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Strategies and policies for sustainable development of Vietnam's cultural industries using SWOT, AHP and QSPM approaches: A case study of the cultural tourism sector

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A B S T R A C T

Sustainable development strategies and policies for Vietnam's cultural industries and cultural tourism play a crucial role in promoting distinctive cultural values and simultaneously fostering a country's economic and social development. The main aim of this paper is to propose sustainable development strategies and policies for cultural tourism within Vietnam's cultural industries by applying a combined approach. The methodology integrates qualitative Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis and quantitative methods, including the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) method and the Quantitative Strategic Planning Matrix (QSPM), to evaluate internal and external factors influencing sustainable development of cultural tourism in Vietnam. Two hundred twenty-six survey responses from tourists, cultural tourism site managers, and 35 expert opinions were collected and analyzed. The findings identify the most significant strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats impacting the sustainable development of cultural tourism in Vietnam. Among these, the strengths and opportunities outweigh the weaknesses and threats. Based on the analysis from the SWOT-AHP-QSPM model, the study discusses and develops a growth-oriented strategy, prioritizing the application of digital technology in cultural tourism services, enhancing tourists' experiences, improving service quality, and strengthening cultural tourism promotion campaigns. The preliminary findings provide insights for policymakers, cultural tourism service providers, and local communities to adopt policies and strategic solutions that will promote the sustainable development of cultural tourism in the future, contributing to the growth of Vietnam's cultural industries.

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1. Introduction

Cultural tourism is a form of tourism focused on exploring and experiencing the cultural, historical and traditional values of local communities, contributing to the cultural exchange between tourists and the local population (Dredge & Jenkins, 2017; Gaonkar & Sukthankar, 2025; Richards, 2001). The development of cultural tourism not only plays a role in preserving heritage but also contributes to creating unique tourism experiences, improving the quality of life for local communities, and fostering the holistic development of the region (Calvi & Weber-Sabil, 2025; Timothy & Boyd, 2003).

In recent years, many studies have applied strategic analysis and evaluation approaches such as SWOT, AHP and QSPM in order to assess development potential and identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within various types of tourism. A review of these studies shows that most research utilizing these tools focuses on types such as ecotourism, wellness tourism and sustainable tourism (Jeelani & Shah, 2024; Rafiee, 2024; Samal & Dash, 2025; Wang et al., 2024). For cultural tourism, recent studies have explored various aspects, from evaluating socio-economic impacts to examining the role of digital media in promoting and preserving cultural heritage (Marlina et al., 2024; Mteti et al., 2025; Vaishar et al., 2025). However, applying strategic analysis methods like SWOT, AHP, and QSPM in cultural tourism remains limited. This research gap is particularly significant in the context of globalization and the intense competition among destinations, requiring the development of cultural tourism strategies that enhance tourist experiences while ensuring the sustainable preservation of cultural values, thus contributing to the growth of cultural industries.

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Vietnam is a country with enormous potential for developing cultural tourism. According to Tue and Hoa (2020) and VNTAIC (2023), Vietnam is home to a rich array of cultural tourism resources, with five tangible cultural heritage sites, one mixed heritage site, 14 intangible cultural heritage sites, and seven documentary heritage sites (including three World Documentary Heritage Sites and four Asia-Pacific Regional Documentary Heritage Sites) recognized by UNESCO. In addition to over 4,000 national heritage sites, 128 unique national heritage sites, and more than 400 national intangible cultural heritage sites, Vietnam is a multi-nationality country with 54 ethnic groups who have lived together throughout the country's formation and defense. This rich cultural diversity has created unique cultural characteristics. Promoting the exploitation of cultural values and developing tourism to meet visitors' needs has significantly contributed to generating income, creating jobs and promoting socio-economic development in Vietnam. However, cultural tourism products still lack diversity, have not effectively leveraged the value of cultural resources, and there is a lack of tourism products bearing national branding and highlighting the unique identity of different regions and localities (Khanh, 2023). Therefore, planning strategies for the sustainable development of cultural tourism that preserve and promote cultural values while enhancing the quality of life for local communities and improving visitor experiences is a necessary research endeavor.

