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Intangible Cultural Heritage as Creative Capital: Evaluating the Economic Contributions of Vietnamese Folk Performing Arts to Local Development

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ABSTRACT: Vietnam has committed to raising the contribution of cultural industries to 7% of GDP by 2030, yet the mechanisms through which living folk performing arts generate value for the communities that hold them remain poorly understood. Drawing on cultural capital theory, the resource-based view and social exchange theory, this study examines whether intangible cultural heritage creative capital (ICHCC) embedded in Vietnamese folk performing arts contributes to local development (LD) through cultural entrepreneurship (CE) and economic benefits (EB). Survey data were collected from 217 practitioners, club members, cultural-tourism operators and local officials in communities that safeguard UNESCO-inscribed folk performing arts, and the model was estimated with partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). ICHCC had a positive effect on cultural entrepreneurship ($\beta = 0.481$, $p < .001$) and on economic benefits ($\beta = 0.324$, $p < .001$). Cultural entrepreneurship increased economic benefits ($\beta = 0.337$, $p < .001$) and local development ($\beta = 0.221$, $p < .001$), while economic benefits were the strongest predictor of local development ($\beta = 0.724$, $p < .001$). The model explained 73.0% of the variance in local development. All four specific indirect effects of ICHCC were significant, including the serial path ICHCC → CE → EB → LD ($\beta = 0.117$, $p < .001$), and the total effect of ICHCC on local development reached 0.458. Roughly half of this effect travelled through economic benefits alone, with the remainder carried by entrepreneurial activity. The findings indicate that folk performing arts support local development when heritage is turned into income-generating activity by local entrepreneurs, rather than through recognition or preservation alone. The study adds a serial-mediation explanation to the heritage economics literature and offers provincial authorities evidence for prioritising entrepreneurial support when implementing the national strategy for cultural industries.

KEYWORDS: Cultural entrepreneurship; folk performing arts; intangible cultural heritage; local development; PLS-SEM

I. INTRODUCTION

Culture is increasingly treated in development policy as a productive resource rather than a fiscal burden. The creative economy literature argues that cultural assets generate income, employment and place distinctiveness once they are mobilised by entrepreneurial actors (Throsby, 2001; UNCTAD, 2022). Intangible cultural heritage (ICH), defined in the 2003 UNESCO Convention as the practices, expressions, knowledge and skills that communities recognise as part of their heritage, occupies a central place in this argument because it is living, reproducible and held by communities rather than by the state (UNESCO, 2003; Vecco, 2010). Among the ICH domains, performing arts are particularly relevant to local economies. A performance is at the same time a cultural practice, an experience good and a tourism product (Richards, 2011; Richards & Wilson, 2006). Vietnam offers a policy-rich setting in which to examine this question. In November 2025 the Prime Minister approved the Strategy for the Development of Vietnam's Cultural Industries to 2030, with a vision to 2045 (Decision No. 2486/QĐ-TTg). The strategy lists performing arts and cultural tourism among ten priority industries and sets targets of about 10% average annual growth, a 7% share of GDP and 6% of the national workforce by 2030, rising to 9% of GDP by 2045 (Government of Vietnam, 2025). The starting point is modest. According to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, cultural industries accounted for 2.68% of GDP in 2015 and about 3.61% in 2018 (VTV, 2024). The National Assembly has since approved a National Target Programme on Cultural Development for 2025-2035 (Resolution No. 162/2024/QH15), and the revised Law on Cultural Heritage (No. 45/2024/QH15) came into force on 1 July 2025. The heritage base on which these targets rest is substantial. According to the statistics of Ministry of Justice, around 70,000 intangible heritage elements have been inventoried nationwide and 534 had been placed on the national list by the time the 2024 law was drafted. With the inscription of Dong Ho folk painting in December 2025, Vietnam now has 17 elements recognised by

UNESCO (VOV, 2025). Several of them are folk performing arts: Quan Ho Bac Ninh folk songs and Ca Tru singing (2009), Xoan singing of Phu Tho (2011), Don Ca Tai Tu music of southern Vietnam (2013), Vi and Giam folk songs of Nghe Tinh (2014) and the art of Bai Choi in central Vietnam (2017). Visitor demand has also recovered strongly. Vietnam received about 17.5 million international arrivals in 2024, an increase of 39.5% on the previous year (Viet Nam News, 2025), and a record of about 21.2 million in 2025 (Asia Gaming Brief, 2026).

Three gaps nevertheless limit the evidence available to policymakers. First, research on ICH and tourism has concentrated on authenticity, visitor experience and the tension between safeguarding and commodification (Esfehani & Albrecht, 2018; Kim et al., 2019). The supply-side process through which heritage is converted into local income has received far less attention. Recent structural models suggest that heritage resources rarely affect economic outcomes directly; their influence runs through social activation, community capabilities or enabling economic conditions (Liang & Pongtornkulpanich, 2026; Vinod et al., 2026). Second, cultural entrepreneurship has mostly been examined in the creative industries, such as music production and design (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Scott, 2012), and seldom as the link between community-held heritage and local economic benefit. Third, Vietnamese evidence remains thin and is largely qualitative or critical in orientation, with an emphasis on the appropriation of heritage by state actors (Salemink, 2012). A recent Vietnamese study showed that cultural heritage identity supports local economic development through innovation and commercialisation capabilities (Nguyen et al., 2026). That study, however, did not isolate folk performing arts, did not treat entrepreneurship as a distinct mechanism and did not separate direct economic gains from broader local development. This study responds to these gaps by testing a serial mediation model in which ICH creative capital (ICHCC) stimulates cultural entrepreneurship (CE), entrepreneurial activity produces economic benefits (EB), and economic benefits in turn drive local development (LD). Three research questions guide the analysis:

RQ1: To what extent does the creative capital embedded in Vietnamese folk performing arts influence cultural entrepreneurship and economic benefits?

RQ2: Do cultural entrepreneurship and economic benefits, separately and in sequence, transmit the effect of ICH creative capital to local development?

RQ3: Which pathway carries the largest share of the effect of ICH creative capital on local development?

The study contributes in three ways. Theoretically, it combines cultural capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Throsby, 1999) with the resource-based view (Barney, 1991) and social exchange theory (Ap, 1992) to explain why a community-held, non-rival resource produces economic value only when it is activated by entrepreneurs. Empirically, it offers a serial-mediation test of this chain for Vietnamese folk performing arts and separates the proximal economic gains of heritage activity from its wider developmental outcomes. Practically, it shows which link in the chain provincial authorities should strengthen when translating Decision 2486/QĐ-TTg into local action plans.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Theoretical foundations

Three theories inform the model. Bourdieu (1986) described cultural capital as embodied dispositions, objectified goods and institutionalised recognition that can be converted into economic capital under certain conditions. Throsby (1999, 2001) restated the concept in economic terms: cultural capital is an asset that embodies cultural value and yields a flow of cultural and economic goods and services over time. Unlike physical capital, it tends to depreciate through neglect rather than through use, so continued practice is a condition of its survival. Folk performing arts fit this definition closely because repertoires, vocal techniques, costumes and ritual settings are reproduced only when they are performed.

