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# LEVERAGING CHAM ETHNIC CULTURE FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN HO CHI MINH CITY

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study was to assess how the Cham ethnic culture can be exploited to encourage sustainable tourism in Ho Chi Minh City based on the sociocultural and economic effects of the culture and to recommend the use of development strategies aligned with preservation. It examines the cultural resources of the Cham in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), including material (architecture) and immaterial (festivals, cuisine). The study 2023-2024 data to guide the creation of the tourism vision of Vietnam up to 2030. The methodology was based on a mixed-method approach, including qualitative and interview-based data from 45 locals and 55 tourists regarding the topic. Moreover, the study also relied on the quantitative survey data of 100 participants, comprising 45 locals and 55 tourists, and secondary data analysis, which was conducted using statistical and thematic methods. The findings of the study indicated that cham culture can be a useful tourist attraction, as well as an identifiable asset in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). It has been found through survey analysis that most of the respondents are in favor of awareness of heritage preservation, and most tourists are interested in going and experiencing genuine cham traditions such as festivals and buildings. Nevertheless, there are still problems such as inadequate infrastructure and advertisement campaigns. Cham culture provides the prospect of earning lucrative earnings by local companies and providing employment; however, the issue of the risks of commercialization has been identified. Socioculturally, it endorses community resilience. A new community-based approach that integrates tourism diversification, workforce training, and cultural promotion will be helpful in striking a balance between cultural integrity and viability, which would then enhance the sustainability of urban tourism. Moreover, the project is helpful in terms of providing information, knowledge, and guidance to local authorities and decision makers on how ethnic minority history can be used to help realize the long-term cultural and financial prosperity of Ho Chi Minh City despite urbanization.*

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**KEYWORDS:** Cham Culture, Sustainable Tourism, Ho Chi Minh City, Socio-Cultural Analysis, Economic Development.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), recognized as the largest city in Vietnam, has become excessively urbanized and has been recognized as a chief tourist destination in Southeast Asia. Ho Chi Minh City's tourism industry contributes significantly to the GDP, accounting for more than 10% of the local economy, with millions of domestic and international visitors in 2023 (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2023).

However, as global tourism trends shift towards experiential and culturally immersive offerings, urban destinations such as Ho Chi Minh City face many challenges in expanding their appeal while protecting their cultural heritage under the pressure of modernization, as suggested by Richards (2018) and Duxbury (2021). In this context, the Cham ethnic minority has been historically substantial, though an underexplored community in Ho Chi Minh City, and it also provides a novel prospect to diversify tourism in the city through capitalization on its sociocultural characteristics.

Cham people living in Vietnamese territory descendants of the ancient kingdom of Champa have a rich cultural heritage comprising architecture, festivals, cuisine, and intangible traditions. This heritage has survived many centuries of socio-political convulsions, as Phan (2004) stressed. Cham people are not as numerous in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) as they are in A Giang or Binh Thuan but, nevertheless, they also keep their presence and contribute to the creation of a new cultural society and economy to develop this active area. They have tangible heritage sites, such as the Cham Temple (Thánh Đường Chăm), as well as intangible practices including traditional festivals and culinary arts. These characteristics, as described in the study project Cham Ethnic Culture in Ho Chi Minh City for Contemporary Tourist Development (Tuyen, 2024, p. 97, Code: T2023.09.1), represent untapped potential for sustainable tourist development. However, their integration into the tourism framework of HCMC is restricted, and they are outshone by major attractions and disadvantaged by problems that comprise inadequate infrastructure as well as inadequate promotion of tourism attractions.

As suggested by UNWTO (2017) and Ziakas (2023), the term sustainable tourism is used to describe tourism that satisfies the needs of the present without prejudice to the potential of the future generation to enjoy cultural and natural resources. Smith (2016) and Duignan and Pappalepore (2023) argue that this strategy has become irreplaceable at the international level.

Sustainable tourism in cities such as Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) facilitates a compromise between economic growth and preservation of the culture, particularly among ethnic minorities whose histories are threatened to be commercialized or even lost in the midst of rapid development. This combination of Cham culture as a tourism resource and as a source of ethnic identity makes Cham culture a valuable case study to examine how minority heritage could be used to sustain the tourism industry in cities and at the same time create resiliency in the socio-cultural aspects of the Cham people. Therefore, this study leverages Cham Ethnic Culture to achieve Sustainable Tourism Development in Ho Chi Minh City. This Socio-Cultural and Economic Analysis has attempted to fill this intersection and evaluate the current situation of the Cham cultural resources, their tourism potential, and the strategies that must be established to ensure that they are exploited sustainably in the long term.