This study addresses existing research gaps by applying the SWOT, AHP and QSPM approaches to propose optimal development strategies and policies for developing sustainable cultural tourism within Vietnam's cultural industries. Accordingly, the study will focus on answering the following questions:

RQ1. What macro and micro environmental factors create strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the development of cultural tourism in Vietnam?
RQ2. Which strategies and policies should be considered for the sustainable development of cultural tourism in Vietnam?
RQ3. What strategic solutions and policies should be implemented to enhance the competitiveness and sustainable development of cultural tourism in Vietnam's cultural industries?

2. Research Method

The study is conducted through qualitative and quantitative methods to establish a robust scientific framework for developing sustainable cultural tourism strategies in Vietnam. This process is divided into five main steps, each contributing to formulating and prioritizing development strategies, leading to specific policy recommendations (see Figure 1). As a result, the findings are reliable, highly applicable in practice, and enhance the proposed strategies' success potential.

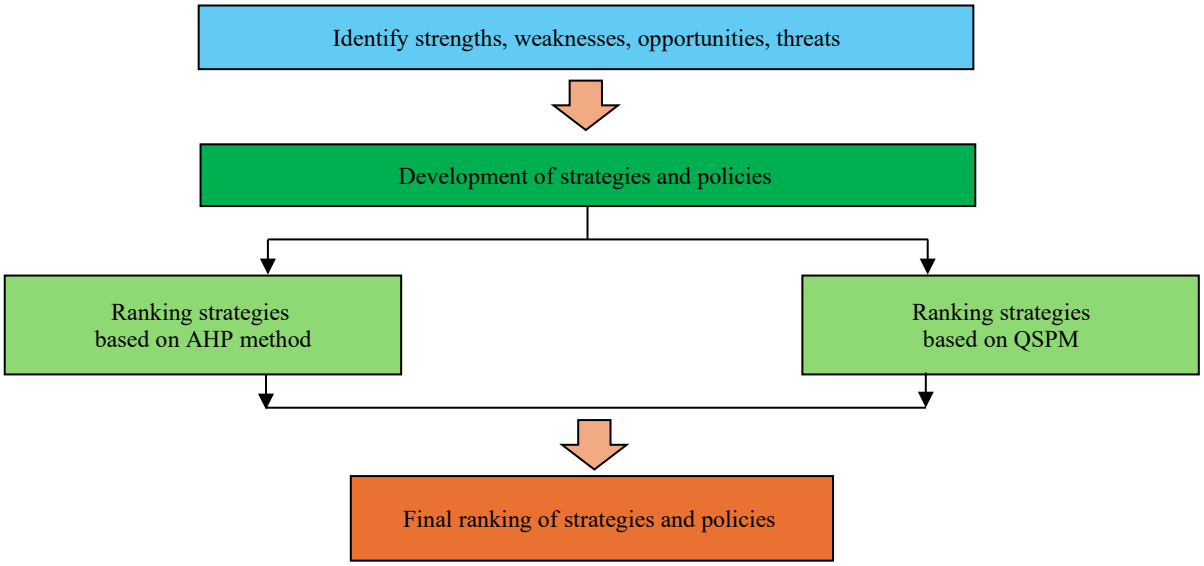

Figure.1. Flow chart of research steps

2.1. Providing strategies and policies for the development sustainable cultural tourism based on the SWOT matrix

In the initial phase, data was collected through surveys from tourists, managers at tourist sites, and interviews with experts in cultural tourism. This process aimed to identify key internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats) within each group that are affecting the development of the cultural tourism industry. After collection, the data was cleaned and tested for reliability using SPSS 24 software. Subsequently, the factors were ranked on a scale of 1 to 4, reflecting the effectiveness of each factor in contributing to the ideal vision of the tourism industry. The final score was calculated by multiplying the weight with the ranking of each factor, providing a quantitative measure of internal

and external factors. To identify the most influential factors (S, W, O, T) affecting the sustainable development of cultural tourism in Vietnam, the Relative Importance Index (RII) proposed by Kometa et al. (1994) was used:

$$\mathrm{RII} = \frac{\sum \mathrm{w}}{\mathrm{A} \times \mathrm{N}}$$

where: w is the rating score of each factor from each respondent; A is the highest possible rating; N is the total number of survey samples. The total score of these factors provides an overall perspective on the development potential and the degree of influence each factor has on the growth of cultural tourism in Vietnam. Based on the SWOT analysis results, development strategies and policies were grouped into four main categories: SO (leveraging strengths to capitalize on opportunities), WO (addressing weaknesses to seize opportunities), ST (using strengths to mitigate threats), and WT (minimizing weaknesses to avoid threats). This classification helps clarify the relationships between the factors and propose specific strategic solutions.

