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Cultural Industries and Their Development in Vietnam: Economic Transformation, Cultural Value, and Creative Potential

Nhung Tran Thi Thu

Hanoi University of Culture, Vietnam;
tranthithunhung0710@gmail.com

Huong Nguyen Thi Lan

Central Commission for Communication and Education,
Vietnam

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Abstract

Cultural industries have emerged as an increasingly important component of contemporary economic development, by bringing together cultural expression, creativity, technology, intellectual property, and market mechanisms. Unlike traditional industries, cultural industries generate economic value not only through material production but also through symbolic meanings, cultural identities, knowledge, and creative content. The expansion of digital technologies, streaming platforms, social media, artificial intelligence, and global cultural markets has further transformed the production, distribution, and consumption of cultural products. These developments have created additional opportunities for developing countries to participate in global value chains while simultaneously creating challenges related to cultural identity, intellectual property protection, market concentration, inequality, and the commercialization of culture. Vietnam represents an important case in this transformation because the country possesses considerable cultural diversity, traditional craft heritage, performing arts, historical resources, and a rapidly expanding digital economy. Since the adoption of the National Strategy for the Develop-

ment of Cultural Industries to 2020, with a Vision to 2030, Vietnam has increasingly recognized cultural industries as an economic sector capable of contributing to employment, economic growth, tourism, national branding, and international integration. This article examines the theoretical foundations of cultural industries, analyzes their economic and social significance, evaluates the development of cultural industries in Vietnam, and discusses the opportunities and challenges created by digitalization and globalization. The article argues that Vietnam should move beyond viewing culture primarily as a field of preservation or public expenditure and increasingly recognize culture as a productive resource while maintaining cultural diversity, public value, and social inclusion. The future development of Vietnamese cultural industries therefore requires an integrated ecosystem connecting creativity, education, technology, intellectual property protection, finance, entrepreneurship, cultural heritage, and international markets.

Keywords: cultural industries; creative economy; cultural economy; Vietnam; digital transformation; creative industries; cultural policy; intellectual property; cultural heritage; sustainable development

1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between culture and economic development has become increasingly significant in the twenty-first century. For much of the industrial era, economic development was primarily associated with manufacturing, natural resources, physical infrastructure, finance, and technological production. Culture was often regarded as a separate sphere associated with education, entertainment, heritage, and public institutions, rather than as an important component of economic activity. However, the expansion of media, information technology, digital platforms, design, entertainment, tourism, fashion, advertising, and creative services has fundamentally changed this relationship. Cultural production has increasingly been organized through market mechanisms, intellectual property systems, digital technologies, and interconnected global networks.

The concept of cultural industries emerged partly from critical analyses of the commercialization and mass production of culture. Adorno and Horkheimer [1] famously used the term “culture industry” to criticize the industrialization of cultural production and the tendency of cultural products to become standardized commodities. Their argument emphasized the tension between artistic autonomy and commercial logic. In contemporary economic contexts, however, cultural industries are no longer limited to the mass entertainment industries criticized by early cultural theorists. They include a much broader range of activities such as film, music, publishing, design, fashion, advertising, architecture, performing arts, crafts, television, radio, games, digital media, and cultural tourism.

The expansion of cultural industries has also contributed to the emergence and growing prominence of the broader concept of the creative economy. According to Howkins [2], creativity can become an economic resource when creative ideas are transformed into products and services protected by intellectual property. This perspective represents an important shift because it recognizes human creativity as a productive economic asset rather than treating it solely as an artistic or cultural characteristic.

The contemporary creative economy has become increasingly important in international trade, a development documented in successive UNCTAD assessments of creative-sector trade and development [3, 4]. UNCTAD [5] reports that creative services exports reached approximately US\$1.4 trillion in 2022, while creative goods exports reached approximately US\$713 billion. These figures illustrate the extent to which creative activities are now integrated into international economic exchange instead of remaining confined to domestic cultural markets. The expansion of digital technologies has accelerated this process by allowing creators to distribute cultural products across borders, often at relatively low marginal distribution costs.

