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EXPLOITING LOCAL CULTURAL RESOURCES TO DEVELOP CULTURAL INDUSTRIES AND CREATIVE TOURISM: THE CASE STUDY OF HA TINH PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

In the context of the creative economy playing a more and more important role in local development, this article analyzes the potential of exploiting local cultural resources to develop cultural industries and creative tourism, through the case study of Ha Tinh Province. The purpose of the study is to clarify the gap between resource potential and exploitation efficiency, and propose an approach to the creative ecosystem based on the cultural resources. According to the research result, although Ha Tinh possesses rich cultural resources, including tangible and intangible heritage, traditional crafts, and indigenous knowledge, their exploitation remains fragmented, lacks coordination, and mainly focuses on the model of preservation or traditional sightseeing tourism. There are three core matters, including: (i) the digitalization of heritage is archival in nature, still not creating creative value; (ii) the ecosystem of creative tourism has yet to be formed due to a lack of connection between the stakeholders; (iii) the cultural policy is not based on evidence, limiting the ability to coordinate resources. Following that basis, the article affirms that it is necessary to shift from a mindset of “owning cultural resources” to “designing creative ecosystems based on cultural resources”. This approach contributes to a theoretical framework in the content of both cultural industries and creative tourism, and also provides policy implications for sustainable local development.

KEYWORDS: Local cultural resources; Ha Tinh Province; cultural industry; creative tourism; creative ecosystem; heritage digitalization; cultural management.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization and the transition to a knowledge-based economy, cultural and creative industries are increasingly recognized as an important pillar of sustainable development, not only at the national but also at the local level. Increasing the role of culture in the contemporary economic structure reflects a fundamental shift in development thinking: from viewing culture mainly as a symbolic realm of preservation and consumption, to considering culture as a productive resource, a form of “soft capital” capable of creating economic, social, and identity value. In that trend, exploiting local cultural resources becomes a key strategy to connect heritage preservation with innovation, promote tourism development, and enhance the competitiveness of localities. From the theoretical aspect, many studies of the cultural industries have placed a foundation for understanding the culture as a system of production - distribution - consumption, in which value is created through the combination of creativity, technology, and the market. The approaches of the creative economy then continue to expand this analytical framework when emphasizing the role of knowledge, innovation, and creativity in transforming cultural resources into high-value products and services. At the same time, in the tourism field, shifting from traditional cultural tourism to creative tourism has transformed the way to organize experiences, from a passive sightseeing model to one of participation, interaction, and co-creation between tourists and local communities. These contributions have created an important theoretical foundation, which helps to redefine the relationship between culture, economy, and local development. Although the above approaches have achieved much progress, significant gaps in theory and practice still exist. *Firstly*, many studies focus on identifying and classifying cultural resources, but have not fully analyzed the mechanisms of transformation from “resources” to “creative ecosystems”, where factors such as institutions, networks of stakeholders, technology, and markets interact mutually to create value. *Secondly*, the studies on the cultural industries and creative tourism usually develop following two relatively independent lines: one emphasizing industry structure and policy, the other emphasizing experience and co-creation. The lack of an integrated theoretical framework has limited the ability to explain local cases where cultural resources are abundant but have not been effectively transformed

into economic value. *Thirdly*, from the practical aspect, many studies focus on creative cities, heritage cities, or branded destinations, while provinces, especially in the context of Southeast Asia, have not been fully examined. Although these spaces contain diverse cultural resources, the capacity to exploit them is still limited.