The resource-based view adds a strategic dimension. Barney (1991) argued that resources which are valuable, rare, difficult to imitate and without close substitutes can support a durable advantage. A living folk art is place-specific, path-dependent and socially complex, which makes it hard for other destinations to replicate. The same view implies that resources create value only when they are deployed, which is why an entrepreneurial mechanism is expected to sit between heritage and economic outcomes (Liang & Pongtornkulpanich, 2026; Nguyen et al., 2026). Social exchange theory completes the framework. Local actors support development when they perceive that its benefits outweigh its costs (Ap, 1992; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). The theory therefore links visible economic gains to the broader judgement that a locality is developing.

The economic contribution of intangible cultural heritage should be understood as a process of resource activation rather than an automatic consequence of cultural possession. Cultural capital theory explains the distinctive value embedded in inherited knowledge, artistic practices and symbolic meanings, while the resource-based view clarifies why such resources may provide a competitive basis for locally rooted ventures when they are mobilised effectively. Social exchange theory extends this explanation beyond firm-level performance by drawing attention to how the resulting benefits are perceived and evaluated by local

stakeholders. These perspectives are complementary but operate at different analytical levels: cultural capital explains the nature of the resource, the resource-based view explains its mobilisation into productive activity, and social exchange theory helps explain the relationship between realised benefits and broader development outcomes. Their integration therefore provides a theoretical basis for examining not only whether folk performing arts contribute to local development, but also through which mechanisms and under what conditions their cultural value may be translated into economic and developmental gains.

Intangible cultural heritage as creative capital

In this study, ICH creative capital refers to the stock of living knowledge, artistic skills, repertoires, symbolic meanings and recognition embodied in a folk performing art that local actors can draw on to create new cultural products and experiences. The construct combines Throsby's (1999) notion of intangible cultural capital with the creative-economy view that heritage gains value when it is recombined into new offerings (Richards, 2011; UNCTAD, 2022). It covers the distinctiveness of the repertoire, the depth of skills held by practitioners, the retention of traditional meaning, the value added by official recognition and the capacity of the art to adapt to new formats. Authenticity sits at the centre of this capital. Kim et al. (2019) found that ICH practitioners understand authenticity holistically, linking transmitted customs, inherited meanings and their own identities, and that many of them see transmission and tourism promotion as potentially compatible. Esfehani and Albrecht (2018) reached a similar conclusion for protected areas, provided that communities keep control over how their heritage is presented. Critical scholarship offers a counterweight: heritage listing can shift control from communities to experts, state agencies and tour operators (Salemink, 2012). Taken together, these studies suggest that heritage capital creates value mainly when its custodians, or entrepreneurs working alongside them, are able to mobilise it.

Conceptualising ICH as creative capital also requires distinguishing the existence of a heritage asset from its capacity to generate value. The continued existence of a folk repertoire, for example, does not necessarily imply that it can support viable cultural products, attract audiences or create livelihood opportunities. Its productive potential depends on the interaction between the artistic capabilities of practitioners, the cultural meanings recognised by communities, the distinctiveness perceived by audiences and the institutional conditions under which the heritage is maintained and presented. Moreover, the capacity to adapt heritage to contemporary settings should not be equated with unrestricted modification or commercialisation. Rather, creative capital is most useful when it enables innovation while retaining the cultural significance that differentiates one performing tradition from another. This distinction is particularly relevant to Vietnamese folk performing arts, whose economic potential may depend on their ability to reach new audiences and participate in tourism or cultural markets without weakening community ownership and intergenerational transmission.

Cultural entrepreneurship, economic benefits and local development

Cultural entrepreneurship carries two meanings in the literature. In organisation theory it denotes the use of cultural resources, such as stories, symbols and identities, to legitimise new ventures and attract resources (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001). In cultural economics it refers to entrepreneurial activity that creates, distributes or commercialises cultural goods while balancing cultural and economic values (Klamer, 2011; Swedberg, 2006). Gehman and Soublière (2017) bridged these views by describing a shift from making culture to cultural making, in which entrepreneurs reshape the repertoires they draw on. Scott (2012) documented how cultural producers convert Bourdieu's non-economic forms of capital into economic returns. Here, cultural entrepreneurship refers to the opportunity recognition, innovativeness, risk-taking and resource combination through which local actors build products and ventures around folk performing arts. Ticketed Quan Ho performances on boats, Ca Tru clubs in Hanoi's Old Quarter, Bai Choi shows for visitors in Hoi An and Don Ca Tai Tu evenings in Mekong homestays are typical examples.

Economic benefits are the perceived direct gains that heritage-based activity brings to practitioners, households and local firms. Research on resident perceptions consistently identifies income, jobs, business opportunities and investment as the core economic impacts of tourism (Andereck et al., 2005; Ko & Stewart, 2002). Local development is a broader, multidimensional process that improves the economic, social and institutional conditions of a territory, ideally on the basis of endogenous assets (Pike et al., 2017). It includes living standards, infrastructure and public services, community cohesion and the attractiveness of the locality as a place to live and invest. Culture-led development research warns against models that expect culture to deliver development on its own (Bille & Schulze, 2006; Sacco et al., 2014). The distinction between proximal economic gains and wider development is therefore retained in the model.

The relationships among cultural entrepreneurship, economic benefits and local development can be understood as successive stages in the conversion of cultural resources into territorial outcomes. Cultural entrepreneurship provides the organisational and market-facing mechanism through which artistic knowledge and heritage-based meanings are translated into performances, cultural experiences and related business opportunities. These activities may generate immediate economic returns for

performers, households and local enterprises, although the magnitude and distribution of such returns are likely to vary across communities and business arrangements. Economic benefits can then contribute to local development when they support more stable livelihoods, stimulate complementary economic activities and strengthen the capacity of local actors to sustain cultural production. However, this progression is not inevitable: revenue may be concentrated among external intermediaries, employment may remain seasonal, and increased visitor demand may create pressure on cultural practices. Distinguishing economic benefits from local development therefore allows the model to capture both the immediate returns associated with heritage-based entrepreneurship and the broader outcomes that may emerge when these returns contribute to the long-term economic and social vitality of a locality. This distinction also establishes the rationale for examining economic benefits as an intervening mechanism rather than treating them as interchangeable with local development.

ICH creative capital and cultural entrepreneurship

ICH creative capital provides the cultural resources, symbolic legitimacy and distinctive narratives upon which cultural entrepreneurs can build new products, services and business opportunities. Lounsbury and Glynn (2001) demonstrated that entrepreneurs use cultural narratives to establish organisational legitimacy, attract external resources and make their ventures meaningful to relevant audiences. Similarly, Scott (2012) illustrated how cultural producers can transform non-economic forms of capital, including symbolic recognition and social relationships, into economic opportunities. Applied to folk performing arts, these arguments suggest that the richness of a traditional repertoire, the artistic skills of practitioners, the cultural meanings embedded in performances and the recognition attached to a heritage tradition can collectively provide a foundation for entrepreneurial activity. Such resources help local actors differentiate their offerings from standardised tourism products, establish credibility with visitors and institutional partners, and develop experiences that are difficult for competing destinations to reproduce.

