

Developing Cultural Tourism in Vietnam

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Abstract

Vietnam is recognized with more than 40000 historical and cultural relics, including more than 3600 national relics. This is a potential factor, creating an advantage for Vietnam to develop cultural tourism. In the current development process, Vietnam is focusing on developing cultural tourism as an important content of the tourism development strategy. Localities in Vietnam all evaluate heritage values and implement programs and plans to exploit and promote cultural heritage values in a suitable manner for socio-economic development. Many localities have been successful in exploiting diverse cultural tourism products, becoming a competitive advantage for development, especially some localities with many famous landscapes, capitals, ancient capitals, etc. In this study, the author focuses on analyzing the practical development of cultural tourism in Vietnam based on a practical survey in the ancient capital of Ninh Binh - a place with many famous landscapes and cultural heritages, with a history of development as the capital of Vietnam in the 10th century; the uniqueness and cultural diversity of Ninh Binh province plays a major role and influence on the economic and social development of the locality and of Vietnam. The research results also assess the factors affecting the development of cultural tourism in Ninh Binh province, thereby discussing and researching related policy issues.

Keywords: *Cultural Tourism, Cultural Tourism Development, Vietnam.*

Introduction

Vietnam is a multi-ethnic country with a long history of development. The 10th century marked the period of gaining autonomy and developing political, economic, cultural and social independence; Hoa Lu (present-day Ninh Binh province) was chosen as the capital of Dai Co Viet, then the capital was moved to Thang Long and is the capital of Vietnam at present.

Among the 63 localities of Vietnam, Ninh Binh province is known as a place with rich tourism resources with many historical and cultural relics, famous landscapes and valuable natural ecological environments. Not only famous for its beautiful landscapes, Ninh Binh is also a land rich in historical and cultural traditions with 1,821 ranked historical relics. Currently, Ninh Binh owns very valuable cultural and historical heritages, which are invaluable assets, such as: Hoa Lu Ancient Capital, Phat Diem Stone Church, Bich Dong Pagoda, Bai Dinh Pagoda, Duc Thanh Nguyen Temple, Thai Vi Temple... (NB, 2024) These are favorable conditions for the development of cultural tourism in Ninh Binh province and in Vietnam.

The current development of Ninh Binh is posing new requirements for the preservation and promotion of cultural values to realize the goal of developing cultural tourism. Many experts, researchers, and managers also identify the development trend and discuss solutions for developing cultural tourism in Ninh Binh. In that context, the author also focuses on the topic of developing cultural tourism for this study.

Literature Review

Cultural tourism is strongly developed in countries and localities with a long history of political and cultural development and ethnic diversity. Many countries and localities have combined the development of natural tourism and cultural tourism in a reasonable way, creating a fulcrum for realizing the goal of economic and social development. They carry out activities to exploit and use cultural resources to create new and different tourism products to serve the needs of tourists to enjoy, experience and explore.

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The World Tourism Organization defines cultural tourism as human activities aimed at studying and exploring culture, performing arts, festivals, cultural events; exploring relics and folk arts (DTU, 2014; Bon, N.V., 2020). Some other studies also explain the concept of cultural tourism in a similar way, that: Cultural tourism is a diverse activity of tourists to enjoy, experience, and discover new and different things about culture (Hung, N.P., 2017), or cultural tourism is a type of tourism developed on the basis of exploiting cultural values, contributing to preserving and promoting traditional cultural values, honoring new cultural values of humanity (PN, 2023).

Thus, it can be seen that many studies on cultural tourism explain in the direction of economic development or serving cultural goals, but researchers all emphasize the exploitation of heritages and cultural values of the nation and the country. Inheriting those contents, the author establishes the view that cultural tourism is a form/product of tourism developed based on cultural values and cultural heritage. Subjects (individuals, organizations) exploit the values of cultural heritage to create cultural tourism products to satisfy the needs of tourists; enhance the value and understanding of tourists and people through products and services, experiences of ethnic and local cultures; do business in cultural tourism products to create economic benefits and reinvestment to preserve culture and promote, honor the values of national culture, serving the socio-economic development goals of the locality and the country.