In that context, Ha Tinh province can be considered a typical example of the difference between resource potential and exploitation efficiency. This locality possesses a rich and diverse system of cultural resources, including tangible heritage, intangible heritage, folklore, performing arts, memories of famous people, traditional festivals, traditional crafts, and indigenous knowledge. These factors not only reflect the historical depth and cultural identity of the locality but also hold great potential to develop the cultural industries and products of creative tourism. However, in practice, exploiting these resources remains fragmented, lacking coordination, and largely limited to isolated conservation activities or the development of traditional sightseeing tourism. Cultural and tourism products are still monotonous, lacking creativity and failing to generate high added value, while the connection between the government, businesses, the community, and the creative sector is not good. Therefore, the problem is not only due to a lack of resources, but also mainly due to the way of organization, management, and development thinking. Based on the above observations, this article approaches the case study of Ha Tinh province to analyze the potential for exploiting local cultural resources in relation to the development of cultural industries and creative tourism. Based on a synthesis and critique of previous studies, the article argues that to minimize the gap between the potential and practice, it requires a fundamental shift from a thinking of “owning cultural resources” to a thinking of “designing creative ecosystems based on cultural resources”. In this ecosystem, cultural resources are no longer considered as static entities to be preserved, but become the foundation for the processes of creativity, production, distribution, and experience, which is operated through the connection of many stakeholders in the value chain. The contribution of this article is demonstrated via three main aspects. *Firstly*, from the theoretical aspect, this article proposes an integrated approach between cultural industries and creative tourism through the concept of a creative ecosystem based on the cultural resources, thereby contributing to improving the current separation between the two research lines. *Secondly*, from the practical aspect,

the article provides the evidence from a locality at a provincial level in Vietnam, where its context is still little studied in the international documents, to clarify the conditions and barriers in the process of transforming cultural resources into economic value. Thirdly, from the policy aspect, the article suggests directions to restructure the way to exploit the cultural resources following the direction of connection, creativity, and sustainability, thereby contributing to a broader discussion on developing the culture based on the place in the context of developing economies.

2. METHOD AND DATA FOR RESEARCH

This study is conducted following a qualitative approach, combined with descriptive analysis, to clarify the way to exploit the local cultural resources in relation to the development of cultural industries and creative tourism in Ha Tinh. The reason for choosing the qualitative method is due to the specific characteristics of the research subject, which relate to complex socio-cultural phenomena that are difficult to quantify and require interpretation in depth and context.

The article uses the method of researching the case study, in which Ha Tinh is selected as a typical case of localities rich in cultural resources but not yet effectively transforming them into creative economic value. This approach allows for analyzing deeply the interaction between cultural resources, institutions, stakeholders, and exploitation practices within a specific space, thereby drawing implications that can be generalized. Research data is collected from two main sources: secondary data and primary data. Firstly, secondary data includes policy documents, reports of local cultural and tourism development, statistical documents, previous research works, as well as materials related to heritage, festivals, traditional crafts, and cultural activities in Ha Tinh. This data source helps to build an overall picture of the cultural resource system and the situation of exploitation in recent years. Secondly, the primary data is collected through semi-structured interviews and field observation. Interviews are conducted with main stakeholders, including cultural and tourism management officials, tourism business representatives, artisans, heritage practitioners, and some members of the local community. The content of interviews focuses on perceptions of the value of cultural resources, current methods of exploitation, challenges, as well as expectations and suggestions for developing the cultural industry and creative tourism. Moreover, field observation at various historical places, festivals, craft villages, and cultural

spaces supplements data on cultural practices and tourism experiences in reality.

Data is processed through content analysis and thematic analysis. Firstly, documents and interview transcripts have been coded following the key theme groups such as: types of cultural resources, exploitation forms, involvement level of stakeholders, value created, and barriers to transformation. These themes are then compared and contrasted to identify patterns and general trends. At the same time, descriptive analysis is used to systematize the types of cultural resources, current exploitation forms, and the development level of activities related to the local cultural industries and tourism. This approach clarifies the gap between potential and practice, and also provides a foundation for proposing directions and solutions. To enhance reliability and validity, the study applies the principle of data triangulation, combining multiple sources and different data collection methods. Because the study focuses on a specific case, the result is more deeply analytical than generalizing. However, the findings from the case study of Ha Tinh can still provide important theoretical and practical suggestions for localities with similar conditions.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From the perspective of local sustainable development theory, the research result shows that exploiting cultural resources in Ha Tinh depends not only on the richness of the heritage but also, more importantly, on the capacity to transform these resources into sustainable value structures, which are capable of maintaining long-term economic, social, and cultural sustainability. There are three prominent analytical axes, including: digitalization of intangible heritage, the formation of a creative tourism ecosystem, and governance capacity based on evidence, which demonstrate their reciprocal relationship in creating an integrated development model.

