

# The Role of Cultural Heritage in Souvenir Development for Sustainable Tourism: A Case Study of the Hung Kings Temple Complex in Phu Tho, Vietnam

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the potential of leveraging traditional historical and cultural values to develop distinctive souvenir products, aiming to contribute to the preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage of the *Hung Kings Temple Complex* in Phu Tho, Vietnam, while fostering sustainable tourism. Through an analysis of *relevant scholarly literature*, the cultural significance of the Hung Kings' heritage, and the current state of souvenir production, this research proposes a framework for designing and developing culturally authentic souvenirs. The findings highlight the importance of integrating local narratives and symbols into product design to enhance *the visitor experience*, support local economies, and ensure the sustainable management of heritage sites. This paper offers practical implications for heritage managers, policymakers, and tourism stakeholders in developing unique cultural products that resonate with *the cultural identity of the destination*.

**Keywords:** Cultural Heritage, Souvenir Development, Sustainable Tourism, Hung Kings' Temple Complex, Phu Tho, Vietnam, Cultural Preservation, Traditional Values.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary global landscape, the cultural industry has emerged as a dynamic and increasingly vital sector, encompassing a wide array of activities *ranging from* arts and entertainment to heritage preservation, media, and creative design (UNESCO, 2009; Throsby, 2001). This industry is not merely an economic driver but also a powerful vehicle for promoting cultural identity, fostering social cohesion, and enhancing a nation's soft power on the international stage. Globally, cultural industries contribute significantly to GDP, create employment, and stimulate innovation, particularly through the commercialization of cultural assets and intellectual property. In Vietnam, the cultural industry *has been gaining momentum and is officially recognized by the government as* a key pillar of socio-economic development, aiming to transform cultural values into economic assets while safeguarding national identity. This strategic orientation underscores the need to leverage Vietnam's rich historical and cultural heritage to create unique products and services, thereby enriching the cultural life of its people and attracting international recognition.

Within this burgeoning cultural industry, cultural heritage tourism stands out as a significant segment, driven by travelers' growing demand for authentic experiences and deeper connections with local cultures (Smith, 2009; Richards, 2018). Souvenirs, in this context, play a crucial role *that goes beyond serving as simple keepsakes*; they function as tangible representations of a destination's identity, history, and cultural values, thereby influencing visitor satisfaction and contributing to local economic development (Kim & Littrell, 2001; Stylos *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, well-designed and culturally relevant souvenirs can act as powerful tools for heritage interpretation and preservation, fostering appreciation and motivating visitors to engage more deeply with the cultural significance of the sites they visit (Timothy & Boyd, 2003).

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The development of such products exemplifies the cultural industry's capacity to transform intangible heritage into marketable goods *embedded with* profound cultural narratives.

Vietnam, a nation rich in historical and cultural heritage, *hosts numerous sites with significant potential* for cultural tourism development. Among these, the Hung Kings Temple Complex in Phu Tho province stands as a paramount symbol of Vietnamese national origin and ancestral worship. Recognized as a Special National Relic Site, it embodies the profound historical and cultural values associated with the Hung Kings era, the legendary founders of the Vietnamese nation. The *Worship of the Hung Kings* in Phu Tho was also inscribed by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, underscoring its global significance. This rich heritage provides a unique foundation for developing distinctive tourism products, including souvenirs, that can both enhance the visitor experience and support the site's preservation.

Despite its profound cultural significance and the annual influx of millions of visitors, the Hung Kings Temple Complex—and Phu Tho province more broadly—faces a notable challenge: the scarcity of unique, culturally distinctive, and high-quality souvenir products. Many existing souvenirs *do not adequately reflect* the specific historical and cultural narratives of the Hung Kings era, often being generic or mass-produced items that fail to capture the essence of the destination. This gap not only diminishes the *overall visitor experience* but also represents a missed opportunity for local economic development and for leveraging souvenirs as effective channels of cultural promotion and heritage education.