Digitalization has profoundly transformed the relationships among cultural producers, intermediaries, platforms, and consumers. A musician can distribute music through global streaming platforms without relying exclusively on established record companies and traditional distribution arrangements. A filmmaker can reach international audiences through digital platforms. Designers can sell products through electronic commerce, while independent creators can use social media to establish global audiences. UNCTAD [5] identifies digitalization and artificial intelligence as major forces reshaping the creative economy because these technologies influence production, distribution, marketing, and consumption.

These developments are particularly relevant to developing countries, for which creative industries may support economic diversification while also presenting substantial institutional and financing challenges. Traditional industrialization frequently requires substantial investment in capital, physical infrastructure, energy, and natural resources. Cultural and creative industries can sometimes provide alternative development pathways because creativity, cultural heritage, local knowledge, and human skills can function as important economic resources. This does not, however, mean that cultural industries can be developed without sustained investment. On the contrary, successful creative economies require sophisticated institutions, intellectual property protection, education, financing, infrastructure, digital technologies, and international networks. Nevertheless, cultural industries provide developing countries with opportunities to transform local cultural resources into products and services with international market value.

Vietnam is particularly well positioned to explore this potential because of the breadth and diversity of its cultural resources. The country possesses a rich cultural heritage shaped by its long history, ethnic diversity, traditional crafts, performing arts, literature, cuisine, architecture, and distinct regional cultural identities. Vietnam also has a large young population, expanding internet connectivity, growing consumer markets, and an increasingly dynamic digital economy. These characteristics provide a potentially strong foundation for cultural and creative industries.

The Vietnamese government has formally recognized this potential. Decision No. 1755/QĐ-TTg, adopted in 2016, established the National Strategy for the Development of Cultural Industries to 2020, with a Vision to 2030. The strategy explicitly defines cultural industries as an important component of the national economy and emphasizes creativity, science and technology, intellectual property, market development, and international integration [6]. The strategy represents a significant institutional change because it treats culture not only as a field of social development but also as a potential economic sector.

UNESCO [7] has further emphasized that Vietnam possesses considerable cultural and creative potential but that this

potential remains underdeveloped, particularly among young people. The organization notes that fewer than 2.5 percent of young people in Vietnam work in cultural and creative industries, suggesting a substantial gap between cultural potential and participation in creative employment.

The central argument of this article is that cultural industries can become an important component of Vietnam's future economic development, but this potential cannot be realized simply by increasing cultural production. Vietnam needs to develop a comprehensive creative ecosystem in which culture, education, technology, entrepreneurship, intellectual property, finance, tourism, and international trade reinforce each other. At the same time, commercialization must not undermine cultural diversity, social inclusion, artistic quality, or the public value of culture.

The article proceeds from this introduction to four substantive sections and a conclusion. The first substantive section introduces the theoretical foundations and distinguishing characteristics of cultural industries. The second examines their economic, social, and cultural significance. The third analyzes the development of cultural industries in Vietnam, including the opportunities and challenges associated with digitalization and globalization. The fourth proposes strategic directions for the sustainable development of Vietnamese cultural industries. The conclusion draws together the main implications for cultural policy, economic transformation, and the protection of cultural value.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

The theoretical history of cultural industries is closely associated with debates about the relationship between culture and capitalism. Adorno and Horkheimer [1] argued that modern capitalism transformed cultural production into an industrial process characterized by standardization, commodification, and mass consumption. From this perspective, cultural products could become commodities whose production was increasingly governed by commercial imperatives.

The critical tradition remains relevant because cultural industries continue to face tensions between creativity and commercialization, as emphasized in more recent accounts of cultural production and its institutional organization [8, 9]. Commercial success can provide resources for artists and cultural organizations, but excessive market pressure may encourage producers to reproduce formulas that have already proven commercially successful. This can reduce cultural diversity and encourage homogenization.