2.2. SWOT-AHP model

After identifying the SWOT factors, the AHP model is applied to build a hierarchical structure, with the objective of sustainable cultural tourism development placed at the highest level, followed by criteria (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) and specific sub-criteria. The factors are evaluated pairwise, with the values being assessed using the pairwise comparison scale proposed by Saaty (1982), forming a matrix (n × n) (Table 1). The relative weight of each pair of factors is calculated by dividing that factor's correlation value by the corresponding column's total value, forming a matrix that represents the correlation weights of the factor pairs (Table 2). The weight of each factor F1, F2, F3, ..., Fn is the average value of each corresponding row (Table 3).

Table 1
Matrix representing the priority levels of factors

Criteria	F_1	F_2	F_3	...	F_n
F_1	1	a_{12}	a_{13}	...	a_{1n}
F_2	a_{21}	1	a_{23}	...	a_{2n}
F_3	a_{31}	a_{32}	1	...	a_{3n}
...	...	...	...	...	...
F_n	a_{n1}	a_{2n}	a_{3n}	...	1

Table 2
Matrix representing the correlation weights of factor pairs

Criteria	F_1	F_2	F_3	...	F_n
F_1	w_{12}	w_{12}	w_{13}	...	w_{1n}
F_2	w_{21}	w_{22}	w_{23}	...	w_{2n}
F_3	w_{31}	w_{32}	w_{33}	...	w_{3n}
...	...	...	...	...	...
F_n	w_{n1}	w_{n2}	w_{n3}	...	w_{nn}

Table 3
Matrix representing the weights of factors

Criteria	Weight
F_1	w_1
F_2	w_2
F_3	w_3
...	...
F_n	w_{n1}

However, the consistency of the weight values of the factors in Table 3 must be checked through the Consistency Ratio (CR). The consistency of the assessment is acceptable if the CR ratio is less than or equal to 10%; otherwise, the evaluation needs to be revisited. The CR ratio is calculated as follows:

$$\mathrm{CR} = \frac{\mathrm{CI}}{\mathrm{RI}}$$

where CI is the Consistency Index, and it is defined as:

$$\mathrm{CR} = \frac{\lambda_{max} - n}{\mathrm{n} - 1}$$

where λ_max is the largest eigenvalue of the correlation weight matrix of the factor pairs (Table 5). The general formula for calculating the largest eigenvalue λmax is as follows:

$$\lambda\mathrm{max} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{j=1}^{n} \left(\frac{1}{w_j} \sum_{j=1}^{n} a_{ij} w_j \right)$$

where: n is the number of criteria; aij is the pairwise rating of the factor (Table 5); w_j is the average weight by row j (Table 3). This quantification helps reduce subjectivity in the evaluation and provides a scientific basis for decision-making. The SWOT-AHP model's results provide valuable insights into the current state of cultural tourism development in Vietnam and serve as a foundation for constructing and prioritizing sustainable development strategies.

2.3. QSPM

The QSPM is applied to prioritize development strategies. The QSPM converts the qualitative assessments from the SWOT analysis into quantitative values, thereby evaluating and ranking the priority levels of each strategy. This process helps in selecting the most optimal strategies, which are highly applicable in practice and aligned with the sustainable development goals of the cultural tourism sector. Finally, the highest-priority strategies are used to propose specific development policies. As a result, the research provides an overall view of the potential for cultural tourism development in Vietnam. It offers practical recommendations to optimize the exploitation of cultural values through increased digital technology applications and enhanced tourist experiences.

2.4. Data collection method

Based on reports and studies on cultural tourism (Hien, 2021; Khanh, 2023; Tue & Hoa, 2020) as well as the practical development of cultural tourism in Vietnam, combined with scientific, systematic, practical, and flexible principles of sustainable development, a system of indicators has been developed to assess the sustainable development factors of cultural tourism in Vietnam (Table 4). These factors are classified into five levels of evaluation: no advantage, slight advantage, average advantage, considerable advantage, and huge advantage, with corresponding scores of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively.