From the above research perspective and content, the scale "Cultural tourism development" (CT) is interpreted by the author to include the main contents: Cultural tourism creates awareness and understanding of tourists and people about ethnic, local and national culture (CT1); Cultural tourism serves economic development and reinvestment in preserving heritage and cultural values of ethnic, local and national cultures (CT2); Cultural tourism enhances the value and promotes the cultural values of ethnic, local and national cultures (CT3).

With the above approach and research content, the author emphasizes the subject factor of cultural tourism, which is organizations and individuals licensed to manage and exploit cultural tourism products. And the conditional factor to maintain and develop cultural tourism is cultural heritage, requiring subjects to both exploit and preserve and promote the cultural values of the nation, locality and country. In Vietnam, with the diversity of ethnic groups and cultures, Vietnam is considered a potential country to develop cultural tourism. The Party and State of Vietnam also set out strategic guidelines and policies for developing cultural tourism associated with preserving and promoting the values of cultural heritage; developing cultural tourism into a cultural industry; exploiting and effectively transforming rich resources into Vietnam's cultural soft power.

To achieve that goal, managers need to exploit the potential of cultural tourism, so that local and national strategies and policies become reality and effective. That is the issue of developing cultural human resources - the subject of cultural tourism, the subject participating in cultural tourism processes; it is also the factor of cultural heritage resources, preserved and exploited to become cultural tourism products. These are two factors that directly affect the development of cultural tourism, which the author built into two scales for this study.

Firstly, cultural human resources - that is the human resources of the locality, of the nation with the understanding, knowledge, skills, and moral qualities necessary to realize the goal of propagating, preserving, and promoting the values of national cultures. This is an important cultural resource, deciding the strategic goal of developing cultural tourism of the nation and locality. According to Hanh, D.T.H. (2018), culture is both an attribute of human beings and a factor that shows the level and quality of life of human beings. And so, talking about culture is talking about people - the subject that contains and represents the value of culture, cultural resources are ultimately human resources, so developing human resources is developing the culture of the nation, of the nation. At the local level, when local people have the knowledge, skills, and moral qualities necessary to achieve the goal of promoting, preserving, and promoting the values of ethnic cultures, they will behave in society and behave with the cultural values of the community and the nation in a civilized manner. That helps the locality promote cultural values and heritages to serve the development of local cultural tourism. Therefore, the content of the "Cultural Human Resources" (HR) scale is built with the implication that local people's knowledge, skills, and awareness of

cultural tourism development: Local people have knowledge of cultural values and heritage of the ethnic group, locality and nation (HR1); Local people have awareness and skills to preserve and maintain cultural values and heritage of the ethnic group, locality and nation (HR2); Local people have the responsibility to exploit, protect and develop cultural values and heritage of the ethnic group, locality and nation (HR3).

Second, cultural heritage - that is the existing cultural resource, determines the goal of developing cultural tourism. Cultural heritages that are effectively exploited will become valuable cultural tourism products serving tourists, bringing economic benefits to the community, locality and the country. In terms of management, cultural heritages need to be introduced and promoted so that people can understand, feel, evaluate the role, meaning and experience when participating in cultural tourism activities. According to many researchers, cultural heritages can be transformed into material cultural products but contain intangible cultural values. Emphasizing this importance, Anh, T.T. (2014) and Hang, C.T. (2021) affirms that cultural products not only play an important role in economic development and perform entertainment functions, but also contribute to educational functions, foster aesthetic values, and the function of continuing and developing history.

