

THE ROLE OF THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM

Nguyen Thi Huong

Thu Dau Mot University

Email: huongnt.cnvh@tdmu.edu.vn

Received: 20 March 2026; Revised: 11 April 2026; Accepted: 12 May 2026

ABSTRACT

Vietnam's tourism sector is undergoing a strategic transition toward sustainable development, aiming to balance economic growth, cultural preservation, and environmental protection. Within this context, creative industries have emerged as a critical driver of innovation in tourism development. This study examines the role of creative industries in advancing sustainable tourism in Vietnam by integrating theoretical perspectives with practical case studies. Employing qualitative methods, including document analysis and synthesis, the research highlights how creative industries diversify tourism products, enrich visitor experiences, foster community participation, and support the safeguarding of cultural heritage. The findings demonstrate that creative industries not only enhance the competitiveness of Vietnam's tourism sector but also contribute to its long-term economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The paper argues that embedding creativity into tourism strategies is essential for positioning Vietnam as a distinctive and resilient destination in the global market.

Keywords: Creative industries, sustainable tourism, cultural heritage, innovation, Vietnam.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, tourism has been identified as one of the most important economic sectors, significantly contributing to economic growth, job creation, and cultural exchange worldwide [1]. In Vietnam, tourism is regarded as a spearhead economic sector, playing a crucial role in the national socio-economic development strategy. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council [2], the tourism sector is expected to contribute over 7% to GDP and support approximately 5.96 million jobs.

In this context, sustainable tourism development has become an imperative requirement and a strategic direction for many countries, aiming to balance economic growth, cultural preservation, and environmental protection [3]. Furthermore, sustainable tourism development requires innovation in thinking, models, and development tools. Worldwide, the creative industry is increasingly recognized as an important driver of sustainable development, particularly in the tourism sector, where experiences, cultural values, and uniqueness play a key role in enhancing the competitiveness of destinations [4].

Vietnam is a country with rich and diverse cultural resources, along with a distinctive system of tangible and intangible heritage. This is an important foundation for developing creative industries linked to tourism. However, many limitations still hinder the exploitation of the creative industry's role in developing sustainable tourism in Vietnam, affecting awareness, policies, and practical implementation. Based on that reality, the article focuses on analyzing the role of the creative industry in the sustainable tourism development in

Vietnam, thereby proposing some appropriate directions and solutions in the context of international integration.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Concept and Characteristics of the Creative Industry

Creative industries refer to sectors based on creativity, knowledge, and intellectual property that generate economic, cultural, and social value. These industries encompass activities related to the creation, production, distribution, and consumption of creative goods and services, closely linked to culture, arts, media, and technology [5]. Creative tourism, in turn, emphasizes the active participation of tourists in local cultural and creative experiences [4].

The basic characteristics of the creative industry can be summarized as follows: (i) based on human creative resources; (ii) creating high added value through content, ideas, and design; (iii) closely linked to cultural identity and intellectual property; (iv) has a strong ability to spread and connect across disciplines. These characteristics show that the creative industry has many similarities and a high capacity for integration with tourism activities.

2.2. Sustainable tourism and its fundamental principles

Sustainable tourism is understood as the development of tourism that meets the needs of tourists and host communities in the present while preserving the ability to meet the needs of future generations [6]. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), sustainable tourism requires a balance between economic efficiency, social equity, and environmental protection [3]. Specifically, sustainable tourism not only aims to increase visitor numbers and tourism revenue but also focuses on conserving natural resources, preserving local cultural values, improving the quality of life of local communities, and promoting stakeholder participation in the tourism development process.

Specifically, sustainable tourism not only aims for growth in the number of visitors and revenue but also focuses on preserving natural resources, maintaining local cultural values, improving the quality of life for local communities, and encouraging the participation of stakeholders in the tourism development process.

2.3. The relationship between the creative industry and sustainable tourism development

The creative industry plays an important role in supporting and promoting sustainable tourism development through various mechanisms. First of all, the creative industry contributes to diversifying and enhancing the quality of tourism products, shifting from a model of tourism primarily based on resource exploitation to a model based on experience, knowledge, and cultural values. This helps reduce pressure on natural resources and limit negative impacts on the environment.

Secondly, the creative industry facilitates the preservation and promotion of traditional cultural values through the recreation, innovation, and sustainable commercialization of cultural products. Activities such as performing arts, handicrafts, creative design, or heritage storytelling not only contribute to preserving cultural identity but also create stable livelihoods for local communities.

Thirdly, the creative industry promotes the participation of the community and small businesses, thereby enhancing inclusiveness and social equity in tourism development. The combination of creativity, technology, and tourism also contributes to enhancing the ability to manage destinations in a smart and sustainable manner.