Nevertheless, contemporary cultural industries cannot be understood entirely through the negative concept of cultural commodification. Cultural products can simultaneously possess economic and cultural value. A film, for example, may generate revenue while also communicating historical memory and national identity. A traditional handicraft may function simultaneously as a commercial product, an expression of community identity, and a representation of cultural heritage.

Throsby [10] therefore emphasizes the multidimensional nature of cultural value. Cultural goods possess economic value, but they may also possess aesthetic, spiritual, social, historical, symbolic, and authenticity values. This distinction is especially important for countries such as Vietnam, where cultural resources are deeply connected with historical communities and traditional practices. Cultural industries should consequently be understood as sectors in which creativity and cultural meaning are transformed into economic value without necessarily eliminating their cultural significance. The challenge for cultural policy is to create conditions in which economic and cultural values can coexist.

The concept of creative industries expanded considerably during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The British Department for Culture, Media and Sport [11] played an important role in popularizing the concept by defining creative industries as activities based on individual creativity, skill, and talent that have the potential to generate wealth and employment through intellectual property.

This approach helped shift attention from culture understood primarily as a subsidized social activity toward culture recognized as an economic resource. Creative workers, designers, musicians, filmmakers, architects, writers, software developers, and other professionals increasingly became recognized as contributors to economic growth.

Florida [12] further popularized the concept of the "creative class," arguing that economic competitiveness increasingly depends on workers whose primary function involves generating new ideas, technologies, designs, and creative solutions. Although the creative-class thesis has been criticized for overstating the role of particular urban professionals, it helped establish creativity as an important component of contemporary economic geography.

Creative industries also demonstrate the importance of intangible assets. Unlike conventional manufacturing, in which physical capital and raw materials often dominate production, creative production depends heavily on ideas, knowledge, reputation, design, storytelling, brands, and intellectual property. These boundaries remain difficult to measure consistently across national statistical systems [13]. This makes copyright, trademarks, and other forms of intellectual property protection particularly important for creators, distributors, and cultural enterprises. UNCTAD [5] defines the creative economy through the interaction between human creativity, ideas, intellectual property, knowledge, and technology. This approach captures the increasingly broad nature of creative economic activity and recognizes that cultural production now intersects with software, advertising, architecture, games, research, digital media, and other knowledge-intensive sectors.

Several characteristics distinguish cultural industries from traditional economic sectors.

First, cultural industries depend heavily on creativity. Human imagination, artistic ability, storytelling, design, and

cultural knowledge constitute core productive resources. This means that investment in human capital is fundamental.

Second, cultural products frequently possess symbolic value. Consumers do not purchase only the physical characteristics of a product but also its meaning, identity, aesthetic quality, and cultural associations. Bourdieu [14] demonstrates how cultural consumption is connected with social distinction and symbolic capital. Third, cultural industries are characterized by substantial uncertainty about consumer preferences and future demand. It is difficult to predict which film will become successful, which song will become popular, or which fashion trend will dominate the market. This creates substantial commercial risk.

Fourth, many cultural products are protected by intellectual property rights, although the scope and enforceability of those rights vary. Copyright provides creators with economic incentives by granting legal control over the reproduction and commercialization of creative works. Fifth, cultural industries operate within increasingly interconnected global markets. Digital platforms allow cultural products to cross borders quickly, meaning that creators compete not only in domestic markets but also for international attention.

Sixth, cultural industries are increasingly digital. Streaming, social media, online gaming, digital publishing, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and electronic commerce have transformed the cultural production process. Taken together, these characteristics mean that cultural industries require policy frameworks adapted to their distinctive cultural and economic functions, rather than simply applying approaches designed for manufacturing or agriculture. Cultural policy must combine economic policy, education policy, technology policy, intellectual property law, competition policy, tourism policy, and urban development.

3. THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

Cultural industries have become an important source of economic activity and potential growth because they generate value from creativity, knowledge, intellectual property, and cultural resources. Their contribution extends beyond direct revenue because cultural production generates demand in related sectors such as tourism, hospitality, transportation, retail, advertising, telecommunications, and education.

UNCTAD [5] reports that the creative economy contributes between 0.5 percent and 7.3 percent of GDP across countries included in its international survey, although differences in definitions make direct comparisons difficult. This variation also reflects differences in definitions, data coverage, and national institutions, all of which influence how the economic contribution of cultural activities is recorded. Cultural industries can also support economic diversification. Countries dependent on agriculture, natural resources, or low-cost manufacturing face structural vulnerabilities when global demand changes. Creative industries can provide additional sources of income based on human capital and cultural assets.

For Vietnam, diversification is particularly important because the country's economic development has historically relied heavily on manufacturing, exports, foreign investment, and increasingly services. Cultural industries offer an opportunity to develop higher-value service activities connected to domestic cultural resources. Cultural industries are labor-intensive in terms of creativity and knowledge. They require artists, designers, programmers, writers, performers, producers, managers, marketers, technicians, researchers, curators, architects, and other professionals.

UNESCO [15] estimates that cultural and creative industries account for approximately 6.2 percent of global employment. This indicates that creative activities are not marginal sources of employment but form a substantial component of the global labor market.

For young people, cultural industries can provide alternative employment opportunities. Young workers often possess strong digital skills and familiarity with social media, digital content, games, audiovisual production, and online entrepreneurship. However, creative employment can also be precarious because many creators work as freelancers or through project-based arrangements. The development of cultural industries therefore requires not only creative education but also professional management skills, together with access to markets, clear contractual protections, and sustainable working conditions. Artists who wish to commercialize their work need knowledge of branding, contracts, copyright, marketing, finance, digital platforms, and international markets.

Cultural industries have an important role in shaping national identity and international perceptions. Countries increasingly use cinema, music, fashion, food, tourism, architecture, and design to communicate national images.

The international success of South Korean popular culture provides a useful comparative example. Film, television, music, fashion, and digital content have contributed to South Korea's international cultural visibility and have generated economic benefits in tourism, consumer goods, and services.

Vietnam possesses diverse cultural assets but has not yet achieved international cultural visibility on a comparable scale. Vietnamese cinema, cuisine, traditional music, fashion, handicrafts, and tourism have significant international potential, but they require stronger branding, production quality, distribution networks, and international marketing. Cultural industries can therefore contribute to what may be described as cultural soft power. Nye [16] argues that soft power derives from the ability to attract rather than simply compel others. Cultural products can create attraction by presenting narratives, lifestyles, values, and identities to international audiences.

Cultural tourism is one of the most direct connections between culture and economic development. Museums, historical sites, festivals, traditional villages, architecture, food, performing arts, and cultural landscapes can attract domestic and international tourists. The economic impact of cultural tourism extends considerably beyond entrance fees or direct expenditure at heritage attractions. Visitors spend money on accommodation, transportation, restaurants, handicrafts, entertainment, and retail. Cultural tourism can therefore create multiplier effects in local economies.

Vietnam has considerable advantages in this field because its cultural heritage is geographically diverse. Hanoi, Hue, Hoi An, Ho Chi Minh City, the Mekong Delta, northern mountainous communities, and many coastal regions possess distinct cultural resources. However, cultural tourism also creates risks. Excessive commercialization can damage heritage sites and transform living cultures into superficial tourist performances. Sustainable cultural tourism must therefore maintain community participation and protect cultural authenticity, consistent with international commitments to safeguarding the diversity of cultural expressions [17]. Cultural industries can contribute to social inclusion when local communities are given opportunities to participate in cultural production. Traditional crafts are particularly important in this respect.