The history of the people of Cham is long and extends to the Champa back in the 2nd-19th century, a maritime state known for its Hindu-Buddhist architecture and networks of trade, highlighted by Lockhart and Duiker (2006) and Moayerian et al. (2022). After its demise, the population of Cham moved to southern Vietnam, with a substantial population residing in HCMC, specifically in Districts 1 and 8, reflected by 8 (Nguyen (2024, p. 31) as well. Today, their cultural practices, ranging from the Rija Nugar festival to traditional weaving and cuisine, reflect a blend of indigenous traditions and Islamic influences, which sets them apart from the predominantly Kinh population of Vietnam (Inrasara, 1994). Despite the considerable diversity within the Cham community, there has been relatively little scholarly focus on Cham in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) compared to the rural Cham settlements in the Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan provinces. This is primarily due to increased tourism related to Cham towers, such as those in My Son (Phan and Nguyen, 2020).

Ethnic tourism is a promotional activity that has gained popularity worldwide in an attempt to encourage cultural differences and economic growth. Nevertheless, it always struggles to maintain a balance between authenticity and commercialization (Yang & Wall, 2009). The Hmong in northern Vietnam and the Toraja in Indonesia are just a few examples of how minority cultures can augment tourism as well as accentuate the possibility of cultural dilution in case they are not managed in a sustainable manner (Cohen, 2001). The urban environment of the Cham people in HCMC

complicates the situation, as their heritage is in competition with new objects of attraction, such as skyscrapers and commercial areas, which require new integration initiatives. The value of this study lies in its focus on urban ethnic minorities, providing a unique perspective on ethnic tourism and linking cultural preservation with urban economic benefits.

According to the tourism plan of the government of Vietnam, which is reflected in the Vietnam Tourism Development Plan to 2030, cultural tourism is one of the pillars of long-term development, and the growth of tourism revenue is expected to grow by 7-8% per year (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2021). Ho Chi Minh City, being a top priority, is supposed to introduce more to offer other than historical places like the Cu Chi Tunnels and include community-based and heritage experiences. Cham culture is consistent with this objective; thus, its input to the tourism of Ho Chi Minh City is insignificant, which points to the lack of interrelation between the intentions of the policy and its application (Nguyen, 2024, pp. 71-77).

Previous researchers such as NGUYEN (2022) and Phan et al. (1991) have already investigated cham culture in rural Vietnam. The expression of the culture in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) is under-researched. The works of Dohamide and Dorohiem (1965), Shekhar (2024), and Dai Nam nhat thong chi contain some background information about Cham heritage, but none of them cover the modern aspects of tourism (Tuyen, 2024, pp. 6-8). Recent literature, including the story of Cham literature by Inrasara (1994), Michelam et al. (2021), and a discussion of religious rituals by Van Hana and Tuanb (N.D), has enlightened the culture, but there is little evidence of connecting the features with sustainable tourism in urban areas. Studies by Tung (2024) and Tomaz and Caldeira (2021) on the impact of tourism on Cham heritage in Vietnam serve as a starting point; however, its rural focus leaves the Ho Chi Minh City environment unexplored. This research aims to address three critical gaps: the under-exploitation of Cham cultural resources by the tourism industry of Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), the absence of empirical data on the potential of cultural resources in terms of socio-cultural and economic potential in an urban environment, and the lack of a tailored model of sustainable integration.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the framework of sustainable tourism developed by the UNWTO in 2017, which emphasizes the role of economic

sustainability, socio-cultural integrity, and environmental stewardship. It applies the Tourism Area Life Cycle model by Butler (1980) to examine how tourism in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) has evolved over time and how the cham culture is to be applied as a revitalization tool in the development stage. Moreover, the research uses authenticity theory, as developed by Cohen (1979), to explore how Cham heritage can be used to offer authentic experiences without being commodified, which is a major problem in ethnic tourism (Yang & Wall, 2009). The socio-cultural resilience perspective Adger (2000) also informs the study, as cham culture can be discussed as a stabilizing force to the identity of the community in the conditions of urbanization.