2.4. Research Methodology

2.4.1. Research Design

This study applies a qualitative approach to analyze the role of the creative industry in the sustainable tourism development in Vietnam. The research design was constructed in an exploratory manner, suitable for interdisciplinary topics that lack unified analytical frameworks. This approach allows for clarifying the mechanisms of influence and the relationships between factors in a specific context.

2.4.2. Analytical Framework

The study uses an integrated analytical framework, connecting three main components: (i) creative industry sectors; (ii) participating entities; and (iii) impact mechanisms, leading to outcomes across the three pillars of sustainable tourism development (economic, social, and environmental). This analytical framework is built on the synthesis of previous studies and adjusted to fit the context of Vietnam.

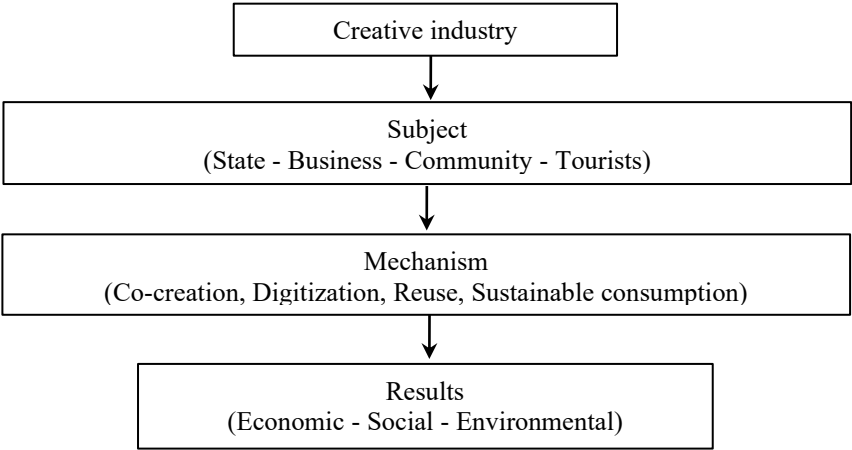


Figure 1. Analytical framework for creative industries and sustainable tourism

2.4.3. Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

The study uses two main methods: document analysis and case study.

First, document analysis was conducted on secondary data sources, including (i) reports and documents from international organizations such as UNESCO, UNCTAD, OECD, and UNWTO; (ii) scientific articles both domestically and internationally related to the creative industry and sustainable tourism; and (iii) policy documents and strategies for tourism development and the cultural industry in Vietnam. The time frame of the selected documents is from 2010 to 2024 to ensure their relevance and reflect new trends such as digital transformation and sustainable development.

Secondly, the case study method was applied through the selection of two representative destinations, Hue and Hoi An. These cases were selected based on the criteria: (i) notable development of the creative industry linked to tourism; (ii) possessing distinctive cultural heritage values; and (iii) clearly demonstrating the interaction between the entities in the tourism ecosystem. This choice allows for comparative analysis to draw out common and distinct characteristics.

The data are analyzed through the content analysis method, focusing on coding and categorizing topics related to the three pillars of sustainable development. At the same time, the study applies a multi-source triangulation approach to enhance the reliability of the results.

2.4.4. Reliability and Methodological Limitations

The reliability of the research is ensured through the use of diverse data sources and cross-comparison between case studies. However, the research still has some limitations. Specifically, the use of secondary data may lead to dependence on the quality and timeliness of the documents. In addition, the qualitative approach does not yet allow for quantifying the impact of the creative industry on each pillar of sustainable development. These limitations also serve as the basis for proposing future research directions.

3. THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE ROLE OF THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM

3.1. The current state of creative industry development in Vietnam in relation to tourism

Over the past decade, the creative industry in Vietnam has gradually been positioned as a sector with significant potential to contribute to sustainable growth, particularly through its increasing linkage with tourism. This shift is clearly reflected at the policy level. According to the Strategy for the Development of Vietnam's Cultural Industries to 2020, with a vision to 2030, cultural and creative industries are identified as important drivers of economic growth and integral components of a knowledge-based economy and cultural identity [7]. This provides an important institutional foundation for integrating creative activities into tourism development. In addition, according to UNCTAD, Vietnam ranked among the top 10 developing economies exporting creative goods in 2020, with an export value of over USD 14 billion, accounting for approximately 2.7% of the global total [8].

At the practical level, the fields of creative industries directly linked to tourism in Vietnam can be divided into three main groups. The first group consists of creative industries based on heritage and traditional culture, including performing arts, handicrafts, festivals, and cuisine. This is the group with the highest level of connection to tourism and also the foundation for many specific tourism products at heritage destinations such as Hue, Hoi An, or Hanoi. The second group consists of applied creative industries, such as design, film, media, and advertising, which play an important role in building the image of destinations, telling heritage stories, and enhancing access to the international tourism market. The third group consists of new creative spaces and models, including creative centers, contemporary art spaces, and digital platforms, which contribute to expanding the tourism experience space, especially in major urban areas.