Craft villages can generate income while preserving traditional skills. Women, ethnic minorities, young people, and rural communities can participate in creative production when appropriate market access and training are available. UNESCO [15] emphasizes that cultural and creative industries can contribute to inclusive development when policies address unequal access to resources and opportunities. This suggests that cultural policy should not focus exclusively on large entertainment companies or major cities.

Vietnam should therefore develop mechanisms that connect rural cultural resources with urban and international markets. Digital commerce provides an important opportunity because traditional craft producers can potentially reach wider domestic and international markets without depending entirely on conventional intermediaries.

4. CULTURAL INDUSTRIES IN VIETNAM: DEVELOPMENT, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES

Vietnam has increasingly recognized culture as an economic resource. A major milestone was Decision No. 1755/QĐ-TTg, issued in 2016, which approved the National Strategy for the Development of Cultural Industries to 2020, with a Vision to 2030. The strategy identifies twelve cultural industries and explicitly states that cultural industries should become important service industries contributing to economic growth, employment, cultural consumption, national image, and international integration [6].

The strategy initially established a target for cultural industries to contribute approximately 7 percent of GDP by 2030 [6]. This objective indicates a policy shift beyond the traditional understanding of culture primarily as a publicly supported service. UNESCO [18] recognized the strategy as an important development in Vietnam's implementation of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. The strategy also reflects a broader international movement toward integrating cultural policy with sustainable and inclusive development priorities.

More recently, Vietnam's policy direction has become even more ambitious. Resolution No. 80-NQ/TW of the Politburo sets a longer-term objective of developing cultural industries and the creative economy so that they contribute approximately 9 percent of GDP by 2045 [19]. This indicates that cultural industries are increasingly viewed as part of the country's long-term development strategy rather than as a secondary cultural policy area.

Film is one of the most visible components of cultural industries. Vietnam has a growing domestic film market and an expanding ecosystem of filmmakers, actors, producers, studios, distributors, streaming platforms, and digital creators.

Vietnamese cinema has increasingly demonstrated its capacity to produce commercially successful films for domestic audiences. However, the industry still faces challenges related to production scale, professional management, international distribution, intellectual property protection, and global marketing. The international competitiveness of Vietnamese cinema depends not simply on producing more films but on developing distinctive narratives and professional production ecosystems. Vietnamese historical stories, mythology, contemporary social experiences, and cultural landscapes provide substantial material for creative adaptation.

Digital streaming also provides opportunities because traditional theatrical distribution is no longer the only pathway to audiences. A Vietnamese film can potentially reach viewers in Southeast Asia and other markets through digital platforms. Nevertheless, digital distribution creates new competitive pressures. Vietnamese content competes with American, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Thai, and other international productions. The development of locally produced content therefore requires creative quality, sustained professional investment, and suitable distribution strategies.

Vietnam's music industry has undergone substantial transformation through digital platforms. YouTube, TikTok, Spotify, and other services allow musicians to reach audiences directly. This transformation reduces certain traditional barriers to market entry for emerging musicians and other creative professionals. Independent artists can produce and distribute music without necessarily obtaining contracts with traditional media companies, although independence from intermediaries does not necessarily imply independence from platform governance.

At the same time, platform-based markets create new forms of dependency. Algorithms influence visibility, audience

attention is highly concentrated, and creators may become dependent on platforms over which they have limited control. UNESCO has identified discoverability, unequal access, and the remuneration of creators as continuing challenges in the digital cultural environment [20].

Vietnamese traditional performing arts also provide opportunities for cultural innovation. Forms such as *cai luong*, *cheo*, *tuong*, *quan ho*, *nha nhac*, and other traditional arts can potentially be reinterpreted for contemporary audiences.

The central challenge is to modernize presentation and expand audience engagement without undermining the cultural meanings of traditional forms. Cultural innovation should not involve replacing distinctive traditional forms with generic commercial entertainment that weakens their cultural significance. Fashion represents an important intersection between culture, creativity, manufacturing, branding, and international trade.