3.1. Digitalization of Intangible Heritage

In the context of digital transformation and local sustainable development, digitalization of intangible cultural heritage is considered a significant pillar in restructuring the methods of preserving and exploiting cultural resources. Based on the research result in Ha Tinh, although this locality possesses a rich system of intangible heritage, including folk songs, traditional festivals, folk knowledge, and community cultural practices, the digitalization still focuses on the documentation level, lacking

development towards the integration of technology, innovation, and the market. From the practical aspect, current digitization activities mainly concentrate on recording, storing, and building databases of cultural heritage. This is a necessary first step that contributes to the preservation of cultural memory and minimizes the risk of its disappearance in the context of social change. However, this is still a “static” approach, while heritage is considered a storage object rather than a resource capable of regenerating value. This reflects a common limitation in heritage governance at some localities: digitalization is understood as a technical activity, detached from strategies for developing the cultural industry and creative tourism.

From the perspective of local sustainable development theory, the digitalization of intangible heritage should be repositioned as a process of “remediation”, in which cultural content is transformed into a digital environment to expand accessibility, enhance interaction, and create conditions for new forms of creativity. This requires a shift from a digital model for preservation to one for value extraction, where heritage becomes the foundation for creative cultural products and services, such as virtual reality experiences, online learning platforms, digital storytelling applications, or multimedia content. The research result also indicates that one of the major barriers to this process is the lack of integrated capacity between the fields of technology, culture, and experience design. The shortage of human resources capable of “translating” heritage into a digital language often makes the digitized products poor in interactivity and fails to attract users, especially young generations and international tourists. Moreover, the lack of coordination between management agencies, technology companies, and heritage practice communities also limits the ability to develop models of sustainable exploitation. Another notable matter is the risk of “framing” heritage within rigid digitalization frameworks, which decreases the inherent dynamism and transformative nature of intangible heritage. This requires an approach to digitalization as an open process, allowing communities to participate, co-create, and reinterpret heritage in new contexts. In other words, digitalization should not “freeze” heritage, but rather create conditions for heritage to “live” continuously in the digital space. From the above analysis, it can be affirmed that the digitalization of intangible heritage in Ha Tinh only truly contributes to sustainable development when it is integrated into a broader creative ecosystem, where technology is not just a

storage tool but becomes the infrastructure for innovation. This requires a synchronized transformation in thinking, capacity, and institutions to turn heritage from a “potential resource” to an “operational resource” in the local innovation economy.

3.2. The model of “creative tourism ecosystem”.

Based on research results, tourism activities in Ha Tinh currently still mainly focus on the model of visiting historical sites, festivals, and scenic spots, with a limited experience level and participation from tourists. The core factors of creative tourism, such as co-creation, personalized experiences, and interaction with local communities, have not been fully exploited. From a theoretical aspect, a creative tourism ecosystem requires a connection between cultural resources, practice communities, creative businesses, technological infrastructure, and supporting policy mechanisms. However, in Ha Tinh, these stakeholders still operate separately and lack a mechanism of effective connection. This is the reason why a situation of “rich in resources but poor in products” happens, where heritage has not been transformed into creative experiences with high economic value.

The result also shows the great potential in developing experiential models based on heritage, such as folk song workshops, craft village tourism, culinary experiences, and cultural storytelling associated with famous people. However, realizing these models requires a shift from an exploitation thinking to a thinking of designing experience, where tourists are not only consumers but also participants in the process of value creation.

Therefore, the creative tourism ecosystem is not only an economic structure, but also a socio-cultural structure where stakeholders interact mutually to create sustainable value.