In the reality of tourism development, the creative industry has been leveraged as a tool to shift the development model from resource-exploitation-based tourism to experience and value-added tourism. For example, in Thua Thien Hue, instead of just focusing on visiting royal architectural sites, many new tourism products have been developed based on performing arts, festivals, and creative spaces linked to heritage, thereby extending the length of stay and dispersing tourist flows away from key heritage sites. Similarly, in Hoi An, creative activities in the fields of handicrafts, folk art, and urban space design have contributed to the formation of a cultural experience tourism model, where tourists are not only observers but also directly participate in creative activities with the local community.

In major cities like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, the development of creative spaces, art streets, and contemporary cultural events has opened up new directions for urban tourism. These spaces not only attract international tourists interested in contemporary creative culture but also contribute to restructuring urban spaces and diversifying tourism products beyond traditional attractions. This trend aligns with international experience, where the creative industry is seen as a key driver of sustainable urban tourism.

However, a deeper analysis shows that the development of the creative industry linked to tourism in Vietnam remains uneven and fragmented. Successful creative models are

mainly concentrated in a few destinations with heritage advantages or in major urban centers, while many other localities still primarily rely on traditional tourism products with low added value. The main reasons stem from disparities in management capacity, creative human resources, investment levels, and connectivity among entities in the tourism-creative value chain. This shows that, although the creative industry has initially played an important role in the development of tourism in Vietnam, to become a true driving force for sustainable tourism, this sector still needs to be supported by synchronized policies and a more systematic approach.

3.2. Application of creative industries in developing tourism products and experiences in Vietnam

In the context of increasingly fierce competition among tourist destinations in the region, developing tourism products based on the creative industry is seen as an important direction to enhance the added value and sustainability of Vietnamese tourism. Instead of primarily focusing on exploiting natural resources and existing heritage, many destinations have begun to shift toward a model of developing tourism products based on experiences, creative content, and tourist participation.

According to a study by CIEM (2024), the creative economy is considered a new growth driver. The global creative industry generated a revenue of 2.25 trillion USD, attracting a workforce larger than the combined automotive industries of Europe, Japan, and the United States. In Vietnam, it is estimated that the creative industry and cultural industry account for about 3% of GDP [9], lower than the global average of 5-10%. Vietnam is projected to maintain a GDP growth rate of 6.6% per year during the 2024-2034 period, with the creative industry being one of the main contributing sectors.

International reports (UNCTAD, UNESCO) also emphasize the role of the creative industry in creating sustainable livelihoods and preserving culture.

At the product level, UNESCO [10] emphasizes that integrating creative elements into types of tourism such as heritage tourism and community tourism into highly narrative and interactive experiences contributes to extending tourists' stays and reducing the pressure on historical sites. This approach allows traditional cultural values to be “shifted” from a static display state to dynamic experiential forms, contributing to an enhanced emotional connection for tourists. For example, in Hoi An, activities such as lantern-making, traditional cooking, or participating in folk festivals are not only demonstrations but are also designed as creative spaces where visitors become part of the process of recreating local culture. This helps increase the length of stay and spending of tourists, while also reducing pressure on historically vulnerable sites.

In the field of performing arts and content creation, large-scale outdoor performances such as “Hoi An Memories” or “The Essence of Northern Vietnam” clearly demonstrate the significant role of the creative industry in innovating tourism products. These programs combine traditional art, modern performance technology, and innovative space design, thereby creating tourism products with high experiential value, capable of operating independently from traditional attractions. From a sustainable development perspective, these products help disperse tourist flows, extend the length of stay, and reduce pressure on tangible heritage, while also generating additional revenue for related creative industries.

In addition, the creative industry is also clearly demonstrated through the application of digital technology in designing and communicating travel experiences. The use of digital media platforms, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) technology in introducing heritage and destinations has enhanced information accessibility, especially for international tourists. For example, in some museums and heritage sites in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City,

digital applications allow visitors to interact with heritage content in a personalized way, thereby enhancing the quality of the experience without increasing the physical impact on the resources.

However, analysis shows that the application of creative industries in developing tourism products in Vietnam remains fragmented and lacks a systematic approach. Many innovative products are developed as standalone projects, not yet integrated into the long-term tourism development strategy of the destination. This limits the ability to replicate and fully leverage the role of the creative industry in sustainable tourism development.

3.3. Some Typical Models of Sustainable Tourism Development Based on Creative Industries

Analyzing the typical models in Vietnam shows that the creative industry can play a role as an intermediary mechanism connecting cultural preservation, local economic development, and enhancing the quality of the tourism experience. These models not only reflect the diversity in approaches but also provide important lessons for sustainable tourism development.