Table 4
The index system of sustainable development factors

Criterion layer	Indicator layer
Strengths (S)	S1. Diverse cultural tourism resources S2. A variety of cultural tourism types are implemented S3. Convenient transportation location S4. Favorable policy environment S5. Good tourism infrastructure S6. Friendly and hospitable local community
Weakness (W)	W1. Lack of skilled human resources W2. Low awareness of cultural preservation W3. Limited financial resources for cultural tourism development W4. Ineffective management and development strategies W5. Limited promotion efforts W6. Inconsistent quality of tourism products
Opportunities (O)	O1. Expanding international cooperation O2. Broad market prospects O3. Supportive policies and investment O4. Development of digital technology O5. Changing tourist perceptions of cultural tourism
Threats (T)	T1. Competitive pressure from neighboring countries T2. Impact of globalization trends on culture T3. Investment and financial challenges T4. Shifts in tourism consumption trends T5. Environmental risks and climate change

The data collection method for this study was random sampling. A total of 250 surveys were distributed to cultural tourism experts, tourists, and management/staff at prominent cultural tourism sites in Vietnam, including The Temple of Literature, the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long, the Complex of Monuments of the Ancient Capital of Hue, the Ancient Town of Hoi An, and the My Son Sanctuary. In total, 226 valid survey responses were collected. The reliability of the survey results, which consisted of 22 questions across four groups of factors (S, W, O, and T), was tested statistically using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The test results indicated that the observed variables in each group (S, W, O, T) had Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.805 to 0.840 (Table 5), demonstrating high consistency and reliability for further analysis.

Table 5
Summary of Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for each S, W, O, T group

Factor	Number of Observations	Cronbach's Alpha
Strengths	6	0.836
Weaknesses	6	0.805
Opportunities	5	0.840
Threats	5	0.810

3. Results

3.1 SWOT factor analysis

Based on the survey results and the RII from Kometa et al. (1994), the ranking of the SWOT factors is shown in Table 6 as follows:

Table 6
Ranking of the S, W, O, and T factors

Factor	Rating Score					RII	Ranking
	1	2	3	4	5		
S1	3	18	46	65	94	0.8027	1
S2	5	16	60	80	65	0.7628	6
S3	1	16	48	74	87	0.8035	2
S4	6	14	47	75	84	0.7920	4
S5	8	20	45	70	83	0.7770	5
S6	1	22	40	75	88	0.8009	3
W1	1	20	46	72	87	0.7982	2
W2	2	30	51	75	68	0.7566	5
W3	3	7	45	79	92	0.8212	1
W4	6	16	48	71	85	0.7885	4
W5	8	10	50	68	90	0.7965	3
W6	9	30	48	74	65	0.7381	6
O1	4	22	38	78	84	0.7912	2
O2	7	35	45	69	70	0.7416	5
O3	6	24	52	65	78	0.7611	4
O4	3	20	41	72	90	0.8000	1
O5	5	18	47	71	85	0.7885	3
T1	4	10	50	68	94	0.8106	1
T2	4	27	38	77	80	0.7788	5
T3	1	25	40	85	75	0.7841	4
T4	4	22	43	70	87	0.7894	3
T5	5	15	41	75	90	0.8035	2

The study selects the top 4 factors from each S, W, O, and T group with the highest ranking to develop a comprehensive strategy for the sustainable development of cultural tourism in Vietnam. This approach focuses on the most critical factors pivotal to developing cultural tourism in Vietnam (Table 7).

Table 7
Factors used for the SWOT-AHP model

Quality objectives	**Opportunities** O1. Expanding international cooperation O3. Supportive policies and investment O4. Development of digital technology O5. Changing tourist perceptions of cultural tourism	**Threats** T1. Competitive pressure from neighboring countries T3. Investment and financial challenges T4. Shifts in tourism consumption trends T5. Environmental risks and climate change
Strengths S1. Diverse cultural tourism resources S3. Convenient transportation location S4. Favorable policy environment S6. Friendly and hospitable local community	**SO strategies** SO1: Enhance cultural promotion through international events. SO2: Apply digital technology to improve cultural tourism services. SO3: Attract investment through favorable policies for cultural tourism. SO4: Education and communication to raise tourist awareness of culture.	**ST strategies** ST1: Improve tourism service quality and create product differentiation. ST2: Develop digital platforms to connect globally with Vietnam's cultural tourism. ST3: Leverage geographical location to develop cultural tourism routes.
Weaknesses W1. Lack of skilled human resources W3. Limited financial resources for cultural tourism development W4. Ineffective management and development strategies W5. Limited promotion efforts	**WO strategies** WO1: Train and collaborate internationally to enhance the human resources capacity for cultural tourism. WO2: Build community investment funds and public-private partnerships to develop cultural tourism. WO3: Develop online marketing to promote Vietnam's cultural tourism.	**WT strategies** WT1: Preserve the cultural heritage and minimize environmental impacts. WT2: Encourage sustainable tourism aligned with new consumption trends. WT3: Create an effective investment environment and enhance the management capacity of cultural tourism.