Vietnam has a strong textile and garment manufacturing sector, but manufacturing capacity does not automatically produce a globally recognized fashion industry. Moving from contract manufacturing toward original design and internationally recognized brands requires sustained investment in creative education, branding, intellectual property protection, marketing, and distribution.

Vietnamese designers can draw upon traditional textiles, indigenous patterns, *áo dài*, handicrafts, and regional cultural symbols to develop distinctive products. Design more broadly can become an important bridge between cultural heritage and modern markets. Furniture, architecture, packaging, graphics, digital interfaces, and product design can incorporate Vietnamese cultural elements without simply reproducing traditional forms.

Vietnam has a large number of traditional craft villages and communities. These resources constitute an important cultural asset but also face challenges from industrialization, aging populations, declining transmission of traditional skills, and changing consumer preferences.

The commercialization of crafts can provide incentives for preserving traditional knowledge. If artisans receive adequate income from their work, younger generations may have stronger reasons to continue traditional occupations.

However, commercialization can also create problems if traditional products are simplified excessively for mass consumption. Cultural heritage can lose its distinctive characteristics when production becomes dominated by market demand.

A sustainable approach therefore requires balancing innovation and preservation. Traditional artisans should be supported in developing contemporary products while maintaining the knowledge and techniques that give those products cultural significance. Digitalization may be the most important structural factor shaping Vietnam's cultural industries in the coming decade.

In many digital sectors, the costs of producing and distributing cultural products have declined considerably, although professional production may still require substantial resources. Smartphones, affordable production equipment, social media, cloud computing, digital payment systems, and artificial intelligence have created new opportunities for independent creators. UNCTAD [5] identifies artificial intelligence as a major driver of change in the creative economy. AI can assist with writing, music production, visual design, animation, translation, editing, and marketing.

For Vietnam, AI could increase productivity and reduce production costs for small creative businesses. It could also help translate Vietnamese cultural content into foreign languages and improve international accessibility. However, AI creates major intellectual property questions. Creators may face a loss of control over their work when copyrighted material is used to train models without adequate authorization, transparency, or compensation. AI-generated content can also create uncertainty regarding authorship and ownership. Vietnam therefore needs modern intellectual property institutions capable of responding to rapidly changing technologies.

5. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF VIETNAMESE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

Vietnam should avoid treating cultural industries as a collection of isolated sectors. Film, music, fashion, design, tourism, publishing, advertising, games, and digital media increasingly interact with each other. A successful film can promote tourism. A popular song can promote fashion. A cultural festival can support local handicrafts. A historical site can become the basis for games, films, documentaries, books, and tourism experiences.

The policy objective should therefore be the development of an integrated cultural ecosystem rather than a collection of individual industries operating independently of one another. Such an ecosystem should connect government institutions, universities, cultural organizations, private enterprises, technology companies, investors, artists, and local communities.

Human capital is one of the most important long-term determinants of the development and competitiveness of cultural industries. Vietnamese education has traditionally placed strong emphasis on academic knowledge and technical skills. Creative industries require a broader combination of artistic, technological, entrepreneurial, and managerial abilities. Universities should therefore expand interdisciplinary programs combining culture, business, technology, design, communication, marketing, and intellectual property. A film student, for example, should understand not only cinematography but also production management, distribution, contracts, international markets, and digital marketing. Similarly, students

in fashion and design should receive training in entrepreneurship, branding, sustainability, e-commerce, and intellectual property.

Intellectual property is central to the economics of cultural industries because creative products can be copied at relatively low cost. Weak copyright enforcement can reduce incentives for investment and innovation, particularly for independent creators and smaller cultural enterprises. Creators may become reluctant to invest significant time and resources when unauthorized copying is widespread.

Vietnam should therefore continue strengthening copyright enforcement while making registration and legal protection more accessible to small creators. The challenge is particularly urgent in the digital environment, where content can be reproduced and circulated rapidly across national borders. Illegal streaming, unauthorized copying, AI-generated derivative content, and online piracy require new enforcement mechanisms.