In Hue, the orientation of tourism development based on cultural and creative industries has contributed to shifting the heritage tourism model from passive sightseeing to cultural experiences. Festivals, art programs, and creative spaces organized in connection with the imperial city's heritage not only enrich tourism products but also facilitate the redistribution of tourist flows in terms of space and time. This approach aligns with international recommendations on sustainable heritage management, emphasizing the role of creativity in alleviating pressure on key heritage sites.

In Hoi An, the model of tourism development based on creativity has been implemented relatively comprehensively, from urban space management and architectural preservation to the development of experiential tourism products. The restriction of motor vehicles in the ancient town, combined with cultural, artistic, and creative craft activities, has contributed to environmental protection, the preservation of heritage authenticity, and the enhancement of the local community's quality of life. Hoi An is considered one of the exemplary cases in Vietnam for successfully integrating sustainable tourism principles with creative industry development.

In order to systematize and clarify the mechanism of putting creative industries into practice, the matrix below will compare the typical success factors of the two destinations, Hue and Hoi An. This comparison is constructed closely following the proposed analytical framework, focusing on evaluating the core dimensions: the main creative fields, the methods of experience innovation, and the specific impacts on the three pillars of sustainable tourism (economic, social, and environmental heritage).

Table 1. Comparison Matrix of Success Factors for Hue and Hoi An in Creative Tourism Development

Analysis criteria	Hue	Hoi An	Comparative review
Leading creative industry sector	Focusing on performing arts, festivals, and creative spaces associated with the heritage of the ancient capital.	Diversification through handicrafts (making lanterns), folk art, traditional cuisine, and urban space design. Strongly develop large-scale experiential performances like “Memories of Hoi An”.	Hue excels in large-scale performing arts, while Hoi An excels in community creativity and handicrafts.
Approach and innovate the experience	Shifting the heritage tourism model from merely passively visiting royal	Build an experiential model where tourists directly participate and become part of the process of recreating local culture.	Hoi An has a more synchronized experiential space model, while Hue

	architectural sites to forms of cultural experiences.	Comprehensive management from urban space and architecture to experience products.	remains fragmented.
State entity	- Playing a leading role (organizing festivals, heritage planning) - Guiding the development of the cultural industry	- Strict management of the ancient urban area - Conservation policies linked to community tourism	Hue leans toward the “state-led” model, while Hoi An is more balanced.
Businesses and the market	- Businesses participate in the event, perform - The product also depends on the event.	Small businesses and households participate strongly-a diverse and continuous experiential market.	Hoi An has a more dynamic ecosystem of small businesses.
The role of tourists	Mainly for spectators (watching performances and visiting)	As a co-creator (participating in the experience)	Hoi An clearly exemplifies the model of creative tourism.
Economic Impact	The new products help extend the duration of tourists' stay at the destination.	Significantly increase the length of stay and spending levels of tourists. The experiential programs create a stable source of income. Creating sustainable livelihoods for thousands of local households.	Hoi An has better stability and spread.
Social Impact (Community)	Contributing to enriching the local tourism products through festivals and creative spaces.	The local community directly participates with tourists in creative activities. Improve the quality of life for local residents. Contributing to encouraging the younger generation to continue the traditional trades of their ancestors.	Hoi An stands out for its social inclusivity.
Environmental and Heritage Impact	Pace and time. In line with international recommendations for reducing the burden on heritage sites.	Reduce pressure on vulnerable historical sites. Implement restrictions on motor vehicles in the old quarter to protect the ecological environment and maintain the authenticity of the heritage.	Hoi An has more direct and effective environmental management.
Local community	Participate but indirectly (service, festival).	Participate directly (making lanterns, guiding, experiencing)	Hoi An achieves a higher level of community empowerment.
Overall sustainability	- Dependent on events and policies - Not fully systematized	- Integrated model, regularly operated - Closely connected with the community	Hoi An is a more exemplary sustainable model, while Huế has potential but needs improvement.

Source: Compiled by the author

However, comparisons between the models also reveal structural limitations. Most successful models still heavily rely on local resources and initiatives.

Hue represents a development model based on institutional and event-driven creative industries, with a strong leading role of the state and large-scale cultural programs. However, the diffusion and community participation are still limited.

Hoi An is a typical model of community-based creative tourism, where the creative industry is “absorbed” into daily life, creating continuous and sustainable experiences.

Comparison shows the key to success lies not only in heritage resources but also in the organization of the creative ecosystem and the level of community participation. This is also an empirical demonstration of the analytical framework proposed in the article.