3.2 Results of the SWOT-AHP model

As shown in the diagram, the objective (selecting the best strategy for developing cultural tourism in Vietnam) is placed at the first level of the AHP model. The SWOT groups (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) are situated at the second level, the factors are at the third level, and the strategy options (SO, WO, ST, and WT) are at the fourth level of the model (Figure 2). From the 16 potential factors obtained after analyzing the survey results (Table 7), the SWOT-AHP model

was developed and assessed through direct interviews with 35 experts specializing in culture, cultural tourism, and sustainable development, all with over five years of experience. The interviews were conducted online via phone and in person at various tourist destinations between November 2024 and January 2025 to determine the relative importance of the S, W, O, and T groups and the factors within each group. The analytical model is presented in Figure. 2.

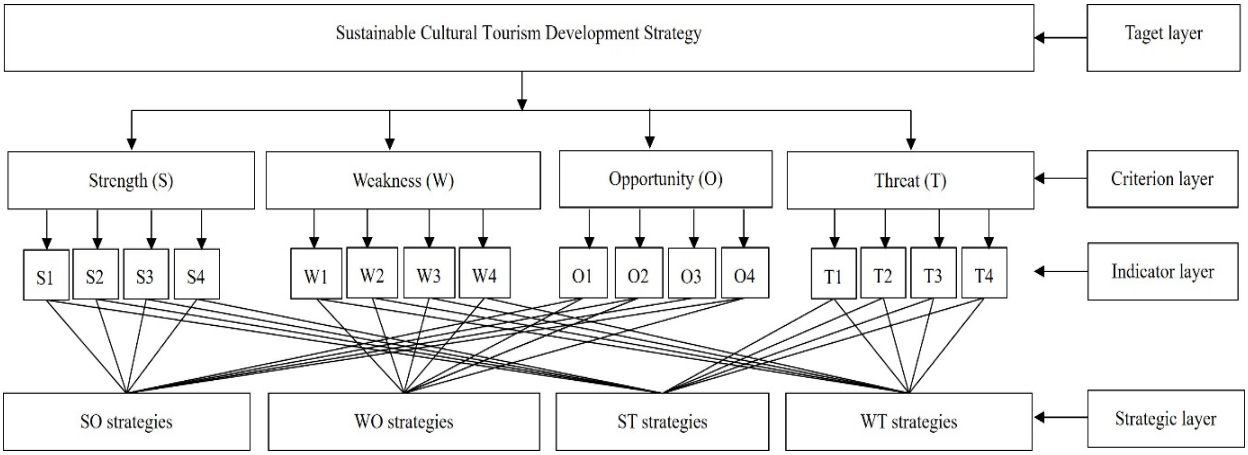

Figure.2. AHP model for SWOT analysis in evaluating the development of sustainable cultural tourism in Vietnam

The SWOT factors are analyzed using the AHP method to determine the importance of the SWOT factors through weights (w) calculated from the evaluation scores of 35 experts. This is done by performing pairwise comparisons among the first-level factors, which include strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O), and threats (T), and then comparing pairs of factors within each group at the second level: (1) the strength group (S) consisting of S1, S2, S3; (2) the weakness group (W) consisting of W1, W2, W3; (3) the opportunity group (O) consisting of O1, O2, O3; (4) the threat group (T) consisting of T1, T2, T3. The results of the analysis are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8
Global weight score of SWOT group with AHP analysis