This research addresses this critical gap by investigating the potential for developing souvenir products rooted in the traditional historical and cultural values of the Hung Kings Temple Complex. The study aims to propose practical solutions for designing and producing such souvenirs, thereby contributing to the sustainable development of tourism in Phu Tho while supporting the preservation and promotion of this invaluable national heritage. Specifically, this study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. *To provide a systematic review of theoretical and practical perspectives* on the development of souvenir products based on traditional cultural values.
2. To assess the current state of cultural heritage utilization and souvenir development at the Hung Kings Temple Complex, identifying existing strengths and limitations.
3. To identify and analyze key cultural symbols and narratives from the Hung Kings era that hold significant potential for souvenir design.
4. To propose a framework and concrete design solutions for developing authentic and appealing souvenir products that effectively convey the cultural essence of the Hung Kings Temple Complex.
5. To evaluate the potential contributions of these proposed souvenir products to heritage preservation, cultural promotion, and sustainable tourism development in the region.

This paper is structured as follows: Section 2 provides a comprehensive literature review on cultural heritage tourism, souvenir development, and the role of cultural values in product design. Section 3 outlines the research methodology *adopted* in this study. Section 4 presents the findings, including the analysis of *the Hung Kings' cultural symbols* and the proposed souvenir designs. Section 5 discusses the implications of these findings for heritage preservation and sustainable tourism, *while Section 6 concludes the study with recommendations for both future research and practical implementation.*

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Souvenirs in Cultural Heritage Tourism: Definitions and Roles

Souvenirs are *an integral part* of the tourism experience, serving as tangible reminders of visits and providing a means for tourists to recall and share their travel memories (Swanson & Horridge, 2006). Beyond their personal significance, souvenir products hold *multiple functions* within cultural heritage tourism. From an economic perspective, they contribute to local economies by generating revenue and supporting local artisans and businesses (Timothy & Boyd, 2003). For destinations, souvenir products act as marketing tools, extending the reach and memory of the place long after visitors have departed (Littrell *et al.*, 1993).

More profoundly, in the context of cultural heritage, souvenir products are not merely commodities but *cultural artifacts that encapsulate* the essence of a destination's heritage. They can represent historical events, traditional crafts, local folklore, or iconic symbols, thereby serving as educational tools that enhance visitors' understanding and appreciation of the culture they encounter (Gordon, 1986; MacCannell, 1976). The authenticity of souvenir products - particularly those handcrafted using traditional techniques or materials - is increasingly valued by tourists seeking genuine cultural engagement (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). This emphasis on authenticity underscores the potential of souvenir products to contribute to heritage preservation by sustaining traditional skills and providing economic incentives for cultural continuity.

## 2.2. Leveraging Cultural Values and Symbols in Product Design

The effective development of cultural souvenirs hinges on the strategic integration of local cultural values and symbols into product design. Cultural values defined as the beliefs, customs, traditions, and narratives that shape a community or heritage site (Hofstede, 1980) can be expressed through myths, legends, rituals, artistic motifs, and historical figures. When incorporated into souvenir design, these elements imbue products with distinctive cultural meaning and enhance their appeal.

The process of transforming intangible cultural values into tangible products requires a deep understanding of the source culture and creative design capabilities (Swanson & Timothy, 2012). Key theoretical approaches emphasize:

**Symbolic Representation:** Utilizing iconic symbols, patterns, or characters that are immediately recognizable and hold significant cultural meaning (e.g., traditional motifs, mythical creatures, historical artifacts).

**Narrative Integration:** Weaving local stories, legends, or historical events into the product's design or accompanying information, allowing the souvenir to tell a compelling cultural narrative (Ryan, 2002).

**Authenticity and Craftsmanship:** Emphasizing the use of traditional materials, techniques, and local craftsmanship to ensure the product's authenticity and support indigenous skills (Littrell, 1990).

**Contextual Relevance:** Ensuring that the souvenir aligns with the specific cultural context of the heritage site, reflecting its unique identity rather than generic themes (Timothy, 2005).

By carefully selecting and interpreting cultural symbols and narratives, designers can create souvenirs that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also culturally resonant, serving as powerful conduits for cultural transmission and appreciation.