Florida [11] argues that the development of creative spaces in major urban areas plays an important role in the process of restructuring urban spaces toward sustainability and inclusiveness. These spaces not only attract tourists interested in creative culture but also serve as “nuclei” that stimulate urban space innovation and connect the creative community with the tourism industry. From an academic perspective, this is evidence of the role of the creative industry in restructuring urban spaces toward sustainability and inclusivity.

However, a comparison between the models also reveals structural limitations. Most successful models still heavily rely on local resources and initiatives, lacking synchronized policy and financial support at the national level. This necessitates the need for a more effective policy framework and coordination mechanism to scale up sustainable tourism models based on the creative industry in Vietnam.

3.4. Assessing the Role of the Creative Industry in Sustainable Tourism Development in Vietnam

3.4.1. Achievements

The practice of tourism development in Vietnam in recent years shows that the creative industry has gradually affirmed its role as an important tool in enhancing the quality of growth and promoting sustainable tourism development across all three pillars: economic, social, and environmental.

First of all, the creative industry has contributed to increasing value in the tourism value chain, especially through tourism products based on cultural and creative experiences. Stage art programs such as “Memories of Hoi An” or “Essence of the North” not only attract a large number of tourists but also generate stable revenue, extend the length of stay, and increase the spending of visitors. In fact, these products have the potential to create higher added value compared to traditional forms of sightseeing, thereby contributing to enhanced economic efficiency without significantly increasing pressure on natural resources.

Secondly, the creative industry plays an active role in preserving and promoting local cultural values—an important pillar of sustainable tourism. Through the recreation, storytelling, and reimagining of heritage elements in forms suitable for contemporary contexts, many traditional cultural values have been “revived” in the tourism space. In Hoi An, handicraft activities, folk performances, and traditional festivals are not only preserved but also become distinctive tourism products, contributing to the livelihoods of the local community and encouraging the younger generation to continue traditional crafts [12].

Thirdly, the creative industry contributes to enhancing the participation of the local community in tourism development, thereby promoting inclusivity and social equity. Experience-based tourism models linked to craft villages, folk art, and community life allow local people to become creative agents and service providers, rather than just beneficiaries.

This aligns with international recommendations on sustainable tourism development, which emphasize the central role of the community.

Especially when considering the environmental pillar, the creative industry is increasingly demonstrating its important role through indirect but systematic mechanisms. First, the application of digital technology in tourism, including virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and digital heritage platforms-allows for the provision of rich experiences without increasing physical pressure on resources. This process of “dematerializing experiences” contributes to reducing visitor density at sensitive destinations, limiting the degradation of monuments, and decreasing emissions related to travel [13], [14].

In addition, the creative industry promotes a shift from a resource-extraction-based tourism model to one based on experience and knowledge. This transition reduces dependence on natural resources and the need for large-scale infrastructure development, thereby minimizing negative environmental impacts. At the same time, creative spaces and cultural districts are often developed through the reuse of existing structures and encourage low-emission modes of transportation, enhancing environmental efficiency [15].

Furthermore, the creative industry contributes to promoting sustainable production and consumption through the use of local materials and small-scale handcrafted processes, minimizing environmental impacts across the tourism value chain. Through communication, art, and design, it also raises tourists’ awareness of environmental protection and encourages responsible consumption behaviors [16].

Thus, the creative industry not only reduces direct pressure on tourism resources but also promotes a transition toward a knowledge-based, low-emission, and environmentally friendly tourism model.

3.4.2 The limitations and challenges posed

Alongside the positive results achieved, the development of the creative industry linked to sustainable tourism in Vietnam still faces many structural limitations, especially when considering all three pillars: economic, social, and environmental.

First of all, the institutional framework and policies for developing the creative industry and tourism still lack synchronization and inter-sectoral coordination. Although there are separate strategies for developing the cultural and tourism industries, coordination between sectors such as culture, tourism, technology, and the environment remains limited. This leads to the implementation of fragmented creative tourism models, lacking long-term orientation and not fully integrating sustainable development goals, especially environmental criteria.

Secondly, the human resources in the creative industry are still limited in quality and professionalism, especially in interdisciplinary capacities such as sustainable experience design, creative management, and digital technology application. Most innovative tourism products today still rely more on practical experience than on evidence-based approaches or international standards. This limits the ability to innovate in a “greening” direction and to minimize environmental impacts throughout the entire life cycle of tourism products.

Thirdly, the linkages between the entities in the creative tourism ecosystem are still weak, especially between tourism businesses, the creative community, regulatory agencies, and environmental organizations. Many successful innovative models at the local scale face difficulties in scaling up due to a lack of benefit-sharing mechanisms, insufficient financial resources, and limited market access. At the same time, the lack of inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms also reduces the effectiveness of resource management and environmental impact control at the destination level.