Target layer	Criterion layer	Weight within group	Indicator layer	Weight within group	Combination weight
Sustainable development of cultural tourism in Vietnam	Strengths	0.406	S1	0.489	0.199
			S2	0.323	0.131
			S3	0.189	0.077
			S4	0.294	0.119
	Weaknesses	0.266	W1	0.287	0.076
			W2	0.440	0.117
			W3	0.236	0.063
			W4	0.262	0.070
	Opportunities	0.352	O1	0.358	0.126
			O2	0.228	0.080
			O3	0.492	0.173
			O4	0.195	0.069
	Threats	0.092	T1	0.331	0.030
			T2	0.291	0.027
			T3	0.252	0.023
			T4	0.320	0.029

Based on the analysis of the weighting results from the SWOT-AHP model, it was concluded that the strengths > opportunities > weaknesses > threats for the sustainable development of cultural tourism in Vietnam. The internal strengths outweigh the weaknesses, especially the diverse and rich cultural tourism resources, which create favorable conditions for the development of various cultural tourism products that cater to the diverse needs of visitors. The weaknesses in Vietnam's cultural tourism primarily lie in the lack of financial resources, limited promotional activities, and the inadequate quality of human resources for this tourism segment. Therefore, it is crucial to diversify investment sources to conserve and exploit cultural values for tourism development, increase digital platforms to connect global tourists with Vietnam's unique cultural tourism products, and focus on training skilled professionals.

Externally, technological development, expanded international cooperation and increased awareness about culture are strong drivers for the sustainable development of cultural tourism in Vietnam. Thus, policies and mechanisms must be created to facilitate the exploitation of opportunities related to digital transformation and the application of digital marketing in promoting Vietnam's cultural tourism products. Competitive pressures, environmental changes, and climate change pose the greatest threats to the sustainable development of cultural tourism. Policies must focus on enhancing competitiveness, adapting to climate change, and protecting cultural tourism sites from natural disasters to meet diverse needs and achieve sustainable development.

3.3. Development strategy analysis by QSPM

Based on the AHP and SWOT analysis results from Table 8, the SO strategy, which combines strengths (S) and opportunities (O), is currently the most optimal strategy for the sustainable development of cultural tourism in Vietnam. The SO strategy aims to leverage opportunities while capitalizing on existing advantages. It includes four specific strategies: (i) SO1: Strengthening the promotion of Vietnam's cultural values through international events and conferences, creating opportunities for cooperation with international tourism organizations; (ii) SO2: Applying digital technology to cultural tourism services to enrich tourists' experiences and improve the quality of cultural tourism services; (iii) SO3: Developing preferential policies to attract investment in cultural tourism; (iv) SO4: Organizing educational programs and communication campaigns to raise tourists' awareness of local cultural values, thus enhancing community interest and commitment to the preservation and development of cultural tourism.

The priority of these four strategies should be determined using the QSPM matrix. By using the four SO strategies as horizontal indicators and the four SWOT model factors as vertical indicators, this study constructed a QSPM matrix for the sustainable development strategy of the cultural tourism industry in Vietnam. In the matrix, SO1-SO4 are four alternatives of the SO strategy, S1-S4 correspond to the four characteristics of strengths (S), W1-W4 correspond to the four attributes of weaknesses (W), O1-O4 correspond to the four characteristics of opportunities (O), and T1-T4 correspond to the four attributes of threats (T). AS represents the attractiveness score for each characteristic, assuming that under the implementation simulation of the corresponding alternative strategy (one of SO1-SO4), the effectiveness of the simulation is estimated and evaluated according to the SWOT model. TAS is the total weighted attraction score of each characteristic, AS, and its weight factor.

Based on the results in Table 9, the total scores for the alternatives SO1, SO2, SO3, and SO4 are 3.492, 3.874, 2.508, and 2.417, respectively. Therefore, the priority ranking of the four alternative strategies is SO2 > SO1 > SO3 > SO4, indicating that the implementation plan and policies for the sustainable development strategy of the cultural tourism industry within Vietnam's cultural industries should prioritize the use of digital technology in cultural tourism services to enrich the experience of tourists and improve the quality of cultural tourism services (SO2). It should also focus on promoting the distinctive cultural values of Vietnam (SO1), building preferential policies to attract investment in cultural tourism (SO3), and organizing educational programs to raise awareness of cultural values (SO4).