## 2.3. Related Studies and Research Gap

Numerous studies have examined the relationship between tourism, cultural heritage, and souvenir consumption. Research has primarily focused on tourist motivations for purchasing souvenirs (e.g., remembrance, gift-giving, status-seeking), factors influencing purchase decisions (e.g., price, quality, authenticity), and the economic impacts of souvenir production on local communities (Kim & Littrell, 2001; Swanson & Horridge, 2006; Stylos *et al.*, 2017). In addition, several studies have investigated the role of souvenirs in reinforcing cultural identity and facilitating heritage interpretation (Timothy & Boyd, 2003).

However, despite the growing body of literature, a notable research gap remains regarding systematic frameworks for developing souvenir products grounded in specific and deeply rooted historical and cultural values, particularly in the context of distinctive heritage sites in developing countries. While the importance of cultural authenticity is widely acknowledged, detailed frameworks or case studies that demonstrate the practical processes of identifying cultural symbols, translating them into design concepts, and evaluating their contributions to heritage preservation and sustainable tourism are scarce. Moreover, research specifically addressing the souvenir development potential of the Hung Kings Temple Complex a site of profound national and international significance remains limited.

This study aims to bridge this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the Hung Kings' cultural heritage, proposing a structured approach for souvenir design, and evaluating the practical implications for sustainable tourism development and cultural preservation at this specific site. By doing so, it contributes to both the theoretical understanding of cultural product development and offers a practical model for similar heritage destinations.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative research techniques to comprehensively investigate the development of souvenir products based on the cultural values of the Hung Kings' Temple Complex. This approach allows for a holistic understanding of the subject, combining in-depth qualitative insights into cultural meanings and design processes with quantitative data on market demand and stakeholder perceptions.

### 3.1. Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through several stages, utilizing various sources to ensure a robust and multifaceted analysis:

#### 3.1.1. Documentary Analysis

An extensive review of historical documents, academic literature, and official reports related to the Hung Kings' era, the Hung Kings Temple Complex, and the cultural heritage of Phu Tho province was conducted. This review included myths, legends, folk tales, historical records, and scholarly works, with the aim of identifying key cultural symbols, narratives, and values. Insights and foundational information for the analysis were drawn from comprehensive internal documents and prior research reports, including detailed historical compilations and project reports such as “Bộ tư liệu về các truyền thuyết Hùng Vương” and “Báo cáo tổng hợp – Đề tài SPLN nghiệm thu 2017.”

Analysis of existing policies and regulations pertaining to cultural heritage preservation, tourism development, and the cultural industry in Vietnam and Phu Tho province.

### 3.1.2. Field Surveys and Observations:

Observation at the Hung Kings' Temple Complex: Direct observations were carried out at the Hung Kings' Temple Complex to examine the range of souvenirs available, the characteristics of existing stalls, visitor purchasing behaviors, and the broader tourism environment. These observations provided critical insights into the current state of souvenir offerings and highlighted their limitations.

#### Surveys with Tourists:

A structured questionnaire was distributed to a representative sample of tourists visiting the Hung Kings' Temple Complex. The survey design, as well as the preliminary insights into tourist preferences and perceptions, were informed by findings from previous projects, documented in internal reports such as "Chuyen de 1- gui HD co so.docx" and "Báo cáo chuyên đề 3 ban Gui HD co so ngay 22-5-2020.docx".

**Interviews with Stakeholders:** In-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including:

**Local Authorities and Heritage Managers:** To understand policies, challenges, and opportunities in heritage preservation and tourism development.

**Local Artisans and Craftspeople:** To gain insights into traditional production techniques, material availability, and their perspectives on integrating cultural symbols into their crafts.

**Tourism Business Operators (E.G., Tour Guides, Souvenir Shop Owners):** To understand market demands, distribution channels, and challenges in selling culturally specific souvenirs.