3.3. Governance capability and policy based on evidence

In local sustainable development theory, governance capability and designing policy play a decisive role in transforming cultural resources into sustainable socio-economic value. Based on the research result in Ha Tinh, although this locality has made significant efforts in heritage preservation and tourism development, the current model of cultural governance is still largely administrative, fragmented, and lacks a data foundation to support decision-making. This leads to a gap between the objectives of policies and implementation effectiveness, and limits the potential for forming an

integrated ecosystem of the cultural industry. One of the prominent features of the current governance system is the prioritization of conservation within regulations, while mechanisms to promote creativity, inter-sectoral linkages, and the testing of new models are still limited. Cultural and tourism policies are often built in a highly planned manner, lacking flexibility and failing to fully reflect market dynamics and the experiential needs of tourists. Moreover, lacking effective coordination between management levels and fields (culture, tourism, technology, and education) decreases the ability to mobilize resources and coordinate the action of the whole organization. From the perspective of modern governance, evidence-based policy is considered a crucial tool for improving the quality of decision-making and optimizing the impact of public intervention. However, the study also shows that collecting, analyzing, and using data in the cultural field in Ha Tinh are still limited. Current data are primarily descriptive statistics, lacking in-depth analysis of user behavior, the economic effectiveness of cultural products, or the participation level of the community. The lack of specific measurable indicators also makes the process of evaluating policy superficial and difficult to adjust promptly to the changes in practice.

Data limitations lead to a broader problem, which is the lack of adaptive governance. While the creative ecosystem requires the ability to experiment, learn, and adapt continuously, the current management model still depends on controlling and following the procedure. This not only reduces the dynamism of local initiatives but also limits the participation of the private sector, the creative community, and other non-state stakeholders. However, the research result also points out many significant potential for transformation. Developing cultural and tourism data platforms that integrate information on resources, tourist behavior, and operational efficiency could provide a basis for designing more flexible and accurate policies. At the same time, promoting multi-stakeholder governance among the government, businesses, communities, and creative sectors can contribute to the formation of sustainable cultural and tourism value chains. Therefore, it can be argued that improving governance capacity in Ha Tinh is not only improving administrative efficiency, but also a process of restructuring the decision-making system following the approaches of data-driven, continuous learning, and co-creation. In this case study, the cultural policy should be considered as a tool for building an ecosystem, rather than merely a framework for regulating activities. Only that, cultural resources can be effectively integrated

into local development strategies, contributing to inclusive and sustainable growth.

3.4. Discussion

Throughout the above three analysis axes, including: digitalization of heritage, the creative tourism ecosystem, and governance capability based on evidence, a core matter defined is that exploiting cultural resources in Ha Tinh is currently not placed within an integrated development framework, where technology, creativity, and institutions operate together as organic components of an ecosystem. In local sustainable development theory, it can be affirmed that the lack of connection between these three factors is the main reason for the long gap between resource potential and practical exploitation efficiency.

Firstly, if digitalization of heritage only focuses on storage and preservation, it will not be enough to create added value, especially in the context of a creative economy that requires the ability to reuse and restructure cultural content. When lacking a connection to experience design and the market, digitized data becomes a “static resource,” not participating in the cultural production-consumption cycle. This not only reduces the effectiveness of investment in digital transformation but also misses opportunities to expand access to heritage to new public groups, including the young generation and international tourists.

Secondly, although creative tourism in Ha Tinh has a rich base in resources, it has not yet developed into a complete ecosystem due to a lack of structural supporting elements. When there are no digital platforms and data to analyze tourist behavior, personalize experiences, and optimize products, tourism activities face difficulty in surpassing traditional sightseeing models. As a result, the economic value generated is limited, while the potential for extending tourist time and increasing spending is still not working well.

Thirdly, if the cultural and tourism policy is not based on evidence, it will be difficult to effectively coordinate the diverse resources involved in developing a creative ecosystem. Lacking data and analytical tools not only reduces the quality of decision-making but also limits the ability to monitor, evaluate, and adjust policy during implementation. This leads to development initiatives that are short-term, uncoordinated, and difficult to create a sustainable impact.