Notably, from an environmental perspective, the role of the creative industry in mitigating the ecological impact of tourism has not yet been fully exploited. The application of digital technologies such as VR, AR, or smart management platforms has only been limited to a few pilot projects and has not yet been widely implemented across the entire tourism system. In addition, sustainable production and consumption models in creative industries (such as handicrafts, design, and cuisine) are still spontaneous, lacking standardization, and not closely linked to emission reduction and circular economy goals.

In addition, the process of commercializing creative products in tourism at some destinations still poses a risk of negative environmental impact. The rapid increase in creative tourism activities without proper control can lead to increased waste, pressure on urban infrastructure, and a decline in the quality of the living environment for local communities. At the same time, if not properly guided, the exploitation of cultural elements toward excessive commercialization can also diminish the authenticity of heritage, indirectly affecting the long-term sustainability of the tourism ecosystem.

Finally, the lack of tools to measure and evaluate the environmental impact of creative tourism activities is a significant gap in research and practice. Currently, most assessments still focus on economic and social indicators, while metrics on carbon emissions, resource use, or ecological footprints have not been systematically integrated into destination management. This limits the ability to monitor, supervise, and adjust policies toward sustainable development.

Overall, the aforementioned limitations indicate that although the creative industry has great potential in promoting sustainable tourism, to fully realize its role, a more systematic approach is needed, especially in integrating environmental goals into the entire creative tourism value chain in Vietnam.

To clarify the achieved results and the existing limitations, Table 2 below summarizes and compares the main aspects of the creative industry in the development of sustainable tourism in Vietnam.

Table 2. Comparison of the achievements and limitations of the creative industry in sustainable tourism development in Vietnam

Aspect	Achievements	Limit
Economy	- Increase the value of tourism products through creative experiences - Increase tourist spending and length of stay - Diversifying products, reducing dependence on natural resources	- Lack of stability, dependent on events and the market - Difficult to scale due to capital and management capacity constraints
Society - Culture	- Preserving and promoting indigenous cultural values - Strengthen community participation - Create livelihoods and promote inclusivity	- The risk of excessive commercialization reduces authenticity. - Community participation is not uniform across different localities.
Environment	- Reduce direct pressure on resources through creative experiences - Promote the digitization and “dematerialization” of travel experiences - Encourage environmentally friendly consumption and production	- The application of green technology and digitization is still limited. - Lack of standards and tools to measure environmental impact - Some activities still put pressure on infrastructure and the environment.
Institution and policy	- Initial steps in forming a strategy for developing the cultural and tourism	- Lack of intersectoral coordination - Policies are still fragmented, not yet

	industry - Increasing awareness of the role of the creative industry	integrating environmental goals
Human resources	- Forming a creative workforce in tourism - Some successful innovative models	- Lack of high-quality, interdisciplinary human resources - Limitations in digital skills and sustainable governance
Ecosystem link	- Emergence of collaborative models between the community and businesses - Some destinations forming an innovation ecosystem	- The link between the parties is still weak. - Lack of mechanisms for benefit sharing and model expansion

Source: Compiled by the author

The table above shows that although the creative industry has brought significant economic and social benefits, as well as initially contributing to reducing environmental impact, structural constraints-particularly in institutions, human resources, and measuring environmental impact-remain major barriers to long-term sustainable development.

4. SOLUTIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS TO PROMOTE THE ROLE OF THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY IN SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM

4.1. Overall Approach Orientation

Based on the analyzed constraints, it can be seen that promoting the role of the creative industry in sustainable tourism development in Vietnam requires a systematic, interdisciplinary, and evidence-based approach. Instead of viewing the creative industry as a supplementary field, it should be identified as a central component in the process of transforming the tourism development model from “resource exploitation” to “knowledge and creativity-based”. At the same time, environmental protection goals need to be integrated throughout the entire value chain of creative tourism, from product design and space organization to experience consumption.

4.2. Institutional and Policy Solutions Group

To address the fragmentation of policies, it is necessary to build an integrated institutional framework between the fields of culture, tourism, creative industries, technology, and the environment. Integrating the goals of creative industry development into the national tourism development strategy and destination planning must be carried out consistently, with environmental criteria (reducing emissions, efficient resource use, ecosystem conservation) becoming a mandatory component.

In addition, it is necessary to establish financial incentive mechanisms and preferential policies for businesses and organizations developing sustainable creative tourism, such as supporting investments in projects applying digital technology, circular economy models, or green creative spaces. At the same time, it is necessary to develop standards and a set of indicators to evaluate sustainable creative tourism in order to guide and monitor implementation practices.