### 3.1.3. Product Development and Evaluation:

**Design Workshops:** Collaborative workshops were organized with designers, cultural experts, and local artisans to brainstorm and develop initial design concepts for new souvenir products based on identified cultural symbols.

**Prototype Production:** Selected designs were developed into prototypes using appropriate materials and techniques, frequently in collaboration with local craft villages and manufacturers. The conceptualization and initial prototyping processes were informed by insights and experiences from previous product development initiatives, as documented in internal reports such as "Các sản phẩm lưu niệm sản xuất 2018–2019 ban gui HD co so 21-5-2020.docx" and "Báo cáo chuyên đề 2 DA SPLN – Gui HD co so.doc".

**Expert Evaluation and Pilot Testing:** The prototypes were evaluated by a panel of experts in cultural heritage, tourism, and design. In addition, pilot testing was conducted with a small group of potential consumers to collect preliminary feedback regarding their appeal, functionality, and cultural relevance.

## 3.2. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods:

### 3.2.1. Qualitative Data Analysis:

Content analysis was applied to documentary sources and interview transcripts to identify recurring themes, key cultural symbols, narratives, and stakeholder perspectives on souvenir development and heritage preservation.

Thematic analysis was used to synthesize insights from interviews and observations, focusing on challenges, opportunities, and best practices in integrating cultural values into products.

### 3.2.2. Quantitative Data Analysis:

Descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies, percentages, means) were used to summarize demographic information of survey respondents and their preferences for souvenir characteristics.

Inferential statistics (e.g., t-tests, ANOVA, correlation analysis) were employed to identify relationships between variables, such as tourist demographics and their willingness to purchase culturally authentic souvenirs, or factors influencing purchase decisions. Statistical software (e.g., SPSS, R) was utilized for this purpose.

This comprehensive methodological framework ensures that the study's findings are robust, well-supported by evidence, and provide actionable insights for the development of culturally authentic souvenir products at the Hung Kings' Temple Complex.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the key findings of the study, structured to first analyze the rich cultural symbols and narratives of the Hung Kings' era, then assess the current landscape of souvenir development at the Hung Kings' Temple Complex, and finally, introduce the proposed souvenir designs that integrate these cultural elements.

### 4.1. Analysis of Hung Kings' Cultural Symbols and Narratives

The Hung Kings' era is deeply embedded in the collective memory and cultural identity of Vietnam, serving as the foundational period for the nation's history and traditions. The comprehensive review of historical documents and traditional narratives (as informed by "7. Bộ tư liệu về các truyền thuyết Hùng Vương- in cuối.docx") revealed a wealth of cultural symbols and narratives with significant potential for souvenir development. These symbols are not merely decorative elements but carry profound meanings, reflecting ancient beliefs, societal values, and historical milestones. Key categories of cultural symbols and narratives identified include:

#### Mythical Origins and Ancestral Figures:

**Lạc Long Quân and Âu Cơ:** The legend of the Dragon Lord Lạc Long Quân and the Immortal Fairy Âu Cơ, who gave birth to one hundred children, fifty ascending to the mountains with their mother and fifty descending to the sea with their father, is the most fundamental narrative of Vietnamese origins. This symbolizes national unity, the diverse origins of the Vietnamese people, and the concept of "Con Rồng Cháu Tiên" (Children of the Dragon and Grandchildren of the Immortals).

**The Hung Kings:** As the legendary founders and rulers of Văn Lang, the first Vietnamese state, the Hung Kings represent leadership, nation-building, and the enduring spirit of the Vietnamese people. Their images, or symbolic representations of their reign, hold immense reverence.

#### Key Legends and Folk Tales:

**Bánh Chưng, Bánh Giày (Square and Round Sticky Rice Cakes):** This legend, associated with Prince Lang Li, highlights the values of filial piety, respect for ancestors, and the importance of agriculture. The shapes of the cakes symbolize Earth (square) and Heaven (round), reflecting ancient cosmological beliefs.

**Sơn Tinh, Thủy Tinh (Mountain Spirit and Water Spirit):** This epic tale of a contest for the hand of Princess My Nương, symbolizing the struggle against natural forces (floods) and the ingenuity of the Vietnamese people in water management.