The resource-based view further explains why ICH creative capital may stimulate cultural entrepreneurship. Resources that are valuable, rare and difficult to imitate can provide a basis for identifying and exploiting market opportunities (Barney, 1991). Folk performing arts are often embedded in particular communities, historical experiences and intergenerational traditions, giving them a degree of place-specific distinctiveness. However, this potential does not imply that cultural resources automatically generate entrepreneurial activity. Rather, their artistic and symbolic attributes may help local actors recognise opportunities, develop innovative offerings and mobilise complementary resources such as finance, marketing capabilities, distribution channels and partnerships. In the Vietnamese context, Nguyen et al. (2026) reported that cultural heritage identity supports innovation and commercialisation capabilities, providing relevant empirical support for the proposition that heritage-related resources can encourage entrepreneurial responses. Accordingly, the greater the creative capital embedded in a folk performing art, the stronger the potential for local practitioners and enterprises to identify, develop and exploit cultural business opportunities.

H1: ICH creative capital positively influences cultural entrepreneurship.

ICH creative capital and economic benefits

Beyond stimulating entrepreneurial activity, ICH creative capital may contribute directly to economic benefits by increasing the attractiveness, visibility and market value of heritage-related experiences. Throsby (1999) conceptualised cultural capital as an asset that generates a flow of cultural goods and services over time, some of which can yield economic returns. From this perspective, the economic contribution of folk performing arts does not depend exclusively on the establishment of new ventures. Existing cultural practices may generate performance fees, paid appearances at festivals, remuneration for artists, public funding for recognised practitioners and expenditure by visitors attending heritage-related events. The cultural distinctiveness and reputation of a performing art can therefore support economic activity even when the individuals involved do not actively pursue entrepreneurial strategies.

The potential effect is particularly relevant when heritage recognition enhances public awareness and attracts audiences beyond the immediate community. Performances associated with distinctive traditions may encourage visitors to spend on accommodation, food, transportation, handicrafts and other complementary services, thereby extending the economic effects of cultural participation to local businesses (Richards, 2011). In addition, the preservation of specialised artistic skills and repertoires can sustain demand for training, cultural interpretation and live performance experiences. Nevertheless, these benefits depend on the extent to which cultural value translates into actual demand and whether local practitioners and businesses can capture a meaningful share of the resulting expenditure. Heritage recognition alone does not guarantee equitable economic returns, but it can strengthen the resource base from which such returns emerge. Thus, ICH creative capital is expected to have a positive relationship with perceived economic benefits, independently of its potential to encourage cultural entrepreneurship.

H2: ICH creative capital positively influences economic benefits.

Cultural entrepreneurship and economic benefits

Cultural entrepreneurship represents the process through which cultural resources are transformed into marketable offerings and economically productive activities. While ICH creative capital provides the underlying artistic and symbolic resources, entrepreneurship enables local actors to organise, package, promote and distribute these resources to audiences and customers. Klamer (2011) and Swedberg (2006) emphasised the entrepreneurial dimension of cultural production, in which the creation and circulation of cultural goods require actors to reconcile artistic values with economic considerations. In the context of Vietnamese folk performing arts, this process may involve developing ticketed performances, organising cultural festivals, offering participatory workshops, incorporating traditional music into tourism experiences or establishing partnerships between artists, accommodation providers and tour operators. Such activities expand the channels through which heritage can reach audiences and generate revenue.

The relationship between cultural entrepreneurship and economic benefits also reflects the importance of combining cultural resources with complementary capabilities. Entrepreneurial actors may identify underserved audiences, experiment with new performance formats, establish pricing strategies, develop promotional networks and coordinate services across local businesses. These activities can increase the commercial reach of folk performing arts and create opportunities for performers, technicians, guides, food vendors and other service providers. Research on residents' perceptions of tourism impacts identifies employment, household income, business opportunities and investment as central dimensions of perceived economic benefit (Andereck et al., 2005; Ko & Stewart, 2002). Cultural entrepreneurship is therefore expected to strengthen these benefits by creating more systematic connections between cultural production and market demand. Although the magnitude of the gains may depend on entrepreneurial capability, market conditions and the distribution of revenue, more intensive cultural entrepreneurship should, on average, be associated with greater perceived economic benefits.

H3: Cultural entrepreneurship positively influences economic benefits.

Economic benefits, cultural entrepreneurship and local development

Economic benefits constitute an important pathway through which heritage-based activities may contribute to local development. According to social exchange theory, residents' evaluations of development-related activities are shaped partly by their perceptions of the benefits and costs associated with those activities (Ap, 1992; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). When folk performing arts generate additional income, employment opportunities and demand for local businesses, community members may perceive heritage-based economic activity as a meaningful contributor to their livelihoods and the prosperity of their locality. Kim et al. (2013) found that perceived economic impacts can improve residents' material well-being, which in turn contributes to overall life satisfaction. These findings support the argument that economic gains are not merely financial outputs but can also influence how residents evaluate changes in their living conditions.

At the local level, the developmental significance of these benefits depends on their capacity to extend beyond isolated transactions or short-term visitor spending. Income generated by performances and related services may support household consumption, encourage reinvestment in local businesses and create demand for complementary services. Where economic gains are retained locally and sustained over time, they may also strengthen the financial basis for cultural transmission, community initiatives and improvements in local infrastructure and public services. These processes are consistent with broader conceptualisations of local development as a multidimensional and territorially embedded process involving economic prosperity, social well-being and institutional capacity (Pike et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the transition from economic benefits to development is not automatic: seasonal demand, unequal revenue distribution and dependence on external intermediaries may limit the wider impact of heritage-based activity. The proposed relationship therefore concerns the expected positive association between perceived economic benefits and local development, rather than an assumption that every economic gain necessarily produces equitable or sustainable outcomes.

H4: Economic benefits positively influence local development.

Cultural entrepreneurship may also contribute to local development through mechanisms that extend beyond the immediate financial returns generated by cultural products and services. By connecting artists, community organisations, tourism operators, local businesses and public institutions, entrepreneurial activity can facilitate collaboration, strengthen local networks and create new opportunities for collective action. These relationships may help communities mobilise resources, share knowledge and improve their capacity to respond to changing cultural and market conditions. Furthermore, the development of distinctive heritage-based offerings can reinforce a locality's cultural identity and external image, potentially increasing its attractiveness to visitors, investors and prospective residents. Gehman and Soublière (2017) highlighted the active role of cultural actors in

reshaping cultural meanings and practices, suggesting that entrepreneurship can influence not only commercial outcomes but also how culture is organised and represented.