Table 9
QSPM matrix of the sustainable strategies

Strategic factors	Weight	SO1		SO2		SO3		SO4	
		AS	TAS	AS	TAS	AS	TAS	AS	TAS
S1	0.250	2	0.500	4	1.000	3	0.750	3	0.750
S2	0.076	3	0.228	3	0.228	2	0.152	4	0.304
S3	0.066	3	0.198	3	0.198	2	0.132	2	0.132
S4	0.071	1	0.071	1	0.071	3	0.213	3	0.213
W1	0.045	2	0.090	2	0.090	3	0.135	3	0.135
W2	0.075	2	0.150	3	0.225	1	0.075	2	0.150
W3	0.069	2	0.138	2	0.138	3	0.207	3	0.207
W4	0.071	3	0.213	2	0.142	1	0.071	1	0.071
O1	0.150	3	0.450	4	0.600	4	0.600	4	0.600
O2	0.080	2	0.160	3	0.240	3	0.240	3	0.240
O3	0.091	4	0.364	4	0.364	2	0.182	3	0.273
O4	0.078	2	0.156	2	0.156	3	0.234	3	0.234
T1	0.084	3	0.252	3	0.252	2	0.168	2	0.168
T2	0.074	2	0.148	2	0.148	3	0.222	3	0.222
T3	0.077	3	0.231	2	0.154	2	0.154	2	0.154
T4	0.080	1	0.080	1	0.080	3	0.240	2	0.160
Total			3.492		3.874		2.508		2.417

4. Discussion

Sustainable cultural tourism has increasingly gained attention and is considered a significant development trend in many countries due to its essential role in preserving and promoting cultural values as well as boosting economic development (De Luca et al., 2020; Gaonkar & Sukthankar, 2025; Ghirardello et al., 2022; Liu & Chen, 2015). With its rich cultural tourism resources, such as world heritage sites, historical monuments, traditional festivals, folk art, and craft villages, Vietnam has enormous potential for developing sustainable cultural tourism (Tue & Hoa, 2020; VNTAIC, 2023, etc.). Therefore, a strategy or policy for sustainable tourism development of Vietnam's cultural industries through regeneration, combining heritage conservation with the rational use of cultural resources, is one of the key goals of Vietnam's tourism sector in the current period. This goal aligns with the Vietnam Cultural Industry Development Strategy until 2030, as set out in Decision No. 1755/QD-TTg dated September 8, 2016, and with Directive No.30/CT-TTg issued by the Prime Minister of Vietnam on August 29, 2024, on the development of Vietnam's cultural industries.

This study proposes strategies and policies for sustainable development of cultural tourism strategy in Vietnam through surveys and expert interviews, combined with references to previous research on cultural tourism. This research used three

analytical approaches: SWOT, AHP, and QSPM. First, the SWOT analysis method was applied to identify the internal and external factors affecting sustainable cultural tourism development in Vietnam. Then, AHP and QSPM tools were used to evaluate and prioritize strategies, ensuring their feasibility and effectiveness during implementation.

The study results have indicated that "Diverse cultural tourism resources" and "Limited financial resources for cultural tourism development" are the prominent strengths and weaknesses. Meanwhile, "Developing digital technology" and "Competitive pressures from neighboring countries" were identified as the most significant opportunities and challenges. These results align with several previous studies on the potential and advantages of developing cultural tourism in Vietnam. Reports from VNTAIC (2023) and Khanh (2023) show that Vietnam possesses significant potential and advantages in developing cultural tourism products and services. However, investment in the sector is still limited, and cultural tourism in Vietnam faces intense competition from neighboring countries (Khanh, 2023; Tue & Hoa, 2020).

The research used the SWOT matrix to address this issue by developing appropriate strategies for each combination of internal and external factors while also analyzing the optimal strategy set for the region based on the internal/external factors matrix. In the next step, AHP and QSPM analyses were applied to identify the optimal strategy. AHP and QSPM analyses were applied in the next step to identify the optimal strategy. The AHP hierarchical structure was developed, with the first level consisting of criteria related to strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; the second level consisting of 16 sub-criteria of internal and external factors; and the third level consisting of alternative strategies. The QSPM method and SWOT analysis helped select the optimal strategy from the SO options. The results indicate that the most effective strategy for Vietnam lies in the active strategic plans, focusing on leveraging internal strengths and external opportunities.