**Hát Xoan (Xoan Singing):** Recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage, Hát Xoan is a traditional folk singing genre performed during spring festivals, particularly in Phu Tho. It embodies communal spirit, ancient rituals, and artistic expression, offering rich visual and auditory motifs.

#### Material Culture and Artifacts:

**Trống đồng (Bronze Drums):** Particularly the Đông Sơn drums, which are iconic artifacts of the ancient Vietnamese civilization. Their intricate patterns often depict daily life, rituals, animals, and geometric designs, offering a rich source of decorative motifs.

**Agricultural Implements and Symbols:** Reflecting the agrarian nature of ancient Văn Lang, symbols related to rice cultivation, buffaloes, and other farming tools can represent prosperity and the foundation of the nation.

**Architectural and Natural Elements of the Temple Complex:** The specific architectural features of the temples, the ancient trees, and the natural landscape of Nghĩa Lĩnh Mountain itself can be stylized and incorporated into designs, connecting the product directly to the sacred site.

These symbols and narratives provide a robust foundation for developing souvenir products that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also deeply imbued with historical and cultural significance, offering visitors a meaningful connection to the heritage of the Hung Kings.

### 4.2. Current State of Souvenir Development at Hung Kings' Temple Complex

The assessment of the current souvenir market at the Hung Kings' Temple Complex, informed by observations and initial survey insights (as detailed in "Chuyen de 1- gui HD co so.docx" and "Báo cáo chuyên đề 3 ban Gui HD co so ngay 22-5-2020.docx"), reveals several key characteristics and limitations:

**Dominance of Generic and Mass-Produced Products:** A significant portion of currently available souvenirs are generic items (e.g., keychains, hats, t-shirts, small figurines) that lack specific cultural ties to the Hung Kings' era or Phu Tho. These products often feature general Vietnamese motifs or simple text, failing to convey the unique identity of the site. This prevalence of mass-produced goods, often imported, results in a lack of culturally distinctive products that truly reflect the profound heritage of the Hung Kings.

**Limited Authenticity and Traditional Craftsmanship:** A notable absence of handcrafted products and a heavy reliance on industrial manufacturing processes characterize the current souvenir offerings. This leads to a dearth of authentic, locally made items that could showcase the rich traditional craftsmanship of the region. The limited emphasis on local artisans and

traditional materials diminishes the perceived value and authenticity for tourists seeking genuine cultural engagement and unique, handmade keepsakes.

**Lack of Narrative Integration:** Existing products rarely incorporate the rich legends and stories of the Hung Kings' era. Without accompanying narratives or meaningful design, these items fail to educate visitors or deepen their appreciation for the cultural heritage.

**Price and Quality Discrepancy:** While some products are inexpensive, their quality is often low. Conversely, higher-quality items may not effectively convey cultural meaning or are not readily available.

**Limited Product Diversity and Innovation:** The range of souvenir types is relatively narrow, and there is a noticeable lack of innovative designs that could appeal to a broader demographic, including younger visitors or those seeking more sophisticated cultural products.

**Tourist Perceptions and Demand:** Surveys with tourists indicated a strong desire for more unique, culturally authentic souvenirs. A substantial percentage of respondents expressed willingness to purchase products that genuinely reflect the history and culture of the Hung Kings, even at a higher price point, provided the quality and cultural relevance are evident. For instance, "Báo cáo chuyên đề 3 ban Gui HD có số ngày 22-5-2020.docx" highlighted that a significant portion of consumers were willing to recommend culturally themed products, indicating a latent demand for such items.

In summary, the current souvenir landscape at the Hung Kings' Temple Complex presents a significant opportunity for improvement. There is a clear demand for products that authentically represent the site's profound cultural heritage, moving beyond generic items to offer meaningful and high-quality mementos.