For Vietnamese folk performing arts, such effects may emerge when entrepreneurial initiatives create sustained cooperation between performers and other local stakeholders, provide new spaces for cultural participation and increase the visibility of local traditions. These processes can support community cohesion and strengthen the capacity of local actors to maintain cultural practices while responding to contemporary needs. However, the developmental contribution of cultural entrepreneurship depends on how initiatives are organised and whose interests they serve. Ventures dominated by external operators may generate limited local spillovers, while poorly managed commercialisation may undermine community participation or cultural continuity. The expected positive relationship is therefore based on the premise that cultural entrepreneurship is sufficiently embedded in local networks to mobilise heritage resources and create benefits that extend beyond individual enterprises.

H5: Cultural entrepreneurship positively influences local development.

The mediating roles of cultural entrepreneurship and economic benefits

The relationships proposed above suggest that the contribution of ICH creative capital to local development may be transmitted through multiple mechanisms rather than occurring solely through a direct effect. Cultural resources possess distinctive artistic, symbolic and social value, but their presence alone does not ensure that this value will be converted into economic activity or improvements in local living conditions. Recent studies reinforce the importance of examining intervening processes. Vinod et al. (2026) reported that heritage resources influenced revenue through a sequence of social, physical and economic conditions, while Liang and Pongtornkulpanich (2026) found that cultural capital had a relatively weak direct effect on community sustainability, with part of its influence operating through cultural innovation capability. These findings are consistent with the argument that the developmental contribution of heritage depends on the capabilities and conditions that enable cultural resources to become productive.

The first proposed mechanism is cultural entrepreneurship. ICH creative capital can provide the repertoire, skills, symbolic legitimacy and cultural distinctiveness required to identify and develop heritage-based opportunities. Nevertheless, these resources may remain economically underutilised if local actors lack the motivation or capability to organise performances, reach audiences, establish partnerships and develop viable offerings. Cultural entrepreneurship consequently serves as a potential mediating mechanism that translates cultural resources into activities capable of generating economic and developmental outcomes. Through this mechanism, the effect of ICH creative capital on economic benefits is expected to be transmitted partly through entrepreneurial opportunity recognition, innovation and resource mobilisation. This reasoning leads to the following hypothesis:

H6: Cultural entrepreneurship mediates the relationship between ICH creative capital and economic benefits.

Cultural entrepreneurship may also mediate the relationship between ICH creative capital and local development. The creative and symbolic attributes of a folk performing art do not necessarily improve local conditions unless they are mobilised through activities that generate broader territorial effects. Entrepreneurial initiatives may connect cultural practitioners with local firms and institutions, create opportunities for community participation and strengthen the visibility and market position of a locality. These activities can contribute to development by expanding the local economic base and improving the capacity of community actors to organise and sustain heritage-related activities. This mediating relationship does not require every developmental benefit to arise from measurable financial returns; entrepreneurial initiatives may also generate organisational capabilities and collaborative relationships that support local development. Accordingly, cultural entrepreneurship is expected to transmit part of the relationship between ICH creative capital and local development.

H7: Cultural entrepreneurship mediates the relationship between ICH creative capital and local development.

Economic benefits represent a second potential mediating mechanism. ICH creative capital may enhance the distinctiveness and attractiveness of folk performing arts, thereby generating opportunities for income, employment and expenditure in related local businesses. These economic gains can, in turn, contribute to wider developmental outcomes when they improve material well-being, stimulate local reinvestment and strengthen the resources available for community activities and cultural transmission. This argument distinguishes the economic value initially generated by heritage-related activities from the broader changes that may follow when those benefits are realised and retained within the locality. It also reflects the social exchange perspective, according to which the perceived benefits of an activity can influence how residents evaluate its contribution to their community (Ap, 1992; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). Thus, economic benefits are expected to mediate part of the relationship between ICH creative capital and local development, although the strength of this pathway may depend on the distribution and durability of the benefits.

H8: Economic benefits mediate the relationship between ICH creative capital and local development.

Finally, the proposed model specifies a sequential mechanism through which ICH creative capital contributes to local development via cultural entrepreneurship and economic benefits. This pathway reflects the proposition that cultural resources must first be mobilised through entrepreneurial activity before their economic potential can be fully realised. Entrepreneurial initiatives transform the artistic and symbolic attributes of folk performing arts into products, services and market relationships that generate income, employment and other economic gains. When these gains extend to practitioners, households and local businesses, they may support improvements in material well-being and contribute to the wider economic and social conditions of the locality. The sequential pathway therefore links the resource-based explanation of cultural value creation with the social exchange explanation of how perceived benefits relate to broader community outcomes.

This formulation is also consistent with the warning by Sacco et al. (2014) against approaches that assume culture can independently deliver development. Rather than treating heritage as a self-sufficient driver of local prosperity, the proposed model considers entrepreneurial mobilisation and the realisation of economic benefits as successive mechanisms through which its potential may be translated into development. The sequential indirect effect is expected to capture this cumulative process, while the separate mediation hypotheses allow the contribution of each mechanism to be assessed independently. Testing these pathways can therefore clarify whether the developmental contribution of Vietnamese folk performing arts is associated primarily with the activation of creative resources, the economic gains generated by entrepreneurial activity, or the combined operation of both mechanisms.

H9: Cultural entrepreneurship and economic benefits sequentially mediate the relationship between ICH creative capital and local development.

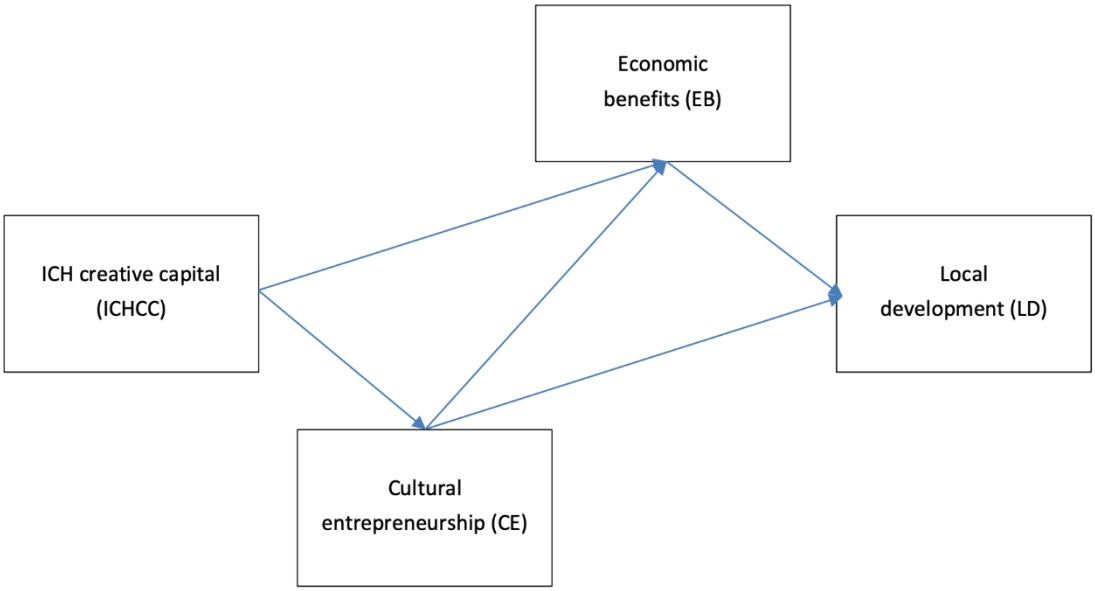


Figure 1. Research Model

METHODOLOGY

Measurement and questionnaire development

The study follows a positivist, deductive approach with a cross-sectional survey design. Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was chosen because the model is oriented towards explaining and predicting local development, contains a chain of mediating constructs and includes a newly operationalised construct, ICH creative capital (Hair et al., 2019, 2022).

