economy perspective by demonstrating how heritage is continuously restructured through creative mechanisms and mediated processes, rather than being passively preserved. In addition, the study highlights the mediating role of tourism experience in linking cultural value creation with tourist behavior and sustainable tourism outcomes.

The findings suggest that policymakers and tourism managers should strengthen the integration of creative elements and multimedia communication in experience design to enhance visitor engagement and destination competitiveness. Greater attention should be given to leveraging technology not only as a supporting tool but as a driver of creative content development. Moreover, communication strategies should be oriented toward embedding sustainability values, promoting community participation, and reinforcing heritage conservation messages. This approach will help bridge the gap between tourism development and sustainability, thereby supporting the long-term viability of heritage tourism destinations.

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