Conversely, when these three elements are integrated in a unified development framework, they can create a close and self-reinforcing value cycle. In

this cycle, the digitalization of heritage provides a data and content platform, and also opens up possibilities for reproducing and distributing value in the digital environment. On that basis, the creative tourism ecosystem transforms cultural content into diverse, interactive, and co-creative experiences, thereby generating economic value and enhancing the attractiveness of the destination. At the same time, evidence-based governance plays a coordinating role, ensuring that policy decisions are built on reliable data, accurately reflect market needs and local capabilities, thereby enhancing the adaptability and sustainability of the entire system. More importantly, this integration is not only technical or organizational, but also reflects a profound shift in development thinking. Instead of approaching cultural resources as an available entity to be exploited, the approach of the ecosystem requires “re-designing” these resources in relation to technology, markets, and communities. This includes restructuring the role of stakeholders, from the government and businesses to local communities and creative sectors, towards collaboration, co-creation, and value sharing. Therefore, the study affirms that the development of cultural industries and creative tourism in Ha Tinh – as well as other localities with similar conditions – should be considered as a process of restructuring the development ecosystem, where digitalization, creativity, and governance are not separate fields, but closely interconnected pillars. Only when cultural resources are integrated into an ecosystem as analyzed and mentioned above can they be transformed from “potential resources” into “operational resources”, contributing to economic growth, strengthening cultural identity, and enhancing the long-term adaptability of the locality.

4. CONCLUSION

This study has systematically analyzed the relationship between the local cultural resources and the potential for developing cultural industries as well as creative tourism in Ha Tinh province from the perspective of local sustainable development theory. Based on the result, although Ha Tinh possesses rich and diverse cultural resources, current exploitation is still fragmented, focusing on individual preservation and traditional sightseeing tourism, and has not yet formed a creative ecosystem capable of generating high added value. The three main analysis axes, including digitalization of heritage, the creative tourism ecosystem, and governance capability based on evidence, have clarified the structural barriers in the process of transforming resources into sustainable economic and cultural value. On that

basis, the study affirms that developing the cultural industry and creative tourism in localities like Ha Tinh requires a fundamental shift from the thinking of “owning cultural resources” to a thinking of “designing creative ecosystems based on cultural resources”. This is not only an adjustment in policy, but also comprehensively restructuring of how cultural resources are organized, managed, and operated in the context of the creative economy. *For the science aspect*, the study contributes to perfecting the integrated theoretical framework between the cultural industry and creative tourism, through proposing the approach of a creative ecosystem based on cultural resources. This approach helps to improve the divide between two relatively independent lines of research, and also supplements empirical evidence from a province where the context is rarely mentioned in international studies. Moreover, the study also contributes to broadening the discussion on place-based cultural development, especially in the context of developing economies and suburban areas. *For the practical and policy aspect*, the research result provides a lot of significant implications. Firstly, it is necessary to build a strategy of digitalization of heritage following the integrated direction of designing experience and developing creative products, instead of focusing on data storage only. Secondly, it should promote the formation of a creative ecosystem through enhancing the connection of stakeholders, developing experiential products, and technology applications. Thirdly, it is necessary to enhance the capability of cultural governance based on evidence, through developing the data system, analysis tools, and a flexible mechanism to evaluate policy. These directions are not only significant for Ha Tinh but can also serve as a reference for localities with similar conditions in formulating policies for cultural and tourism development.

However, the study has some specific limitations. Firstly, due to using the qualitative research method and only focusing on a specific case study, the ability to generalize the results is limited. Secondly, the data is mainly descriptive and interpretive, which lacks a sufficient quantitative analysis to measure specific impacts. Thirdly, the research scope has not deeply analyzed tourist behavior or the economic effectiveness of specific models due to limitations in data and research time. From these limitations, the studies in the future can be expanded in a lot of directions. Firstly, it is necessary to develop comparative studies across different localities to test and perfect the theoretical framework of the creative ecosystem based on cultural resources. Secondly,

there should be a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to better measure the socio-economic impact of creative cultural and tourism industry models. Thirdly, it needs to deeply analyze the role of digital technology, especially big data and digital platforms, in restructuring the cultural value chain. Finally, future studies should pay more attention to the role of the local community and the

form of co-creation in ensuring the sustainability and inclusiveness of cultural development. In overall view, this study contributes to affirming that local cultural resources only truly become a driving force for development when it is integrated into an interdisciplinary creative ecosystem, where technology, innovation, and governance operate together as pillars of sustainable development.

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