Creative businesses frequently experience difficulties obtaining conventional bank financing because their assets are intangible. A software company may have intellectual property but few physical assets. A film production company may possess valuable scripts, brands, and distribution rights but limited collateral. Vietnam therefore needs financial mechanisms specifically adapted to creative industries. These may include venture capital, cultural investment funds, production grants, tax incentives, crowdfunding mechanisms, and public-private partnerships.

Government support should not be limited to subsidizing cultural production indefinitely, without strengthening the longer-term conditions for viability. It should create conditions under which promising creative businesses can become commercially sustainable.

Vietnamese cultural industries cannot rely exclusively on domestic consumers if they aim to become major economic sectors. Internationalization should therefore become a central component of cultural-industry policy. Vietnamese creators need support in translation, international marketing, copyright licensing, participation in international festivals, export promotion, and cross-border distribution. ASEAN represents a particularly important market because cultural similarities can reduce some barriers while the region's large population provides significant market potential. Vietnam should also explore cultural cooperation with countries such as South Korea, Japan, China, France, and other major creative economies.

Vietnam should develop cultural tourism as an integrated creative industry rather than simply selling access to heritage sites. Modern tourists increasingly seek experiences rather than passive observation. Cultural tourism can therefore incorporate performances, food, crafts, storytelling, digital experiences, workshops, fashion, architecture, and local community participation. For example, traditional craft villages can become creative tourism destinations where visitors learn production techniques, purchase products, participate in workshops, and experience local cultural traditions. Such models can generate higher local value while encouraging cultural preservation.

Cities are particularly important to cultural industries because they concentrate talent, infrastructure, consumers, universities, investors, cultural institutions, and creative enterprises. Florida [12] emphasizes the importance of creative human capital in urban development. Vietnam should therefore develop creative clusters in major cities such as Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City while also supporting emerging creative centers in Hue, Da Nang, Hoi An, Hai Phong, and other locations.

Hanoi has a policy framework for developing cultural industries, including its 2022 resolution on cultural-industry development, with the objective of making culture a high-value economic sector while strengthening tourism, urban branding, and international integration [21]. Creative-city development should involve more than constructing new cultural buildings or promoting cultural infrastructure as an isolated objective. The priority should be creating environments in which artists, entrepreneurs, researchers, designers, and technology professionals can interact.

A central conceptual challenge facing cultural industries is maintaining an appropriate relationship between commercial value and cultural value. If culture is treated exclusively as a commodity, economically profitable activities may gradually replace less profitable but culturally significant traditions.

Throsby [10] argues that cultural policy must recognize the multidimensional nature of cultural value. Economic efficiency cannot be the only criterion for evaluating cultural activities. Vietnam therefore needs a dual approach. Market mechanisms should be encouraged where they can generate sustainable economic activity, while public policy should continue supporting cultural forms whose social and historical value cannot be adequately captured by the market. This principle is especially important for intangible cultural heritage, minority cultures, traditional performing arts, archives, museums, and historical preservation. It is also consistent with the principle of protecting cultural diversity as a public value, rather than viewing cultural expression only through its commercial returns [17].

Cultural industries should not become concentrated exclusively in wealthy urban populations. Young people, women, ethnic minorities, rural communities, and independent creators should have opportunities to participate. UNESCO [7] emphasizes the importance of youth participation in Vietnam's cultural and creative industries. Expanding youth participation requires training, affordable infrastructure, digital access, mentorship, and financing. The digital economy can reduce geographic barriers, but digital access alone remains insufficient to ensure meaningful participation. Individuals

also require knowledge, networks, and market access.

Inclusive cultural policy should therefore focus on developing capabilities rather than simply providing equipment. The future of cultural industries should also be connected to environmental sustainability. Large cultural events, festivals, film productions, fashion industries, and tourism activities can generate significant environmental impacts. Creative industries can nevertheless contribute to sustainability through eco-design, circular fashion, sustainable architecture, digital distribution, cultural tourism, and creative solutions to environmental challenges. The creative economy should therefore be understood as part of a broader transition toward knowledge-intensive and sustainable economic development.