4.3. Group of solutions for developing human resources and creative capacity

In order to address the limitations in the quality of human resources, it is necessary to promote training in interdisciplinary competencies between creativity, tourism, and sustainable development. Training programs need to integrate content such as sustainable

experience design, creative governance, digital transformation, and environmental management in tourism.

For the local community, capacity-building programs need to be implemented to support residents in actively participating in the creative tourism value chain, especially in applying environmentally friendly production and consumption practices. This not only contributes to improving product quality but also ensures inclusivity and sustainability in development.

4.4. Group of solutions for developing innovative tourism products and models

The development of innovative tourism products needs to shift strongly toward a model based on experiences, content, and cultural values, rather than relying on the exploitation of physical resources. Products need to be designed with a focus on minimizing environmental impact, such as limiting the use of unsustainable materials, optimizing energy use, and encouraging low-emission activities.

At the same time, it is necessary to promote sustainable production and consumption models in creative industries linked to tourism, such as using local materials, recycling, and developing environmentally friendly handicrafts. Building “green” tourism value chains linked to local identity will help reduce the ecological footprint while enhancing economic value.

Additionally, it is necessary to encourage the development of creative spaces in a sustainable manner through the reuse of existing structures, the development of pedestrian areas, and the minimization of impacts on urban landscapes and ecosystems.

4.5. Group of solutions on technology application and digital transformation

To enhance the role of the creative industry in minimizing environmental impact, it is necessary to promote the application of digital technology throughout the entire tourism system. Technologies such as VR, AR, big data, and artificial intelligence can be used to design travel experiences that are less dependent on physical resources while also supporting real-time visitor flow management to avoid overcrowding at destinations.

In addition, it is necessary to develop smart management platforms that integrate environmental indicators, allowing for the monitoring and assessment of the impact of innovative tourism activities. The application of technology not only enhances the quality of the experience but also plays a crucial role in optimizing resource use and reducing emissions.

4.6. Solutions for strengthening ecosystem linkages and destination governance

To address the limitations in the linkage between stakeholders, it is necessary to establish an effective coordination mechanism between the state, enterprises, creative communities, and environmental organizations in the development of creative tourism. Public-private-community partnership models need to be promoted to share resources, knowledge, and benefits fairly.

At the destination level, integrated governance models need to be applied, in which the creative industry is seen as a tool to regulate tourist flows, allocate tourism space, and reduce pressure on resources. Connecting creative spaces, craft villages, and heritage destinations within the same network will contribute to enhancing exploitation efficiency and ensuring long-term sustainability.

4.7. Policy Implications

From the above solutions, several important policy implications can be drawn. First, the creative industry needs to be positioned as a strategic driver in sustainable tourism development, rather than just a supplementary factor. Secondly, policies need to be developed in an integrated, interdisciplinary manner and based on evidence, where environmental goals must be seamlessly integrated throughout. Thirdly, ensuring the genuine participation of the

local community and promoting sustainable production-consumption models should be considered a core principle. Finally, it is necessary to develop a system of indicators and evaluation tools to fully measure the impact of the creative industry on all three pillars of sustainable tourism development.

5. CONCLUSION

This study systematically analyzed the role of the creative industry in sustainable tourism development in Vietnam, based on a combination of an interdisciplinary theoretical framework and practical analysis of exemplary models. The research results show that the creative industry not only contributes to enhancing the added value of tourism products but also plays an important role in cultural preservation, promoting community participation, and gradually reducing the environmental impact of tourism activities.

5.1. Theoretical Contributions and Policy Implications

5.1.1. Theoretical Contribution

From an academic perspective, this study contributes to clarifying the mechanism of impact of the creative industry on sustainable tourism development through three main aspects.

First, the study affirms the role of the creative industry as a mediating mechanism in the process of transforming the tourism development model, from one based on the direct exploitation of natural resources and heritage to one based on experience, knowledge, and creativity. This approach helps expand previous discussions that primarily focused on the economic and cultural aspects of the creative industry.

Secondly, the research supplements empirical evidence from the Vietnamese context, thereby clarifying how creative industries interact with stakeholders in the tourism ecosystem (the state, businesses, communities, and tourists) to create economic, social, and environmental values. Especially, the research emphasizes the role of the creative industry in “dematerializing” travel experiences, contributing to reducing pressure on resources and shaping sustainable consumption models.

Thirdly, the research contributes to refining the integrated analytical framework between the creative industry and sustainable tourism, in which the environmental pillar is clarified through mechanisms such as digitizing experiences, developing sustainable creative spaces, and promoting green tourism value chains. This helps fill the gap in previous studies that have not fully considered the environmental role of the creative industry.

5.1.2. Policy Implications

From the research results, several important policy implications are proposed to enhance the effective role of the creative industry in sustainable tourism development in Vietnam.