All four constructs were modelled as reflective and measured with five items each (Table 1). Items for cultural entrepreneurship, economic benefits and local development were adapted from validated scales. Because no validated scale exists for the creative capital of performing-arts heritage, the ICHCC items were developed from cultural capital theory and prior ICH research. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The five-point format was preferred to reduce the response burden for older artisans. The items were drafted in English and translated into Vietnamese through back-translation by two bilingual researchers (Brislin, 1970). A panel of cultural economists, heritage specialists and practising artisans reviewed the wording for relevance and clarity, and the instrument was then piloted with a small group of respondents before the main survey.

Table 1. Measurement items and sources

Construct	Code	Item	Source
ICH creative capital (ICHCC)	ICHCC1	Our folk art has a distinctive repertoire that cannot be found elsewhere.	Throsby (1999); Nguyen et al. (2026)
	ICHCC2	Practitioners in our community hold high-level artistic skills passed down through generations.	Throsby (2001)
	ICHCC3	Performances of our folk art retain their traditional meanings and identity.	Kim et al. (2019)
	ICHCC4	Official recognition (UNESCO or national inscription) increases the value of our folk art.	Liang & Pongtornkulpanich (2026)
	ICHCC5	Our folk art can be adapted to new formats (stage, tourism, digital) without losing its identity.	Richards (2011)
Cultural entrepreneurship (CE)	CE1	Local actors actively look for new business opportunities based on our folk art.	Covin & Slevin (1989)
	CE2	New products or services based on our folk art are regularly introduced.	Covin & Slevin (1989)
	CE3	Local actors are willing to invest time and money in ventures based on our folk art despite uncertain returns.	Covin & Slevin (1989)
	CE4	Local actors use the stories and symbols of our folk art to attract customers, partners and support.	Lounsbury & Glynn (2001)
	CE5	Local actors combine our folk art with other resources (tourism, cuisine, crafts, digital media) to create value.	Gehman & Soublière (2017); Scott (2012)
Economic benefits (EB)	EB1	Activities based on our folk art increase the income of practitioners.	Andereck et al. (2005)
	EB2	Activities based on our folk art create jobs for local people.	Ko & Stewart (2002)
	EB3	Activities based on our folk art create business opportunities for local firms and households.	Andereck et al. (2005)
	EB4	Activities based on our folk art attract investment to the locality.	Ko & Stewart (2002)
	EB5	Activities based on our folk art help households diversify their sources of income.	Kim et al. (2013)
Local development (LD)	LD1	Living standards in our locality have improved.	Kim et al. (2013)
	LD2	Infrastructure and public services in our locality have improved.	Kim et al. (2013)
	LD3	Community cohesion and local pride have been strengthened.	Kim et al. (2013); Pike et al. (2017)
	LD4	Our locality has become more attractive for living, visiting and investing.	Pike et al. (2017)
	LD5	Young people are more willing to stay and take part in local cultural life.	Pike et al. (2017)

The questionnaire had three parts: a short screening section confirming at least one year of involvement with the folk art, the twenty measurement items, and questions on respondent characteristics. Predictor and outcome items were placed in separate sections, respondents were assured of anonymity and were told that there were no right or wrong answers, which reduces the risk of common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Sampling and data collection

The target population comprised people directly involved in safeguarding or commercialising UNESCO-inscribed Vietnamese folk performing arts. Respondents were recruited in communities associated with Quan Ho (Bac Ninh), Xoan (Phu Tho), Ca Tru (Ha Noi), Vi and Giam (Nghe An and Ha Tinh), Bai Choi (Hoi An area) and Don Ca Tai Tu (Mekong Delta). Four groups were targeted: artisans and practitioners, members of folk art clubs and troupes, owners or managers of cultural-tourism businesses that use the art, and commune- or provincial-level cultural officials. A purposive quota approach was used within each area. The sample size is adequate for the model. A power analysis in G*Power (Faul et al., 2009) for the most complex regression in the model, local development on two predictors, with a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), $\alpha = 0.05$ and power of 0.95 requires 107 cases. The inverse

square root method (Kock & Hadaya, 2018), based on the smallest path coefficient estimated in the model (0.221), requires 127 cases at the 5% significance level. The 217 responses exceed both thresholds.

Data analysis

The data were analysed with SmartPLS 3 (Ringle et al., 2015) in two stages (Hair et al., 2019, 2022). The measurement model was assessed first. Indicator loadings should exceed 0.708; internal consistency was evaluated with Cronbach's alpha, rho_A and composite reliability, all of which should be above 0.70; and convergent validity requires an average variance extracted (AVE) of at least 0.50. Discriminant validity was examined with the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT), using thresholds of 0.85 for conceptually distinct constructs and 0.90 for conceptually close ones (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2015). In the second stage, the structural model was assessed for collinearity (inner VIF), path coefficients, coefficients of determination (R^2) and effect sizes (f^2). Significance was tested by bootstrapping with 500 subsamples, two-tailed tests and bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) confidence intervals. Specific indirect effects were used to test H6-H9, and mediation types were classified following Zhao et al. (2010). Common method bias was examined with Harman's single-factor test and the full collinearity approach (Kock, 2015).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics results

The sample comprised 217 respondents involved in the safeguarding, performance or commercialisation of Vietnamese folk performing arts. Regarding gender, male respondents accounted for 54.8% of the sample, while female respondents represented 45.2%, indicating a relatively balanced gender distribution. The age profile was concentrated in the 40-49 age group (28.1%), followed by respondents aged 50-59 (22.6%) and 30-39 (22.1%). Respondents aged 40 and above collectively represented 63.1% of the sample, suggesting that a substantial proportion had reached a stage of life at which they may have accumulated considerable professional and community experience. This profile is relevant to the study because the evaluation of heritage-based creative capital, entrepreneurial activities and local economic benefits may require familiarity with cultural transmission, performance practices and the changing relationship between folk arts and local markets.