6. CONCLUSION

Cultural industries have evolved from a relatively marginal field of cultural policy into an increasingly important component of contemporary economic development. They combine creativity, culture, technology, intellectual property, entrepreneurship, and market mechanisms to generate both economic and cultural value.

The historical critique of the culture industry remains important because commercialization can produce standardization, inequality, and cultural homogenization. Nevertheless, contemporary cultural industries cannot be reduced to this negative interpretation. Cultural production can generate employment, stimulate innovation, support tourism, strengthen national identity, preserve heritage, and create opportunities for international trade.

The global creative economy demonstrates the increasing economic importance of these sectors. UNCTAD [5] shows that creative services and goods constitute a substantial component of international trade, while digitalization is rapidly changing how cultural products are created, distributed, and consumed.

Vietnam possesses many of the fundamental resources required to develop a successful cultural economy. Its historical heritage, ethnic diversity, traditional crafts, performing arts, cuisine, architecture, literature, fashion, and contemporary creative talent provide an extensive cultural resource base. At the same time, Vietnam has a young population, expanding digital infrastructure, growing consumer markets, and increasing international integration.

The adoption of the National Strategy for the Development of Cultural Industries represented an important institutional turning point. The strategy established cultural industries as an important component of the national economy and identified twelve sectors for development. Vietnam's more recent policy direction indicates an even stronger commitment to transforming culture and creativity into sources of economic growth.

However, cultural potential does not automatically become economic value. The transformation requires institutions, investment, education, technology, intellectual property protection, professional management, international distribution, and effective markets.

Vietnam's most important challenge is therefore ecosystem development. Cultural industries should not be developed through isolated programs supporting individual artistic sectors. Instead, the country needs an integrated system connecting education, creative talent, technology, finance, cultural heritage, tourism, intellectual property, entrepreneurship, and international markets.

Digitalization provides one of the greatest opportunities. Vietnamese creators can increasingly reach global audiences without relying entirely on traditional cultural institutions. Social media, streaming platforms, electronic commerce, artificial intelligence, and digital production tools have significantly lowered barriers to entry.

At the same time, digitalization creates new risks. Platform concentration, copyright infringement, algorithmic inequality, cultural homogenization, and artificial intelligence may weaken the position of individual creators. Vietnam therefore needs regulatory institutions capable of protecting creators while encouraging technological innovation.

The development of cultural industries should also remain consistent with the broader social purpose of culture. Culture cannot be evaluated solely according to revenue or GDP contribution. Cultural heritage, identity, community participation, artistic expression, and social cohesion possess values that cannot always be captured by market prices.

Vietnam should consequently pursue a balanced development model in which culture functions simultaneously as an economic resource and as a public cultural good. Commercially viable industries should be encouraged to develop through markets and entrepreneurship, while culturally important but economically vulnerable activities should continue to receive appropriate public support.

Ultimately, the development of cultural industries provides Vietnam with an opportunity to move from a model based predominantly on the production of goods toward a more knowledge-intensive economy based increasingly on creativity, intellectual property, cultural identity, and human capital. If Vietnam can successfully combine its cultural heritage with contemporary technology, professional management, creative education, and global market access, cultural industries can become not merely an additional economic sector but an important pillar of the country's long-term development.

The future of Vietnamese cultural industries will therefore depend on the country's ability to answer a fundamental question: how can cultural identity be transformed into economic value without allowing economic logic to destroy the cultural values that make that identity valuable in the first place? A sustainable response requires building an ecosystem in which creativity, markets, technology, cultural heritage, and the public interest reinforce rather than undermine one

another.

Author contributions

Both authors contributed equally to this work.

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The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest related to the research presented in this manuscript.

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