First, it is necessary to reposition the creative industry as a strategic driver in sustainable tourism development, rather than just a supplementary field. This requires the integration of creative industry development goals into the national tourism strategy and destination planning in an interdisciplinary and long-term manner.

Secondly, it is necessary to improve the institutional framework by strengthening coordination among the cultural, tourism, technology, and environmental sectors, while also developing standards and measurement tools to fully assess the impact of creative tourism on all three pillars of sustainability.

Thirdly, it is necessary to promote the development of creative human resources with interdisciplinary capabilities, particularly in the fields of sustainable experience design, digital

transformation, and environmental governance. At the same time, enhancing the capacity of local communities should be considered a prerequisite to ensure inclusivity and sustainability.

Fourth, it is necessary to encourage the development of innovative tourism models toward “greening”, including the application of digital technology to minimize physical impacts, the development of sustainable creative spaces, and the promotion of tourism value chains based on environmentally friendly production and consumption.

Finally, it is necessary to establish smart destination governance mechanisms, in which the creative industry is used as a tool to regulate tourist flows, allocate tourism spaces, and reduce pressure on resources, thereby enhancing the adaptability and sustainable development of the tourism sector in the context of global change.

5.2. Research limitations and future research directions

This study has some limitations. First, the primary use of analytical methods and case studies limits the ability to quantify the impact of the creative industry, especially on the environmental pillar. Secondly, the scope of the research is still narrow, not fully reflecting the diversity of innovative tourism models in Vietnam.

In the future, subsequent studies could focus on developing quantitative methods and expanding the scope by region and type of destination while also deeply analyzing the role of digital technology and the circular economy.

REFERENCES

- [1] World Bank, “Tourism and economic development,” 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/tourism>
- [2] World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), “Vietnam’s travel & tourism set for a record 2024,” Jun. 28, 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://wttc.org/news/vietnams-travel-and-tourism-set-for-a-record-2024>
- [3] UN Tourism (UNWTO), “Sustainable Development,” [Online]. Available: <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development>
- [4] G. Richards, “Creativity and tourism: The state of the art”, *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 38, no. 4, pp. 1225-1253, 2011, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2011.07.008>
- [5] UNCTAD, “*Creative Economy Outlook: Trends in International Trade in Creative Industries*,” United Nations, 2018. [Online]. Available: https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditcted2018d3_en.pdf
- [6] World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and Earth Council, *Agenda 21 for the Travel & Tourism Industry: Towards Environmentally Sustainable Development*, London: WTTC, 1997. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/254041?ln=en&utm>
- [7] Prime Minister of Vietnam, *Decision No. 1755/QĐ-TTg dated September 8, 2016 on Approving the Strategy for the Development of Vietnam’s Cultural Industries to 2020, with a Vision to 2030*. Hanoi, Vietnam, 2016. [Online]. Available: <https://vanban.chinhphu.vn/default.aspx?pageid=27160&docid=186367>
- [8] Nguyen Hoa, “Vietnam: Top 10 developing economies in the world exporting leading innovative goods (2024)”. [Online]. Available: <https://congthuong.vn/viet-nam-top-10-nen-kinh-te-dang-phat-trien-tren-the-gioi-xuat-khau-hang-hoa-sang-tao-hang-dau-308138.html>
- [9] Dang Khoa, “Revenue from the creative industry accounts for 3% of Vietnam's GDP each year”, *VietTimes Electronic Magazine* (2024). [Online]. Available:

- <https://viettimes.vn/doanh-thu-tu-cong-nghiep-sang-tao-chiem-3-gdp-viet-nam-moi-nam-post174496.html>
- [10] UNESCO and UNDP, *Creative Economy Report 2013: Widening Local Development Pathways*. New York, USA: United Nations, 2013. [Online]. Available: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000224698>
- [11] R. Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. New York, NY, USA: Basic Books, 2002. [Online]. Available: <https://books.google.com/books?id=7NK5AAAAIAAJ&utm>.
- [12] UNCTAD, *Creative Economy Outlook 2018*. Geneva: United Nations, 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://unctad.org/publication/creative-economy-outlook-2018>
- [13] UNESCO and UNDP, *Creative Economy Report 2013: Widening Local Development Pathways*. New York: United Nations, 2013. [Online]. Available: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000224698>
- [14] S. Gössling, "Risks, resilience, and pathways to sustainable aviation: A COVID-19 perspective," *Journal of Air Transport Management*, vol. 89, Art. no. 101933, 2020, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jairtraman.2020.101933>
- [15] OECD/ICOM, *Culture and Local Development: Maximising the Impact: A Guide for Local Governments, Communities and Museums*. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2019. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9a855be5-en>
- [16] World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals - Journey to 2030*. Madrid: World Tourism Organization, 2017. doi: <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284419401>