### 2.2. Ethnic Tourism and Cultural Heritage

The integration of ethnic minority culture into sustainable tourism development has been thoroughly researched and is influenced by the global tendency towards culturally immersive and responsible tourism activities. This literature review highlights major themes pertinent to using Cham ethnic culture as a source of sustainable tourism in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). It is concerned with ethnic tourism, sustainable tourism frameworks, and the sociocultural and economic aspects of minority heritage in urban settings. This review is based on the historical and current literature on cham culture and tourism development in Vietnam, and its comparison with other parts of the world in order to determine the gaps and provide a theoretical basis for the current research.

According to the findings of Yang and Wall (2009); Kusumastuti et al. (2024) ethnic tourism is a type of traveling that is characterized by the need to learn about the culture, traditions and even lifestyles of any specific native or minority group. This type of tourism has become a strong device in terms of culture and economic development. Worldwide, cases like the Maori in New Zealand and Hmong in northern Vietnam demonstrate how they can be used to improve the attraction of destinations as well as assist the local communities, as suggested by Butler and Hinch (2007). Nevertheless, Cohen (1988) finds that cultural commercialization, where traditions are diluted or performed to tourist delight, and lack of authenticity are some of the problems that usually cause this kind of tourism. The rural Cham villages of Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan, Vietnam have endeavored to draw tourists with their unique towers such as "My Son" and festivals such as "Kate," although these efforts have been criticized as a way of generating many dollars at the expense of

cultural integrity unveiled by Quang et al. (2024) also.

The children of the Champa kingdom, 2<sup>nd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, have an extensive history of material objects such as buildings and intangible activities such as music, dance, and astronomy (Phan, 2004). From this perspective, Dohamide and Dorohiem (1965) and Inrasara (1994) signify that historical sources such as *Dai Nam nhat thong chi* and *Dai Viet su ky* record the cultural importance of Champa and its development in southern Vietnam. The Cham community's urban presence in Ho Chi Minh City, as well as accurate impressions of the Cham Temple and traditional festivals, have been recognized as tourism resources. Unlike its rural counterparts, urban cham culture is under pressure from industrialization, raising concerns about the recovery of ethnic tourism and sustainability (Phu 2005).

### 2.3. Sustainable Tourism Frameworks

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2017), sustainable tourism can be viewed as the beginning of a balance between economic benefits, sociocultural preservation, and environmental protection. As per Shekhar (2024) and Tomaz and Caldeira (2021), the Tourist Area Life Cycle (TALC) model by Butler (1980) can be used to analyze the current tourist trajectory at HCMC, which is currently at the stage of development and needs to be diversified to avoid a lack of results. Ethnic tourism achieves this goal by providing unique experiences; however, the future success of tourism depends on the ability to keep the culture authentic, a given that Cohen (1979) explains as the perception of a tourist to experience real cultural interactions. Michelam et al. (2021) and Richards (2018) point out that cities are turning to cultural heritage as a source of differentiation. Examples include Bangkok and Singapore, which have seen how minority cultures add to their tourism offerings.

The Vietnam Tourism Development Strategy for 2030 in Vietnam focuses on cultural tourism development, with the aim of achieving a yearly revenue growth of approximately 7-8%. The city of Ho Chi Minh (HCMC) is allocated to spearhead this effort (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2021). However, mainstream attractions, which include Cu Chi Tunnels, have received much attention, and this has excluded minority heritages, including the Cham (Tuyen, 2024, p. 102). In the realization of sustainable tourism practices, research conducted globally emphasizes the significance of community participation. As an illustration, Toraja of Indonesia shows that local involvement can be used

to curb the risks of commodification (Vardopoulos et al., 2023). This implies that a community-based strategy might be vital for the development of chain tourism in HCMC.

### 2.4. Socio-Cultural And Economic Dimensions

The socio-cultural importance of ethnic tourism is that it enhances community identity and resilience, especially by minority groups in urbanizing settings, which was also disclosed by Adger (2000). In the example of the Cham community of Ho Chi Minh City, cultural practices can be considered as the so-called "pillars of identity amidst the fast urbanization (Tuyen, 2024, p. 31). According to studies by NGUYEN (2022) and Phan et al. (1991), the Cham people play an important role in Vietnamese cultural scenes, but their socio-cultural dynamics in urban areas have never been fully investigated. Ethnic tourism has astonishing potential for recreating local economies through job creation and stimulating the emergence of colorful micro-enterprises.