Table 2. Demographics of respondents (n = 217)

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	119	54.8
	Female	98	45.2
Age	Under 30 years	32	14.7
	30-39 years	48	22.1
	40-49 years	61	28.1
	50-59 years	49	22.6
	60 years and above	27	12.4
Respondent group	Artisans and folk art practitioners	78	35.9
	Members of folk art clubs and performance troupes	57	26.3
	Cultural-tourism business owners or managers	48	22.1
	Cultural officials	34	15.7
Primary heritage area	Quan Ho - Bac Ninh	39	18.0
	Xoan - Phu Tho	31	14.3
	Ca Tru - Ha Noi	30	13.8
	Vi and Giam - Nghe An and Ha Tinh	39	18.0
	Bai Choi - Hoi An area	35	16.1
	Don Ca Tai Tu - Mekong Delta	43	19.8
Years of involvement	Fewer than 5 years	35	16.1
	5-9 years	48	22.1
	10-19 years	72	33.2
	20 years or more	62	28.6

In terms of respondent characteristics, artisans and folk art practitioners constituted the largest group (35.9%), followed by members of folk art clubs and performance troupes (26.3%), cultural-tourism business owners or managers (22.1%), and cultural

officials (15.7%). This composition brings together perspectives from cultural preservation, performance organisation, commercial activity and public-sector management. Geographically, respondents were distributed across the six heritage areas, with the largest share drawn from the Don Ca Tai Tu area (19.8%), followed by Quan Ho and Vi and Giam (18.0% each). Furthermore, 61.8% of respondents had been involved in their respective cultural or professional activities for at least ten years, indicating substantial accumulated experience within the sample. The inclusion of respondents with different professional roles, geographical backgrounds and levels of involvement provides a potentially useful basis for examining the proposed relationships among ICH creative capital, cultural entrepreneurship, economic benefits and local development.

Table 3 summarises the four constructs. Respondents rated cultural entrepreneurship highest (M = 3.76, SD = 0.83), followed by ICH creative capital (M = 3.59, SD = 0.97). Economic benefits (M = 3.29, SD = 1.16) and local development (M = 3.13, SD = 1.04) were rated closer to the scale midpoint. This pattern suggests that respondents see their folk arts as valuable and see local actors as active in exploiting them, but are more cautious about how far these activities have already raised incomes or changed local conditions. At item level, skewness ranged from −1.551 to −0.034 and excess kurtosis from −1.152 to 2.261, which indicates no severe departure from normality; PLS-SEM does not in any case require normally distributed data (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of constructs (n = 217)

Construct	Items	Mean	SD	Skewness (range)	Kurtosis (range)
ICH creative capital (ICHCC)	5	3.594	0.974	−0.958 to −0.696	−0.622 to 0.574
Cultural entrepreneurship (CE)	5	3.759	0.830	−1.551 to −0.290	−1.152 to 2.261
Economic benefits (EB)	5	3.286	1.157	−0.680 to −0.451	−0.819 to −0.385
Local development (LD)	5	3.132	1.039	−0.846 to −0.034	−1.015 to 0.228

Source: *Data analysis by SmartPLS 3*

Scale reliability and validity assessment

The reliability and validity of the measurement model were assessed following the guidelines for reflective measurement in PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2019, 2022). As shown in Table 4, all twenty indicator loadings exceeded 0.708, ranging from 0.728 (CE1) to 0.939 (EB1). Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.866 for cultural entrepreneurship to 0.957 for economic benefits, and composite reliability ranged from 0.901 to 0.967. All constructs therefore show satisfactory internal consistency. The AVE values, between 0.646 and 0.853, are well above 0.50, confirming convergent validity.

Table 4. Outer loadings, construct reliability and convergent validity

Construct	Item	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
ICH creative capital (ICHCC)	ICHCC1	0.826	0.905	0.928	0.927	0.718
	ICHCC2	0.780				
	ICHCC3	0.904				
	ICHCC4	0.901				
	ICHCC5	0.819				
Cultural entrepreneurship (CE)	CE1	0.728	0.866	0.917	0.901	0.646
	CE2	0.779				
	CE3	0.868				
	CE4	0.876				
	CE5	0.758				
Economic benefits (EB)	EB1	0.939	0.957	0.957	0.967	0.853
	EB2	0.931				
	EB3	0.913				
	EB4	0.926				
	EB5	0.907				
Local development (LD)	LD1	0.874	0.907	0.909	0.931	0.729

Construct	Item	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
	LD2	0.885				
	LD3	0.895				
	LD4	0.818				
	LD5	0.794				

The composite reliability of economic benefits (0.967) lies slightly above the 0.95 level at which some items may be redundant (Hair et al., 2019). The five EB items nonetheless refer to different gains (income, jobs, business opportunities, investment and income diversification), and their AVE of 0.853 shows that the construct captures most of the variance in its indicators. All items were therefore retained.

Discriminant validity was first examined with the Fornell-Larcker criterion. As Table 5 shows, the square root of the AVE of each construct is larger than its correlations with the other constructs. For economic benefits, for example, the square root of the AVE (0.923) exceeds its correlations with cultural entrepreneurship (0.493), ICH creative capital (0.486) and local development (0.833).

Table 5. Fornell-Larcker criterion

	CE	EB	ICHCC	LD
CE	**0.804**			
EB	0.493	**0.923**		
ICHCC	0.481	0.486	**0.847**	
LD	0.578	0.833	0.504	**0.854**

Note: Diagonal values (bold) are the square roots of the AVE.

Source: *Data analysis by SmartPLS 3*

Because the Fornell-Larcker criterion can fail to detect a lack of discriminant validity, the HTMT ratio was also examined (Henseler et al., 2015). Five of the six HTMT values in Table 6 lie between 0.474 and 0.610, well below 0.85. The value for economic benefits and local development (0.888) exceeds the conservative 0.85 threshold but remains below the 0.90 threshold recommended for constructs that are conceptually close. Such proximity is expected here, since the economic gains of heritage activity are one of the channels through which local development is perceived. Discriminant validity is therefore accepted, with this proximity taken into account when interpreting the EB → LD path.

Table 6. Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)

	CE	EB	ICHCC	LD
CE				
EB	0.482			
ICHCC	0.497	0.474		
LD	0.610	0.888	0.513	

Source: *Data analysis by SmartPLS 3*

Common method bias was assessed in two ways. In Harman's single-factor test, the first unrotated factor explained 49.3% of the total variance, just below the 50% threshold, and three factors had eigenvalues above one (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Full collinearity VIFs ranged from 1.473 to 3.749. The values for ICHCC (1.473) and CE (1.618) are well below Kock's (2015) threshold of 3.3, whereas those for EB (3.324) and LD (3.749) are slightly above it. These two values reflect the strong substantive correlation between economic benefits and local development (r = 0.833) rather than a method factor shared by all constructs, but common method variance cannot be ruled out entirely and is acknowledged as a limitation.