Thus, each locality and each country needs to perform well the task of exploiting, preserving and promoting cultural heritages to become important resources for developing cultural tourism products. The scale of "Cultural Heritage" (CH) in this study is built with the above content implications, including the main contents showing the local interest in preserving, promoting the value, and exploiting cultural heritages to serve the development of local cultural tourism: Localities perform well the task of preserving cultural heritage to develop cultural tourism products to serve socio-economic development (CH1); Localities responsibly exploit cultural heritage to serve the development of cultural tourism products for the goal of socio-economic development (CH2); Localities perform well the propaganda and promotion of cultural heritage to raise awareness of people and tourists in preserving and promoting heritage values to serve the development of cultural tourism products (CH3).

From the above overview research content, the author has built a theoretical research framework, a research model including 02 independent variables and 01 dependent variable with a total of 09 observed variables when researching cultural tourism development. The author designed a survey with 09 questions, which are the 09 observed variables mentioned above and measured by a 5-level Likert scale: 1 - Strongly disagree; 2 - Disagree; 3 - No opinion; 4 - Agree; 5 - Strongly agree (Table 1, Figure 1).

Table 1. Theoretical Framework

No	Scales	Encode	Rating levels				
			1	2	3	4	5
I	Cultural Human Resources	HR					
1	Local people have knowledge of cultural values and heritage of the ethnic group, locality and nation.	HR1					
2	Local people have awareness and skills to preserve and maintain cultural values and heritage of the ethnic group, locality and nation.	HR2					
3	Local people have the responsibility to exploit, protect and develop cultural values and heritage of the ethnic group, locality and nation.	HR3					
II	Cultural Heritage	CH					
4	Localities perform well the task of preserving cultural heritage to develop cultural tourism products to serve socio-economic development.	CH1					
5	Localities responsibly exploit cultural heritage to serve the development of cultural tourism products for the goal of socio-economic development.	CH2					
6	Localities perform well the propaganda and promotion of cultural heritage to raise awareness of people and tourists in	CH3					

No	Scales	Encode	Rating levels				
			1	2	3	4	5
	preserving and promoting heritage values to serve the development of cultural tourism products.						
III	Cultural Tourism Development	CT					
7	Cultural tourism creates awareness and understanding of tourists and people about ethnic, local and national culture.	CT1					
8	Cultural tourism serves economic development and reinvestment in preserving heritage and cultural values of ethnic, local and national cultures.	CT2					
9	Cultural tourism enhances the value and promotes the cultural values of ethnic, local and national cultures.	CT3					

Source: Compiled by the author through the review

Research Model

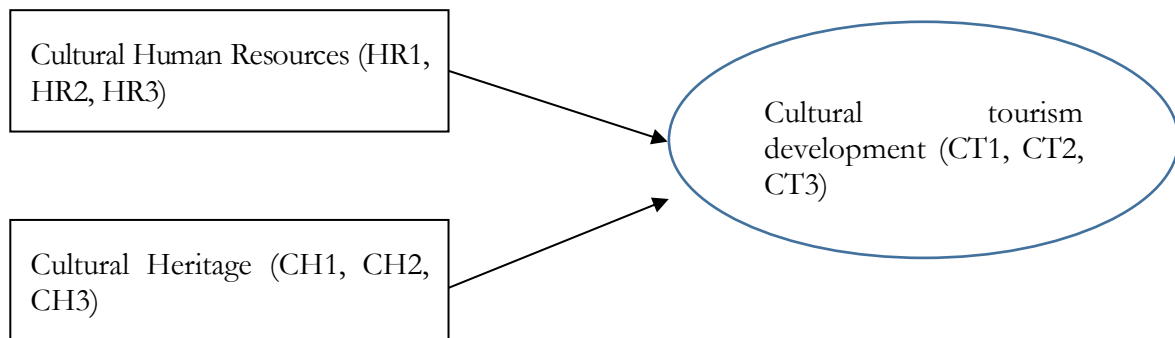


Figure 1. Research Model

The theoretical research model was built to demonstrate the impact of the factors "Cultural human resources" (HR) and "Cultural heritage" (CH) on "Cultural tourism development" (CT). The author conducted an empirical study in Ninh Binh province with the hypothesis that: *Cultural human resources (H1) and Cultural heritage (H2) have a positive impact on the development of cultural tourism in Ninh Binh province.*