Not only does this type of tourism introduce tourists who come with the intent to indulge in the exotic experiences of a particular culture, it also produces a rich pool of entrepreneurial ventures by the people of the respective area, enabling them to present their culture, crafts, and even culinary delights. Consequently, communities are able to develop, earn income, and maintain their culture in the process. The Hmong in Sapa depicts this, with tourism contributing more than one-fifth of the local revenues (Truong, 2013). In Ho Chi Minh City, the survey outcomes indicate that tourists are especially interested in cham people, which means that they can potentially affect the economy (Nguyen, 2024, pp. 134-170); the actual economic values have not yet been calculated. Infrastructure underdevelopment and a deficiency in awareness have remained obstacles to cultural tourism development (Tuyen, 2024, pp. 77-80). The same situation occurs with urban ethnic tourism worldwide, where Smith (2016) provides that insufficient facilities and lack of promotion can easily sabotage ethnic minority cultural programs. Tung 's(2024) analysis of cham tourism in Vietnam speaks of risks of commercialization, which is also raised with reference to Ho Chi Minh City, where city influences can be a threat to cham traditions.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in HCMC from January 2024 to March 2025, with three important stakeholder groups in mind: the cham community, tourist industry actors, and visitors. Qualitative data were

gathered through 25 semi-structured interviews with carefully chosen participants: 10 Cham community leaders (e.g., elders, cultural practitioners), 10 tourism stakeholders (e.g., tour operators, hotel managers), and five policymakers from HCMC's Department of Tourism. Purposive sampling ensures a range of opinions on cultural preservation and profitability (Patton, 2015). In addition, the study survey reached 350 people, including 200 local and foreign travelling people and 150 local entrepreneurs in tourism-related industries, including handicraft dealers and restaurant proprietors. The survey data were then screened to select the most suitable sample, ultimately yielding valid responses from 45 local residents and 55 tourists. The survey results were used to verify and supplement the qualitative interview data, and also to analyze secondary data using statistical methods and thematic analysis. Convenience sampling was used to obtain tourists in main spots, such as Ben Thanh Market, and businesses were sampled through snowball sampling in Cham-impacted areas, such as District 8, HCMC.

### **3.1. Research Design**

The study used a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach, where both qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously and analyzed together to provide a comprehensive view, as suggested by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010). The method suits the aims of the study, which is to examine the Cham cultural resources, assess the socio-cultural and economic potential of the resources, and propose sustainable tourism strategies. Qualitative data involves the perspective of insiders on the culture of value, and quantitative data measure the impressions of community and tourists to guarantee triangulation and strength (Tuyen, 2024, p. 16).

### **3.2. Data Collection**

Data were collected using a mixed-methods research design consisting of qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys, in addition to secondary sources. The interviews were semi-structured, targeting the Cham authorities of Ho Chi Minh City to seek cultural heritage, tourism potential, and community priorities. The 15 interviews were recorded for 45-60 minutes each, with informed consent. The quantitative data were collected in the form of a structured questionnaire, which was administered to 100 respondents, including 45 locals of Cham origin and 55 tourists visiting Cham-related sites between 2023 and 2024. The survey employed a

Likert-scale and categorical questions to quantify the perception of cultural significance, tourism appeal, and other economic aspects, including income and the use of language. Historical records, governmental documents, and previous academic works formed part of the secondary data that was analyzed to provide a context to primary findings and provide other evidence. This multi-source methodology improved the rigor of the analysis process through the cross-validation of the perspectives and ensuring that the Cham cultural resources were understood to support sustainable tourism.

### **3.3. Sampling**

Purposive sampling was assessed in interviews to select Cham dignitaries with cultural competence, based on their roles and community status (Tuyen, 2024, p. 16). To ensure the representation of diverse perspectives, the survey employed a stratified convenience sample, with locals drawn from Cham neighborhoods in Districts 1 and 8 and tourists from various sites. The sample size (n=100) strikes a balance between statistical power and feasibility, as presented in previous tourism studies (Veal, 2017).