Model assessment

Inner VIF values ranged from 1.000 to 1.321, so collinearity among predictors does not bias the structural estimates (Hair et al., 2022). Table 7 reports the direct paths. All five hypothesised relationships are positive and significant at $p < .001$, and none of the BCa confidence intervals includes zero.

Table 7. Structural model results: direct effects

Path	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics	P Values	95% BCa CI	f^2	Hypothesis	Decision
ICHCC → CE	0.481	0.486	0.070	6.914	0.000	[0.334; 0.600]	0.300	H1	Supported
ICHCC → EB	0.324	0.330	0.049	6.668	0.000	[0.233; 0.420]	0.120	H2	Supported
CE → EB	0.337	0.337	0.058	5.819	0.000	[0.221; 0.442]	0.130	H3	Supported
EB → LD	0.724	0.723	0.038	19.094	0.000	[0.645; 0.797]	1.469	H4	Supported
CE → LD	0.221	0.221	0.044	5.036	0.000	[0.138; 0.306]	0.137	H5	Supported

Note: R^2 (adjusted R^2): CE = 0.231 (0.227); EB = 0.324 (0.318); LD = 0.730 (0.728). Bootstrapping with 500 subsamples.

Source: *Data analysis by SmartPLS 3*

ICH creative capital explains 23.1% of the variance in cultural entrepreneurship. Together with cultural entrepreneurship, it explains 32.4% of the variance in economic benefits, and economic benefits and cultural entrepreneurship together explain 73.0% of the variance in local development. By the benchmarks in Hair et al. (2019), the explanatory power is weak to moderate for the two mediators and substantial for the final outcome. The effect sizes show that economic benefits make a very large contribution to explaining local development (f^2 = 1.469). ICH creative capital has a medium-to-large effect on cultural entrepreneurship (f^2 = 0.300), while the remaining paths have effects between small and medium (f^2 = 0.120-0.137).

The standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) of the estimated model was 0.101, marginally above the lenient 0.10 cut-off. Global fit indices are of limited relevance in prediction-oriented PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2019), so this value is reported for transparency and the model is evaluated mainly on its explanatory power and the significance of its paths.

Table 8 reports the indirect effects. All four specific indirect effects of ICH creative capital are positive and significant, and their confidence intervals exclude zero. The total effect of ICHCC on local development is 0.458 (t = 10.334, p < .001; BCa CI [0.362; 0.535]). Of this effect, 51.3% passes through economic benefits alone (β = 0.235), 25.5% through the serial path via cultural entrepreneurship and economic benefits (β = 0.117) and 23.1% through cultural entrepreneurship alone (β = 0.106).

Table 8. Specific indirect effects

Path	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics	P Values	95% BCa CI	Hypothe-sis	Decision
ICHCC → CE → EB	0.162	0.163	0.032	5.094	0.000	[0.111; 0.236]	H6	Supported
ICHCC → CE → LD	0.106	0.108	0.027	3.876	0.000	[0.060; 0.168]	H7	Supported
ICHCC → EB → LD	0.235	0.239	0.040	5.932	0.000	[0.163; 0.311]	H8	Supported
ICHCC → CE → EB → LD	0.117	0.118	0.024	4.895	0.000	[0.080; 0.176]	H9	Supported
CE → EB → LD	0.244	0.244	0.045	5.440	0.000	[0.157; 0.332]	-	-
ICHCC → LD (total ef-fect)	0.458	0.464	0.044	10.334	0.000	[0.362; 0.535]	-	-

Source: *Data analysis by SmartPLS 3*

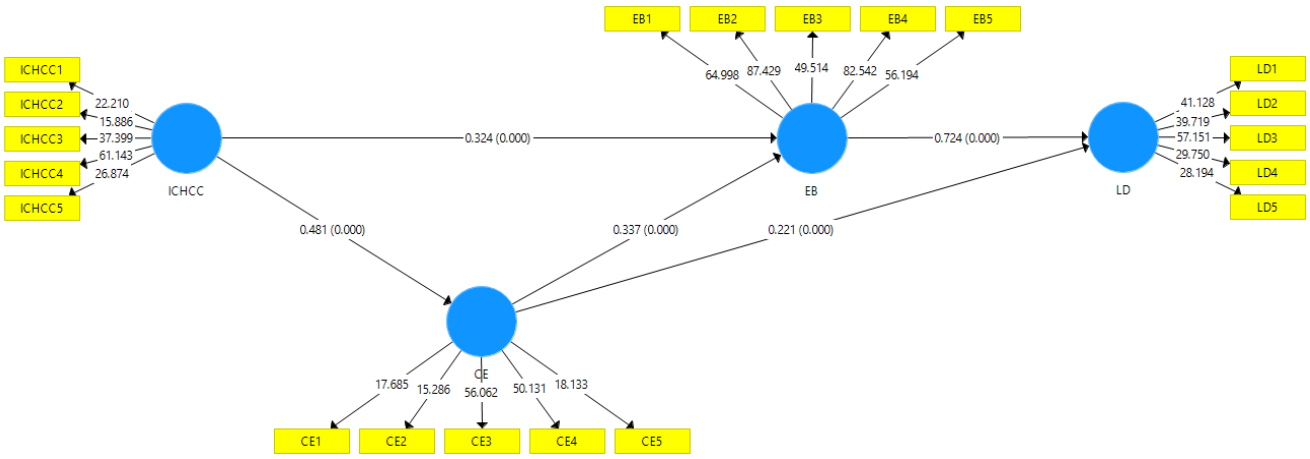


Figure 2. Pls Bootstrapping Model

DISCUSSION OF HYPOTHESIS TESTING RESULTS

The results support H1. ICH creative capital has a strong positive effect on cultural entrepreneurship (β = 0.481, p < .001; f^2 = 0.300). Where a folk art is perceived as distinctive, skilfully performed, faithful to its meanings and officially recognised, local actors are more likely to look for opportunities, launch new products and invest in ventures built around it. This finding is consistent with the argument of Lounsbury and Glynn (2001) that cultural resources provide the stories and legitimacy entrepreneurs need, and with the strong link between heritage identity and innovation capability reported by Nguyen et al. (2026). Among the ICHCC indicators, adaptability (ICHCC5) and the value added by recognition (ICHCC4) carried the highest outer weights, which suggests that entrepreneurs respond less to the existence of a repertoire than to the belief that it can be presented in new formats without losing its identity. H2 is supported that ICH creative capital has a positive direct effect on economic benefits (β = 0.324, p < .001; f^2 = 0.120). Some gains from heritage therefore accrue without passing through new ventures, for example through festival fees, public support for recognised artisans and spending by visitors who come to see a performance. This is in line with Throsby's (1999) view of cultural capital as an asset that yields a flow of economically valuable services. The hypotheis H3 is also supported. Cultural entrepreneurship increases economic benefits (β = 0.337, p < .001; f^2 = 0.130). Entrepreneurial activity is thus a distinct source of income, jobs and business opportunities rather than a simple by-product of heritage endowment. The finding supports the view of Klamer (2011) and Swedberg (2006) that cultural entrepreneurs create economic value by bringing cultural goods to market.