Research Methods

In this study, the author uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. With the qualitative method, the author collects and analyzes secondary data - published documents to build a theoretical research framework including 3 scales: "Cultural human resources" (HR); "Cultural heritage" (CH); "Cultural tourism development" (CT). With the quantitative method, the author collects and analyzes primary data by surveying 180 managers of more than 60 cultural agencies and organizations in Ninh Binh province, Vietnam. The survey is conducted in two steps: Preliminary survey and official survey.

Preliminary survey: In this study, the author analyzed exploratory factors to preliminarily assess the unidimensionality, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the scales; regression analysis to test the correlation of the scales. According to Hair, J.F. et al. (2009), the minimum sample size required for exploratory factor analysis for the 3-scale model and 9 observed variables of this study is $N = 9 \times 5 = 45$. The author designed, completed the survey design and conducted a preliminary survey at 20 cultural agencies and organizations in Ninh Binh province with a sample size of $N = 50$ managers ($N > 45$). The preliminary survey results showed that all 3 scales and 9 observed variables achieved reliability to be used in an official survey on a larger scale.

Official survey: From the preliminary survey results that met the requirements, the author conducted an official survey with a sample of N = 180 managers of more than 60 cultural agencies and organizations in Ninh Binh province. The survey was conducted selectively: Respondents had at least 2 years of experience in management in the tourism sector; the survey was conducted with the consent of the respondents after the author conducted a preliminary interview. The survey results were: 180/180 people agreed to respond and 180/180 valid responses, achieving a valid response rate of 100%.

Research Results

From the survey data of 180 managers of more than 60 cultural agencies and organizations in Ninh Binh province collected, the author conducted Cronbach' Alpha test to identify the reliability of the scales and observed variables in the research model. According to Hair, J.F. et al. (2009), the scales are reliable when meeting the standard conditions: Cronbach'alpha > 0.6; the observed variables are reliable when meeting the standard conditions: Corrected Item-Total Correlation > 0.3. The test results show that all 3 scales and 9 observed variables are reliable when meeting the above standard conditions (Table 2).

Table 2. Statistical Results and Testing Results of the Scale

Scales	Observed variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach' Alpha	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
1. Cultural Human Resources (HR)	HR1	200	1	5	4.21	.603	.702	HR1 = .501
	HR2	200	1	5	4.18	.611		HR2 = .498
	HR3	200	1	5	4.16	.644		HR3 = .405
2. Cultural Heritage (CH)	CH1	200	1	5	4.05	.591	.682	CH1 = .381
	CH2	200	1	5	3.99	.585		CH2 = .369
	CH3	200	1	5	4.02	.617		CH3 = .434
3. Cultural tourism development (CT)	CT1	200	1	5	4.04	.595	.649	CT1 = .498
	CT2	200	1	5	3.97	.613		CT2 = .396
	CT3	200	1	5	3.98	.621		CT3 = .408
Valid N (listwise)		200						

Source: Author's survey results

Data in Table 2 shows that observations on the scales "Cultural human resources" (HR), "Cultural heritage" (CH), "Cultural tourism development" (CT) are all rated at an average level of Mean > 3.97, statistically significant according to the determined Likert scale (1-5). In particular, the observed variables of the scale "Cultural human resources" (HR) are rated at the highest level with Mean (HR1) = 4.21, Mean (HR2) = 4.18, Mean (HR3) = 4.16, showing that managers of cultural agencies and organizations highly appreciate the cultural human resources factor of Ninh Binh province. Accordingly, Ninh Binh people have knowledge about cultural values, cultural heritage; have qualifications, understanding and awareness, skills to preserve and maintain cultural values, cultural heritage; responsible for exploiting, protecting and developing the cultural values and heritages of the nation, locality and country. This is an important factor in promoting the development of cultural tourism in Ninh Binh province, contributing to increasing the economic, cultural and social values for the locality.