### 4.3. Proposed Souvenir Designs and Their Cultural Integration

Based on the analysis of Hung Kings' cultural symbols and the identified gaps in the current market, this study proposes a series of innovative souvenir designs. These designs aim to effectively translate intangible cultural values into tangible products, enhancing visitor experience and promoting the heritage of the Hung Kings. The conceptualization and initial prototyping of these designs were guided by insights and experiences gained from prior product development initiatives (as documented in "Các sản phẩm lưu niệm sản xuất 2018-2019 ban gui HD có số 21-5-2020.docx" and "Báo cáo chuyên đề 2 DA SPLN - Gui HD có số.doc"). The proposed products are categorized by their primary cultural inspiration and material application:

#### 4.3.1. Products Inspired by Mythical Origins and Ancestral Figures:

**Figurines/Sculptures of Lạc Long Quân and Âu Cơ:** Stylized representations in ceramic, wood, or metal. Designs focus on capturing the essence of their roles as progenitors, perhaps with symbolic elements like a dragon and a fairy. These could be accompanied by small scrolls detailing their legend.

**Miniature Bronze Drums (Đồng Hồ):** Replicas or decorative items featuring intricate patterns inspired by Đông Sơn drums, incorporating elements like human figures, boats, birds, and geometric motifs. These can be made from bronze, ceramic, or even wood, serving as decorative pieces or functional items like coasters.

**"Con Rồng Cháu Tiên" Themed Items:** Products like silk scarves, ceramic plates, or small art prints featuring artistic interpretations of the dragon and fairy motifs, symbolizing the Vietnamese lineage.

#### 4.3.2. Products Inspired by Key Legends and Folk Tales:

**Bánh Chung, Bánh Giày Miniatures/Themed Items:** Small, decorative replicas of these cakes made from durable materials (e.g., resin, ceramic) or stylized patterns on textiles (e.g., tea towels, placemats). These items would be accompanied by a brief explanation of the legend and its significance.

**Sơn Tinh, Thủy Tinh Narrative Art:** Illustrations or small art pieces depicting key scenes from the legend, perhaps on wooden plaques, ceramic tiles, or framed prints. This could also extend to children's books or puzzles.

**Hát Xoan Inspired Crafts:** Products reflecting the artistry of Xoan singing, such as stylized musical instruments (miniature drums, phách), traditional costumes motifs on fabric items (e.g., pouches, fans), or decorative masks.

#### 4.3.3. Products Utilizing Local Materials and Craftsmanship:

**Phu Tho Green Tea Infused Products:** Given Phu Tho's reputation for tea, incorporating local tea into edible souvenirs or tea sets with Hung Kings' motifs.

**Bamboo and Rattan Crafts:** Utilizing locally abundant bamboo and rattan to create functional or decorative items (e.g., baskets, lampshades, small boxes) with etched or painted Hung Kings' symbols.

**Silk Products with Traditional Patterns:** Silk scarves, ties, or small bags featuring patterns inspired by Đông Sơn drums, Hát Xoan motifs, or stylized natural elements from the Temple Complex.

Each proposed product aims to: (1) clearly convey a specific cultural narrative or symbol of the Hung Kings' era, (2) utilize local materials and craftsmanship where appropriate to ensure authenticity and support local communities, and (3) be aesthetically appealing and functional, meeting contemporary consumer demands. The pilot testing and expert

evaluations confirmed the high potential and positive reception for these culturally integrated designs, indicating a strong market for such unique souvenir products.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study underscore the significant potential for developing culturally authentic souvenir products at the Hung Kings' Temple Complex, moving beyond generic offerings to create meaningful connections between visitors and the rich heritage of Vietnam. By systematically analyzing the profound cultural symbols and narratives of the Hung Kings' era and identifying the current deficiencies in souvenir offerings, this research provides a robust framework for product innovation. The proposed souvenir designs, which intricately weave historical legends, mythical figures, and traditional art forms into tangible items, are not merely commercial goods but serve as powerful vehicles for heritage interpretation, cultural promotion, and sustainable tourism development.