### **3.4. Data Analysis**

Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis following a process consisting of six steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): transcription, coding, theme identification, review, definition, and reporting. The NVivo program facilitated easier identification of tendencies, such as cultural values and tourism restrictions. Descriptive and inferential statistics, such as frequencies and chi-square tests, were applied to the quantitative data to examine the relationship between variables using SPSS. Content analysis of secondary data sources was performed to arrive at a historical and policy understanding. Integration occurred when qualitative results were used alongside quantitative results, such as the linking of community support to tourist demand) to assist in the development of meaningful narratives.

### **3.5. Validity And Reliability**

Triangulation of data sources presented validity, whereas intercoder reliability tests (for qualitative data) and survey pilot testing (n=10) ensured consistency, as recommended by Creswell (2014). Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the survey scales to ensure internal reliability using a threshold ( $\alpha > 0.7$ ). Considering the HCMC environment of this study, researchers' biases were documented to ensure reflexivity, as suggested by Nguyen (2024, p. 16).

### 3.6. Ethical Considerations

The Ho Chi Minh City Open University Review Board approved this study. Participants provided informed consent, and anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by using pseudonyms and storing data securely. Cultural sensitivity was signified by an informed consent form while recruiting the participants. Moreover, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by avoiding the collection of personally identifiable information such as personal data.

## 4. RESULTS

This paper, which was based on Cham Ethnic Culture as a Sustainable Tourism Development in Ho Chi Minh City, examined economic and socio-cultural factors. Qualitative interviews with the Cham dignitaries, a quantitative survey of 100 respondents (45 locals, 55 visitors) aggregated and collected in the period between 2023 and 2024, were used to collect data, as outlined in the methodology.

The results are arranged into three primary topics that fit the study's objectives: 1) the existing state and tourist potential of Cham cultural resources, 2) socio-cultural significance and community attitudes, and 3) economic contributions and sustainability issues. Each theme includes qualitative and quantitative findings, followed by a discussion of how they fit into the framework of sustainable tourism, authenticity, and sociocultural resilience (UNWTO, 2017; Cohen, 1979; Adger, 2000).

## 5. CURRENT STATUS AND TOURISM POTENTIAL OF CHAM CULTURAL RESOURCES

Interviews with Cham dignitaries suggested and indicated a diverse range of cultural resources in HCMC, including tangible and intangible heritage. The Cham Temple (Thánh Đường Chắm) in District 1 is a 1930s architectural monument in Champa and Islamic styles, while smaller prayer buildings can be visited in District 8 (Tuyen, 2024, pp. 38-49).

Festivals such as Rija Nugar (thanksgiving ceremony) and Ramadan are also listed as intangible heritage, as well as cuisine, such as thit nuong la lot (grilled pork in betel leaves) and banh xeo cham (cham-style pancakes) (Tuyen, 2024, pp. 54-68).

The values of cultural heritage, as stressed by Cham dignitaries through interviews, relate to their centuries-old traditions, but it is now quite known that the constraints of exploiting cultural heritage to cater to tourists are connected to insufficient infrastructure and promotions, absence of signs and

tour guides that are conversant with Cham and Vietnamese or English (Tuyen, 2024, p. 77).

The survey findings revealed a significant level of visitor interest in chain culture. Among the 55 tourists, 78% were more willing to have authentic cultural experiences as opposed to generic urban activities, such as visiting shopping malls, 65% were willing to visit the Cham Temple, and 58% were willing to attend Cham festivals.

It was also noted that 62% of the locals believe that cultural events are the most tourism-prepared assets, 55% of them believe in food, and 48% of them believe in architecture. However, just 35% of tourists were familiar with cham cultural sites before their visit, indicating a promotional deficiency (Tuyen, 2024, p. 160). According to historical documents and tourism reports, Cham Temple is a registered cultural heritage site; however, its 5,000 visitors per year are insignificant in comparison to popular destinations such as Notre-Dame Basilica, which welcomes over 200,000 visitors (Vietnam National Administration of Tourism, 2023).

These findings justify the possibility of chain culture becoming a distinct tourism product in HCMC and are in line with Butler's (1980) Butler Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) Model, which highlights the relevance of diversity in the process of development.

Cohen (1979) states that tourists want to experience authentic cultural ties with reality when they travel, and therefore, mosques, festivals, and food can offer authentic experiences. However, their underuse illustrates the gap between the integration of tourism and the availability of resources, a problem observed in urban ethnic tourism worldwide (Richards, 2018).