Based on the analyses above, this study identifies four key strategic solutions and policies for the sustainable development of cultural tourism in Vietnam as follows:
First, the strategy and policy are to enhance the application of digital technology in cultural tourism services to enrich visitor experiences and improve the quality of cultural tourism services (SO2). This strategy aims to use digital technology to improve the quality of cultural tourism services and enhance visitor experiences. The government of Vietnam must invest heavily in information technology infrastructure and support tourism businesses in adopting digital technology, such as developing mobile applications that provide detailed information about cultural destinations. Tourism businesses should develop digital tourism products, such as virtual reality tours and online cultural experiences, to attract visitors and improve service quality, thus providing more prosperous and authentic experiences. The local community should also increase the use of digital technology to showcase the local cultural values. Streaming cultural events and creating digital content about local customs and traditions will help enhance the presence of local culture on digital platforms, attracting interest from tourists.

Second, strengthening the promotion of Vietnam's unique cultural values through international events and conferences, creating opportunities for collaboration with international tourism organizations (SO1). To promote sustainable cultural tourism, the government should actively organize and support cultural events and traditional festivals at international events while establishing cooperative relationships with international tourism organizations. Promoting Vietnam's image at international events will help enhance the country's cultural values and attract international visitors. Tourism businesses should collaborate with international partners to create tour packages that combine participation in cultural events while introducing Vietnam's unique cultural tourism products. Local communities should also actively engage in cultural activities, provide quality community-based tourism services, and create a positive impression for international tourists, thus enhancing the value of cultural tourism of Vietnam’s cultural industries.

Third, developing incentive policies to attract investments in cultural tourism (SO3). This strategy focuses on creating policies that attract all resources to invest in cultural tourism, thereby promoting the development of this sector. The government needs to develop incentive policies related to taxes and land use, encourage public-private partnership (PPP) projects (Thanh, T. D. et al., 2024), and provide financial support for projects investing in cultural tourism to create a favorable business environment for enterprises. Tourism businesses can use these policies to invest in tourism infrastructure, develop unique cultural tourism products, and improve service quality. Local communities have played a crucial role in supporting businesses that provide tourism services while engaging in cultural activities to create attractive products that serve visitors' needs.

Fourth, organizing educational and communication programs to change visitors' awareness of local cultural values, thereby enhancing the interest and commitment of the community to the conservation and development of cultural tourism (SO4). Through educational and communication programs, this strategy aims to change visitors' awareness of local cultural values. The government should implement educational programs on national cultural values in schools and organize communication campaigns to raise awareness among visitors and the community about the importance of preserving cultural heritage. Tourism businesses should organize cultural experience activities and provide visitors with information about the local history and culture, increasing their interest and awareness of the local culture. Local communities should also participate in educational and communication programs, sharing knowledge about local cultures, preserving and promoting cultural values, and creating a sustainable cultural tourism environment.

5. Conclusion

In the current context, developing tourism associated with conserving and promoting cultural values has been an urgent requirement to drive sustainable development in the tourism sector and the economy in general. Vietnam's cultural tourism sector has attracted many domestic and international tourists in recent years thanks to its rich and diverse cultural resources. However, this form of tourism has yet to reach its full potential. Combining the SWOT-AHP and QSPM models, this descriptive analysis study aims to develop sustainable strategies and policies for cultural tourism within Vietnam's cultural industries. Based on the analysis, the development strategies identified and classified show that the options SO1, SO2, SO3, and SO4 achieved total scores of 3.492, 3.874, 2.508 and 2.417 respectively.

The results indicate that the most effective and innovative policy for sustainable development of Vietnam's cultural industries should, particularly cultural tourism, focus on reinforcing and maintaining the strengths such as abundant tourism resources, favorable transport infrastructure, supportive policies and the friendliness of local communities, while also capitalizing on opportunities such as the rapid growth of technology and expanding international cooperation. These factors form the foundation for promoting sustainable development of cultural tourism. Based on the quantitative analysis of internal and external factors, this study makes a theoretical contribution to the existing literature on SWOT-AHP-QSPM analysis in cultural tourism. It provides fresh insights into the integrated development of tourism and cultural industries in Vietnam.

However, due to financial and time constraints, the strategic factors identified in this study were based solely on the perspectives of a specific group of experts. Consequently, the findings may vary if opinions from other expert groups are considered. Future research should involve a broader consultation with experts and conduct more in-depth studies on each factor to develop scientifically sound and more comprehensive policies for the sustainable development of cultural tourism.

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