In general, cultural resources include cultural human resources, cultural heritages and other resources. When there are good human resources, unique and diverse cultural products, it will promote the development of local and national cultural tourism. In the period of 2019-2024, the tourism industry of Ninh Binh province has achieved positive results: In 2024, tourism revenue reached over 9,100 billion VND, an increase of 40.15% compared to 2023, an increase of 148% compared to 2019, exceeding the plan by 13.75% (MCST, 2024). The image of Ninh Binh tourism brand is widely promoted both domestically and internationally, becoming one of the top 10 destinations in Vietnam and receiving many prestigious awards from

international organizations and websites, notably: Top 10 most attractive experiences in 2024; Top 10 friendliest destinations in the world; Forbes international magazine ranked Ninh Binh 4th in "Top 10 wonders of the world for people who don't like crowds"; Trang An scenic complex was voted by Kotler Award as "influential destination in the world".

From the results of reliability testing of the scales and observed variables, the author has the basis to conduct exploratory factor analysis to test the initial theoretical research model. Exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation is performed to preliminarily assess the unidimensionality, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the scales to have more basis for drawing research conclusions about the suitability of the proposed theoretical research model. The results of exploratory factor analysis are shown in Table 3 and Table 4 below.

Table 3. Total Variance Explained

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.823
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1263.687
	df	36
	Sig.	.000

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.964	44.043	44.043	3.964	44.043	44.043	2.754	30.595	30.595
2	2.699	29.991	74.034	2.699	29.991	74.034	2.599	28.872	59.467
3	1.100	12.224	86.258	1.100	12.224	86.258	2.411	26.791	86.258
4	.360	4.004	90.262						
5	.298	3.313	93.575						
6	.224	2.491	96.066						
7	.173	1.923	97.989						
8	.107	1.189	99.178						
9	.074	.822	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Author's survey results

Table 4. Rotated Component Matrix

Rotated Component Matrix ^a				
Scales	Observed variables	Component		
		1	2	3
Cultural Human Resources (HR)	HR1	.801		
	HR2	.789		
	HR3	.771		
Cultural Heritage (CH)	CH1		.759	
	CH2		.787	
	CH3		.763	
Cultural tourism development (CT)	CT1			.791
	CT2			.783

	CT3			.702
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.				
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.				
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.				

Source: Author's survey results

In quantitative research, according to Hair, J.F. et al. (2009), exploratory factor analysis was performed in accordance with the data set through the values: $0.5 \leq KMO \leq 1$; Bartlett's test has an observed significance level $Sig. < 0.05$; Eigenvalue ≥ 1 ; Total Variance Explained $\geq 50\%$; Factor Loading ≥ 0.5 . The data in Table 3 and Table 4 show that:

+ $KMO = 0.823 > 0.5$, confirming that exploratory factor analysis is appropriate for the data set; Bartlett's test has an observed significance level $Sig. = 0.000 < 0.05$, showing that the observed variables have a linear correlation with the representative factor. Total Variance Explained with Cumulative % = $86.258\% > 50\%$ (Table 3), showing that 86.258% of the variation of the representative factors is explained by the observed variables; the observed variables all have Factor Loading > 0.5 (Table 4), showing that the observed variables have good statistical significance. The theoretical research model initially proposed is consistent with the survey research practice.

+ The observed variables were extracted into 03 factors corresponding to the 03 initial factors with Eigenvalues > 1 (Table 3), continuing to confirm the suitability of the initial research model. And the initial research model was kept intact, including: 02 independent variables "Cultural human resources" (HR), "Cultural heritage" (CH) and 01 dependent variable "Cultural tourism development" (CT) with a total of 9 observed variables with good statistical significance, which can perform multivariate linear regression analysis to examine the relationship of the variables in the model. The results of the regression analysis are shown in Table 5, which is the basis for the author to draw research conclusions.