The 78% rate of tourists agreeing that cham cultural heritage is preserved is authentic shows the market demand that Ho Chi Minh City can meet; however, the 35% awareness rate shows that this potential has not been fully exploited, which is consistent with Smith's (2016) finding of a promotion gap in ethnic minority heritage tourism.

In contrast, rural Cham locations such as My Son attract more tourists because of their well-established infrastructure, Van Hana and Tuanb (N.D), indicating that HCMC might use comparable tactics (e.g., guided tours and cultural festivals). Yang and Wall's (2009) argument that ethnic tourism thrives when cultural integrity is maintained is consistent with qualitative emphasis on authenticity

However, the lack of infrastructure, as depicted by the interviews and survey analysis results, was found to be a major barrier that needs to be addressed

through investment to comprehend this potential.

## 6. SOCIO-CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

Authorities claim that Cham culture is a source of identity in HCMC, which enhances the unity of the community in the context of urbanization, as reflected by Nguyen (2024, p. 31). One of the elders is the opinion that these rituals maintain the connection between youth and the legacy of Champa. Festivals like Rija Nugar were underlined as critical to the generational transfer of practices, as revealed by Tuyen (2024, p. 68).

Nevertheless, dignitaries have suggested community initiatives to maintain authenticity, which has been subject to criticism regarding the cultural dilution in case of the excessive focus on show over the meaning of tourism (Tuyen, 2024, p. 80).

Among the 45 local people interviewed, 71% expressed that they believed that Cham culture should be promoted to make HCMC more diverse, and 67% stated that they would be willing to participate in tourism-related activities (such as culinary shows and guidance) as long as they had the required level of training (Nguyen, 2024, pp. 165-170). 82% of the visitors indicated that Cham culture should be promoted to make HCMC more diverse, and they obtained a high sociocultural value rating (A chi-square test showed that strong community buy-in was evident because a high correlation was observed between local support of preservation and willingness to engage in tourism ( $\chi^2 = 12.34$ ,  $p < 0.1$ ) (Tuyen, 2024, p. 170).

The resilience of Cham is reinforced by sociological studies such as Phu (2005), who perceives that they have implemented in urban life while upholding their unique customs. This trend is further supported by HCMC's multicultural policy framework (Tuyen, 2024, p. 14).

Cham culture's dual function as an identity anchor and tourism asset is consistent with Adger's (2000) sociocultural resilience concept, which holds that legacy protects communities from the stress of urban life. The proactive approach demonstrated by the 71% support for preservation contrasts with rural cham situations where residents are occasionally marginalized by external tourism development (Phan and Nguyen, 2020).

The community-based tourism (CBT) model thrives in this vibrant community, fueled by a remarkable 67% enthusiasm for participation. This fervent engagement has been developed as an influential strategy, especially among the H'Mong

people in the magnificent scenery of Sa Pa. Their obligation to share their rich culture and spectacular surroundings has not only altered tourism in the area but also strengthened their sense of identity, as discussed by Truong (2013). The significant chi-square finding ( $p < 0.1$ ) also supports this, which indicates that conservation initiatives tend to naturally inspire travelers' participation.

More than 82% of visitors agree that cham culture is valuable, which supports Richards' (2018) research on the contribution of cultural tourism to urban variety and strengthens HCMC's standing as a global center. However, as suggested by UNWTO (2017), dignitaries' concerns over commodification reaffirm Cohen's (1988) criticism of fake authenticity, calling for measures (such as cultural education for visitors) to preserve integrity.

## 7. ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS AND SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES

With opportunities for microbusinesses, such as food kiosks and handicraft sales, and job creation, such as guides and performers, dignitaries regard tourism as a potential economic lifeline (Tuyen, 2024, p. 87).

From this perspective, Tuyen (2024, p. 110) also articulated that "we require resources and skills to compete with big cities, which can also highlight issues of insufficient training as well as money. More than 60% of tourists are ready to spend more on high-quality experiences, including workshops, and spend on an average VND500,000 (/US 20) on cham-related experiences per visit (Tuyen, 2024, p. 150). It was estimated by locals that tourism with the help of infrastructure and other training could increase household income by 10-15% within a year (Tuyen, 2024, p. 165).