### 5.1. Implications for Heritage Preservation

The development of culturally authentic souvenir products offers a direct pathway to enhancing heritage preservation efforts at the Hung Kings' Temple Complex. Firstly, by transforming intangible cultural heritage (e.g., legends, folk tales, traditional music like *Hát Xoan*) into tangible products, these souvenirs contribute to the safeguarding and dissemination of cultural knowledge. Each product becomes a miniature ambassador, carrying the story and significance of the Hung Kings' era to a wider audience, thereby reinforcing its value and ensuring its continuity across generations. Secondly, the emphasis on local craftsmanship and materials in the proposed designs provides economic incentives for local artisans and communities to maintain and revive traditional skills. This direct economic benefit can prevent the erosion of traditional crafts, turning them into viable livelihoods and fostering a sense of pride and ownership among local populations in their cultural heritage. Lastly, when visitors purchase and appreciate these culturally rich souvenirs, their awareness and appreciation for the heritage site are deepened. This enhanced understanding can translate into greater support for conservation initiatives, responsible tourism behaviors, and a collective commitment to protecting the Hung Kings' Temple Complex for future generations.

### 5.2. Implications for Cultural Promotion

Culturally authentic souvenirs serve as potent tools for cultural promotion, extending the reach of the Hung Kings' heritage far beyond the physical boundaries of the Temple Complex. These products act as cultural ambassadors, carrying the essence of Vietnamese origins and ancestral worship to homes and communities worldwide. By integrating compelling narratives and iconic symbols, souvenirs can effectively communicate complex cultural meanings in an accessible and engaging manner. This not only enhances the visitor's understanding and memory of their experience at the site but also stimulates curiosity and encourages further exploration of Vietnamese culture. The unique identity conveyed through these products strengthens the destination's unique brand identity, differentiating the Hung Kings' Temple Complex from other tourist sites and establishing it as a premier cultural destination. This strategic use of souvenirs aligns with the broader objectives of Vietnam's cultural industry development, transforming cultural assets into marketable products that promote national identity and soft power.

### 5.3. Implications for Sustainable Tourism Development

The strategic development of culturally authentic souvenir products is intrinsically linked to the principles of sustainable tourism. Firstly, it contributes to diversifying tourism products and revenue streams for the Hung Kings' Temple Complex and the surrounding Phu Tho province. By offering a wider range of high-quality, meaningful products, the destination can attract a broader demographic of tourists and encourage higher spending, thereby reducing over-reliance on entrance fees or other single sources of income. Secondly, the focus on local production and craftsmanship directly supports local economies and creates employment opportunities for residents, including artisans, designers, and small business owners. This fosters inclusive growth and ensures that the economic benefits of tourism are distributed within the local community. Thirdly, by promoting products that celebrate local culture and heritage, the initiative encourages responsible consumption and minimizes the negative impacts often associated with mass tourism, such as the proliferation of generic, environmentally unfriendly, or culturally inappropriate goods. Finally, by involving local communities in the design, production, and sale of these souvenirs, the project fosters community involvement in tourism and heritage management, empowering residents and building a sense of collective responsibility for the sustainable future of the Hung Kings' Temple Complex.

While the potential benefits are substantial, successful implementation requires careful consideration of challenges such as maintaining product quality, ensuring fair trade practices, protecting intellectual property rights for traditional designs, and establishing effective market access and distribution channels. Addressing these challenges will be crucial for the long-term sustainability and impact of culturally authentic souvenir development.

This section highlights how the proposed approach to souvenir development at the Hung Kings' Temple Complex aligns with broader goals of heritage preservation, cultural promotion, and sustainable tourism, demonstrating the practical and theoretical significance of this research.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has thoroughly investigated the critical role of culturally authentic souvenir development in enhancing heritage preservation, cultural promotion, and sustainable tourism at the Hung Kings' Temple Complex in Phu Tho, Vietnam. By analyzing the rich historical and mythical narratives of the Hung Kings' era, assessing the current limitations of souvenir offerings, and proposing a series of innovative designs, this research provides a comprehensive framework for transforming intangible cultural values into tangible, meaningful products. The findings confirm a significant demand for such products among tourists and highlight their potential to serve as powerful tools for cultural interpretation and economic empowerment of local communities.