Besides, H4 receives the strongest support. Economic benefits have a very large effect on local development (β = 0.724, p < .001; f^2 = 1.469). Consistent with social exchange theory (Ap, 1992; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011) and with Kim et al. (2013), residents and local actors judge their locality's development largely through the gains they see from heritage activity. The size of this path should nevertheless be read with the HTMT value of 0.888 in mind: economic benefits and local development are conceptually related, and part of their association may reflect a shared evaluation of the local economy. H5 is also confirmed. Cultural entrepreneurship has a direct positive effect on local development (β = 0.221, p < .001; f^2 = 0.137), in addition to its indirect effect through economic benefits (β = 0.244). Entrepreneurial activity seems to contribute to development through non-monetary channels as well, such as stronger community networks, local pride and a more visible place image (Gehman & Soublière, 2017). Because both the direct and the indirect effects of CE on LD are positive and significant, economic benefits act as a complementary partial mediator in this relationship (Zhao et al., 2010).

H6-H9 are all supported. Cultural entrepreneurship partially mediates the effect of ICH creative capital on economic benefits (β = 0.162, p < .001); because the direct effect is also significant, the mediation is complementary (Zhao et al., 2010). Economic benefits mediate the effect of ICHCC on local development (β = 0.235, p < .001), and so does cultural entrepreneurship (β = 0.106, p < .001). The serial path ICHCC → CE → EB → LD is also significant (β = 0.117, p < .001). Taken together, these effects produce a total effect of 0.458. The pattern supports the argument of Sacco et al. (2014) and Vinod et al. (2026) that culture contributes to development through several interacting mechanisms rather than as a single cause. It also echoes the finding of Liang and Pongtornkulpanich (2026) that cultural capital becomes developmentally relevant mainly when it is activated. Because the model

did not include a direct path from ICHCC to local development, the results show that the hypothesised mechanisms are sufficient to transmit a substantial effect, but they cannot establish whether any additional direct effect exists.

CONCLUSION

This study examined whether, and through which mechanisms, the creative capital embedded in Vietnamese folk performing arts contributes to local development. Using survey data from 217 stakeholders and PLS-SEM, it found that ICH creative capital stimulates cultural entrepreneurship and generates economic benefits both directly and through entrepreneurial activity, and that economic benefits are the dominant proximal driver of local development. All four indirect pathways from heritage capital to local development were significant, and about half of the total effect travelled through economic benefits. The study extends cultural capital theory and the resource-based view to community-held performing-arts heritage by showing that such capital becomes developmentally productive when it is converted into income-generating activity. It also adds to the culture-led development literature a quantitative, serial-mediation account in which entrepreneurship and economic gains are modelled as separate links.

The findings have several practical implications for provincial People's Committees and Departments of Culture, Sports and Tourism responsible for translating Decision No. 2486/QĐ-TTg into local action plans. First, heritage safeguarding and recognition programmes should be complemented by targeted measures that enable local actors to transform cultural resources into viable economic activities. While documenting and preserving folk performing arts remain essential, these efforts may generate limited economic returns unless practitioners and cultural organisations have the capabilities and resources to develop sustainable cultural products. Provincial authorities could therefore introduce small grants, preferential credit schemes and business incubation programmes for heritage-based enterprises, alongside simplified administrative procedures for organising regular performances at tourist destinations and cultural venues. Training programmes should also strengthen practitioners' capabilities in product development, pricing, audience engagement, digital marketing and partnership management. Given the importance of adaptability and recognition within ICH creative capital, particular attention should be paid to supporting innovative performance formats, contextual interpretation and responsible branding that communicates the cultural significance of folk performing arts. UNESCO recognition can serve as a valuable promotional asset, but its use should be accompanied by appropriate safeguards to ensure that commercial presentation remains consistent with community values and heritage transmission objectives.

Second, the findings highlight the importance of strengthening collaboration between cultural practitioners, entrepreneurial actors and local tourism businesses. Artisans, folk art clubs, performance troupes and cultural-tourism enterprises could jointly develop integrated experiences that combine live performances with traditional food, handicrafts, storytelling, participatory workshops and accommodation. For example, folk performances could be incorporated into locally managed tourism itineraries or community-based tourism packages, enabling visitors to engage more deeply with the cultural context of the art while generating complementary income opportunities for local households and businesses. Such arrangements may also reduce dependence on ticket revenue alone and help distribute the economic value of heritage across a broader network of local stakeholders. Provincial authorities and tourism associations can facilitate these partnerships through networking events, shared promotional platforms, destination-level branding and digital marketplaces that connect cultural producers with visitors and tour operators. Importantly, these initiatives should involve practitioners in decisions about performance formats, cultural interpretation and commercial arrangements, ensuring that innovation strengthens rather than displaces the communities responsible for maintaining the heritage.

Finally, the strong relationship between economic benefits and local development underscores the need to focus not only on generating revenue but also on how economic gains are distributed, retained and reinvested within local communities. Policymakers should establish transparent arrangements for allocating performance revenue among individual artisans, clubs, organisers, host communities and participating businesses. Where appropriate, a proportion of income from heritage-based tourism could support practitioner remuneration, apprenticeships, intergenerational transmission, costume and instrument maintenance, and community-led safeguarding activities. Local monitoring systems could also track indicators such as employment created, income earned by practitioners, the participation of local businesses, opportunities for younger generations and the continuity of traditional performance practices. These indicators would allow authorities to assess whether cultural entrepreneurship contributes to sustained local development rather than merely increasing visitor numbers or short-term commercial activity. More broadly, the findings suggest that successful culture-led development requires coordination between cultural policy, tourism planning, enterprise support and community participation. By combining entrepreneurial support with equitable benefit-sharing and long-term safeguarding, provincial authorities can strengthen the capacity of Vietnamese folk performing arts to generate economic value while preserving their cultural significance and contributing to more inclusive local development.

The study has limitations that suggest directions for further research. The cross-sectional design captures perceptions at one point in time and cannot establish causality; longitudinal or panel data would allow the dynamics of heritage-led development to be examined. All constructs were measured through self-reports from one survey, and although procedural remedies were applied, the full collinearity results for EB and LD indicate that common method variance cannot be fully excluded. Future work could combine survey data with objective indicators such as household income from heritage activity, the number of registered cultural enterprises or provincial cultural-industry statistics. The close association between economic benefits and local development (HTMT = 0.888) also suggests that the LD scale could be refined to place greater weight on non-economic dimensions. The model did not include a direct path from ICH creative capital to local development, so the share of the effect that operates outside the hypothesised mechanisms remains to be tested. Finally, the sample of 217 respondents did not permit comparisons across regions, heritage forms or respondent groups. Larger samples would make it possible to test whether the mechanisms differ between urban and rural settings, or between arts with long tourism exposure, such as Quan Ho, and those still recovering from near disappearance, such as Ca Tru and Xoan.

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