Nevertheless, 52% of the respondents stated promotions, whereas 68% of the respondents and 4% cited bad facilities as a hindrance. The Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism has stated that the tourism sector contributes 10% to the GDP of Ho Chi Minh City and that cultural tourism will be enhanced by 7-8% in the year (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2021). Although the current contribution of chain tourism is small, comparisons with rural chain locations indicate that investment might increase local revenue by 5-10% (Tuyen, 2024, p. 9).

Tourist spending of VND 500,000, along with local estimates of a 10-15% revenue increase, demonstrates that cham tourism has the potential to become a viable micro-economy in line with the UNWTO (2017) sustainability pillar of economic viability.

This is comparable to the Hmong in Sapa, where 20% of local revenue comes from tourism (Truong, 2013), indicating that HCMC refers to the size of benefits. Butler's (1980) rejuvenation phase, in which premium cultural activities drive sales, is supported by a 60% willingness to pay more. Nonetheless, structural constraints were highlighted by 68% of respondents, citing infrastructure limitations, and 52% indicating marketing shortcomings, which is consistent with Smith's (2016) research on the difficulties faced by urban ethnic tourism.

An important constituent of sustainable CBT is capacity building through financing and training, which has also been evidenced by the qualitative findings suggested by Adams (2006). Economic benefits risk fleeting if issues are not addressed, as is the case with overreliant rural chain tourism (Tung, 2024).

Although small, the anticipated 5-10% revenue increase in Vietnam's 2030 objectives (Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, 2021) establishes cham tourism as a specialized economic contributor to HCMC under sustainable management.

## 8. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Cham culture is a diverse asset of Ho Chi Minh City, as evidenced by its combination of cultural, social, and economic sustainability. In line with Richards' (2018) urban tourism trends, visitor preparedness, as evidenced by visitor interest (78%) and community support (71%), positions it to expand Ho Chi Minh City's offerings. However, as the UNWTO (2017) highlights, sustainability depends on reducing barriers related to infrastructure and knowledge.

The proposed CBT model strikes a balance between economic growth and authenticity by combining workforce training, infrastructure upgrading, and cultural promotion (such as festivals), while building resilience (Cohen, 1979; Adger, 2000).

It can be practically applied to HCMC officials making investments in the accessibility of the sites, educating residents of Cham to be agents of Cham culture, and advancing Cham history with more popular attractions.

This implies that the role of urban minority history in sustainable development should be emphasized; therefore, it promotes ethnic tourism on a scholarly basis, as well as offering an example that could be followed in other cities such as Bangkok and Jakarta.

The long-term implications and synergies of rural and urban chain tourism should be investigated in

future studies.

## 9. CONCLUSION

### 9.1. Summary Of the Findings

Through the integration of socio-cultural preservation and economic growth, this study has illustrated the considerable potential of Cham ethnic culture as a resource for sustainable tourist development in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). From the survey of the topic and learn more from the analysis of scientists, according to Tuyen (2024), 78% of tourists want authentic experiences, while 71% of locals support heritage preservation.

These results show that there is a rich picture of tangible, Cham Mosque, intangible, Rija Nugar festival, and Cham cuisine culture assets. These materials position cham culture as an efficient way of enhancing HCMC tourism services, and it aligns with the 2030 tourism goals of Vietnam and the System of Butler (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle model.

In a sociocultural sense, chain heritage strengthens community resilience, and Adger's (2000) paradigm is supported by the high local willingness (67%) to participate in tourism activities. Infrastructure shortages were argued by 68% of the surveyed participants and insufficient awareness was highlighted by 35% of the tourists), which signifies a present challenge, spending by tourists (VND 500,000 per visit) and expected 10-15% growths show feasibility in terms of economics.

### 9.2. Limitations And Policy Implications

The limitations of this study include its short-term data (2023-2024) and HCMC-specific focus, which highlight the need for future longitudinal studies and comparisons across rural and urban areas.

These results demonstrate the immediate need for HCMC authorities to take measures. Unless infrastructure and marketing are invested in, chain tourism runs the risk of becoming a niche market, underutilizing assets, and not being able to reach the desired tourism.

The key solutions to achieve the potential in the future and enhance the competitiveness of Ho Chi Minh City globally while maintaining its ethnic landscape are to empower the cham population by training and supporting their policies.

Furthermore, this study is expected to help foreign tourism investors seize opportunities when there is information that Ho Chi Minh City, in particular, and Vietnam in general, are welcoming investments that connect and develop the tourism

industry.

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