Table 5. Multivariate regression results

		Coefficients ^a					VIF
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	1.123	.171		10.958	.000	
	Cultural Human Resources (HR)	.597	.312	.498	14.355	.000	1.795
	Cultural Heritage (CH)	.365	.274	.383	8.982	.000	1.795
a. Dependent Variable: Cultural tourism development (CT)							
Adjusted R Square: 0.774; Durbin-Watson: 2.105							

Source: Author's survey results

The data in Table 5 shows that:

+ $R \text{ Square} = 0.774$, confirming that the scales "Cultural human resources" (HR), "Cultural heritage" (CH) explain 77.4% of the variation in the scale "Cultural tourism development" (CT); $VIF = 1.795$ ($1 < VIF < 2$), showing that the regression model does not have multicollinearity; Durbin-Watson = 2.105 ($1 < d < 3$), showing that the regression model does not have autocorrelation, confirming that the scales "Cultural human resources" (HR), "Cultural heritage" (CH) are independent and have an impact on the scale "Cultural tourism development" (CT), confirming the suitability of the theoretical research model with the survey data set.

+ The regression coefficients of the two independent variables "Cultural human resources" (HR), "Cultural heritage" (CH) are both statistically significant $Sig. = 0.000$ ($Sig. < 0.05$) and have positive values: $B(HR) = 0.597$ and $B(CH) = 0.365$, confirming the positive relationship between the two independent variables

"Cultural human resources" (HR), "Cultural heritage" (CH) and 01 dependent variable "Cultural tourism development" (CT); hypotheses H1, H2 are accepted; the initial research model continues to be confirmed to be appropriate.

Based on the generalized regression model of Hair, J.F. et al. (2009): $Y = B_0 + B_1 \cdot X_1 + B_2 \cdot X_2 + \dots + B_i \cdot X_i$, the author determined the multivariate regression model of this study as follows:

$$CT = 1.123 + 0.597 \cdot HR + 0.365 \cdot CH$$

Based on the standardized regression coefficient (Beta), it can be seen that the correlation level of the independent variables and the dependent variables in increasing order is: "Cultural Heritage" (CH) and "Cultural Human Resources" (HR). That contributes to further affirming the empirical research results in Vietnam: Human resource development is an important content that determines the success of socio-economic activities in general. In this case, cultural human resource development is an important content that determines the success of the strategic goal of cultural tourism development.

Conclusion

In this study, the author achieved the goal with the theoretical research framework built and empirical research achieved results, that the development of cultural human resources - the main factor of cultural tourism activities; that is the intellectual level, understanding, knowledge, skills of the people about culture, heritage and protection, preservation, promotion of cultural values, heritage, plays an important role in successfully implementing the strategic goal of developing cultural tourism of the locality, of the country. This research result is consistent with the study of Hanh, D.T.H. (2018), that culture is both an attribute of human beings and a factor showing the level and quality of life of human beings; talking about culture is talking about people - the subject containing and expressing the value of culture, cultural resources are ultimately human resources, so developing human resources is developing the culture of the nation, of the country.

From the above research results, the author suggests the management issue of Ninh Binh province and expands to other localities in Vietnam to promote the development of cultural tourism, which is to promote the development of cultural human resources to become the driving force for the development of cultural tourism. Localities need to pay attention to implementing policies to develop local human resources with moral qualities, patriotism, love for the nation; have qualifications, knowledge of society, national history; have qualifications, modern scientific knowledge to become cultural subjects for the goals of preserving and promoting cultural values, heritage to develop cultural tourism, implementing the strategic goals of local socio-economic development. Because, at the local level, when local people have the knowledge, skills, and moral qualities necessary to achieve the goals of propagating, preserving, and promoting the values of national cultures, they will behave in society and behave with the cultural values of the community and the nation in a civilized manner. That helps the locality promote cultural values and heritage to serve the development of local cultural tourism.

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