The research underscores that souvenirs are far more than mere commercial items; they are vital conduits for cultural transmission, fostering a deeper connection between visitors and the heritage site. The proposed designs, rooted in the legends of Lạc Long Quân - Âu Cơ, Bánh Chung - Bánh Giày, Sơn Tinh - Thủy Tinh, and the artistry of Hát Xoan, exemplify how traditional symbols and narratives can be effectively integrated into modern products. This integration not only enriches the visitor experience but also provides tangible benefits for heritage preservation by supporting traditional crafts and raising awareness about the cultural significance of the site. Furthermore, by promoting local production and community involvement, this approach aligns perfectly with the principles of sustainable tourism, ensuring that economic gains contribute directly to local livelihoods and the long-term viability of the heritage site.

### 6.1. Recommendations

Based on the findings and implications of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for stakeholders involved in the management and development of the Hung Kings' Temple Complex and Phu Tho tourism:

#### **For Heritage Managers and Local Authorities:**

**Develop a Strategic Plan for Cultural Souvenir Development:** Integrate the proposed framework and design principles into a long-term strategy for souvenir production, ensuring alignment with overall heritage preservation and tourism development goals.

**Establish Quality Control and Authenticity Standards:** Implement mechanisms to ensure the high quality, cultural authenticity, and ethical production of souvenirs, potentially through a certification or labeling system for "Hung Kings' Heritage Souvenirs."

**Invest in Local Craftsmanship and Training:** Provide support, training, and resources for local artisans to enhance their skills in traditional crafts and adapt them for contemporary souvenir design, fostering a sustainable ecosystem for cultural production.

**Create Dedicated Retail Spaces:** Establish well-designed, prominent retail outlets within the Temple Complex and key tourist areas in Phu Tho specifically for authentic, high-quality cultural souvenirs, enhancing visibility and accessibility.

#### **For Tourism Businesses and Entrepreneurs:**

**Collaborate with Local Artisans and Designers:** Actively seek partnerships with local craftspeople and designers to co-create and produce unique souvenir lines that reflect the Hung Kings' heritage.

**Integrate Narrative and Educational Content:** Ensure that souvenir products are accompanied by clear and engaging narratives (e.g., through packaging, tags, or digital content) explaining their cultural significance, thereby enhancing their value as educational tools.

**Diversify Product Offerings:** Explore a wider range of product categories and price points to cater to diverse tourist segments, from luxury items to affordable, yet culturally meaningful, keepsakes.

#### **For Researchers and Academics:**

**Conduct Further Market Research:** Investigate specific market segments and their preferences in more detail, including international tourists, to refine product development and marketing strategies.

**Assess Economic Impact:** Conduct follow-up studies to quantitatively assess the economic impact of culturally authentic souvenir development on local communities and the overall tourism economy of Phu Tho.

**Explore Digital Integration:** Research the potential of digital technologies (e.g., AR/VR, interactive apps) to enhance the cultural storytelling associated with souvenirs and provide immersive experiences.

### 6.2. Limitations and Future Research

This study provides a foundational understanding of culturally authentic souvenir development at the Hung Kings' Temple Complex. However, it acknowledges certain limitations. While initial pilot testing and expert evaluations were conducted, a comprehensive market test with a larger and more diverse sample of tourists would provide more robust

quantitative data on consumer preferences and willingness to pay. Additionally, the long-term economic and social impacts of implementing these souvenir development strategies require ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Future research could delve deeper into the specific consumer segments for these products, explore the role of branding and marketing in promoting culturally authentic souvenirs, and analyze the effectiveness of different distribution channels. Comparative studies with other heritage sites in Vietnam or Southeast Asia that have successfully implemented cultural product development strategies could also offer valuable insights.

By addressing these recommendations and pursuing further research, the Hung Kings' Temple Complex can solidify its position as a leading cultural heritage destination, where tourism and cultural preservation mutually reinforce each other through the power of authentic souvenir products.

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