

Preservation of cultural identity by Vietnamese youth through modern music in the global era

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ABSTRACT

In the current context, elements of folk culture are increasingly being explored by young Vietnamese artists as a creative resource in their musical productions. The fusion of modern music with traditional culture gives rise to melodies that are rich in national identity while still retaining a contemporary spirit. This combination facilitates greater engagement with the younger generation (Gen Z) and enhances their appreciation of cultural values. To clarify the relationship between music and identity, as well as how Vietnamese youth use music as a means to connect with and preserve national cultural identity in the era of globalization, the research team employed a quantitative method through surveys of university students regarding their perceptions and attitudes toward traditional music. This was combined with a case study approach to conduct an in-depth analysis of two musical works - “Bắc Bling” and “Đào Liễu” - based on criteria such as musical elements, imagery and social messaging, societal and media impact, and cultural - social value. The research findings reveal that the younger generation is not indifferent to traditional culture. On the contrary, they are actively engaging in creative processes that incorporate traditional elements into modern music. These musical productions not only shape new aesthetic preferences but also foster intergenerational dialogue and spread effectively through digital platforms. This affirms that cultural preservation can be achieved through creativity, adaptation, and innovation - demonstrating the proactive cultural dynamism of Vietnamese youth in the age of globalization.

Keywords: Modern music, Traditional culture, Young generation (Gen Z), Cultural identity preservation, Creativity and innovation

1. INTRODUCTION

President Hồ Chí Minh once stated that “Culture lights the way for the nation,” a thought later reiterated by the late General Secretary Nguyễn Phú Trọng during the National Cultural Conference on the implementation of the 13th Party Congress Resolution, held on the morning of November 24, 2021, in Hanoi: “Culture is the identity of a nation; as long as culture exists, the nation exists. If culture is lost, the nation is lost.” In a world that is increasingly integrated, modern music is heavily influenced by foreign cultures, such as Western culture or the Hallyu wave. The incorporation of folk cultural elements into music not only helps promote national traditions but also serves an educational purpose - instilling in

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younger generations a sense of cultural identity, love for their homeland, and national pride. A deep understanding of cultural roots empowers young people with the confidence to step into the era of globalization. To clarify how artists - especially young ones - integrate cultural elements into music, and to examine the impact of such musical works on young people's perceptions, the research team selected two representative compositions that incorporate folk materials for in-depth analysis, while also conducting a small-scale survey to provide a more comprehensive and objective perspective on the topic.

2. RESEARCH OVERVIEW AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

2.1. Literature Review

At present, there is a lack of in-depth research in Vietnam on how young people use modern music as a means to preserve national cultural identity. Existing studies and academic articles have primarily focused on youth musical preferences or the imbalance between contemporary popular music and traditional music. A notable example is the study titled "What Is Seen in the Role of Traditional Music in Schools?" (May 25, 2020) by Nguyễn Thị Minh Châu, which emphasizes the essential role of traditional music in education. The author proposes reintroducing this art form into schools through age-appropriate methods of transmission, while also criticizing the trend of "Westernization" in professional music education in Vietnam. Another relevant study is "The Role of Aesthetic Emotion in Musical Activities" (May 3, 2017) by Nguyễn Thu Nghĩa and Triệu Thị Linh, which explores the relationship between aesthetic emotion and culture in the context of music. The article affirms that for young people, music has become a space for creativity, where traditional cultural imprints are expressed through the revitalization of folk music - such as rewriting lyrics or blending traditional tunes with modern melodies.

In contrast, international research tends to focus more directly on the relationship between music and cultural identity, as well as the interaction between traditional and modern cultural forms. A typical example is found in studies of Korean music and culture - a country that has developed a robust presence in regional popular culture. In *Preserving Korean Music* (2006), Keith Howard provides an in-depth analysis of South Korea's traditional music preservation system, emphasizing the role of the state and artists in maintaining national identity. Meanwhile, Neela Roshini and colleagues examine the influence of the Hallyu wave on Indian youth in their study "Influence of Korean Culture among Today's Youth" (2024), asserting that Korean culture has become a model for cultural modernization - where traditional values are preserved within a modern framework that appeals to young audiences. Another notable study by Evan William Stewart - "South Korea Manages Globalization: Strategies of Self-Definition and Cultural Preservation" (2023) - argues that South Korea has successfully managed globalization through two main strategies: self-defining its identity via cultural exports (such as K-pop and cinema) and preserving traditional elements such as Hanbok (traditional clothing), Hanok (traditional houses), and Hansik (Korean cuisine), all under strong governmental support.

Thus, it can be observed that most existing studies treat traditional music primarily as a heritage to be preserved, without paying sufficient attention to the creative fusion between tradition and modernity as seen in the hybrid musical productions currently popular in Vietnam. There remains a lack of research that delves into the relationship between youth and their behavior in preserving cultural identity through the adaptation of folk music within contemporary musical contexts. In particular, few studies have investigated how young people

access, perceive, and disseminate revitalized traditional elements embedded in modern musical works. Despite the notable impact of compositions such as “Bắc Blink” and “Đào Liễu”, these pieces have yet to be examined from a scientific perspective. This research gap serves as the impetus for the research team to explore how Vietnamese youth preserve cultural identity through modern music, thereby contributing a new dimension to the academic discourse on this topic.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Key Concepts: Cultural Identity, Globalization, and Modern Music

Cultural Identity

Cultural identity refers to the totality of values, norms, symbols, customs, and beliefs that are distinctive to a community or nation, formed through historical development and manifested in social life. In Vietnam, national cultural identity is expressed through elements such as the Vietnamese language, folk music, traditional clothing, customs and rituals, folk beliefs, traditional festivals, the spirit of community, and patriotism.

Globalization

Globalization is the process of expanding and strengthening interconnections and mutual influences among countries and nations across various fields, including economics, culture, politics, science, and technology. In the cultural domain, globalization leads to cultural exchange and acculturation, while also posing the risk of eroding national identity - particularly among younger generations.

Modern Music

Modern music, also known as contemporary music, is a term that emerged in the 20th century, encompassing various genres such as pop, rap, indie, EDM, among others. Changes in technology, culture, and society have profoundly influenced the development of music, giving rise to new melodies, unique performance styles, and innovative artists. At the same time, music has gradually become an effective medium for conveying cultural values in a way that resonates with young people, contributing to the awakening of national pride.

2.2.2 Theoretical Approaches

In this article, the research team constructs an interdisciplinary theoretical framework, integrating fields such as cultural studies, youth sociology, and media - arts studies, with the aim of illustrating the relationship between music and cultural identity. The study affirms that music is not merely a form of entertainment but also a medium for transmitting values, collective memory, and cultural symbols.

Two foundational theories are applied in the research: Cultural Identity Theory and Acculturation Theory.

Cultural Identity Theory, developed by Mary Jane Collier and Milt Thomas, explores how individuals or groups perceive and define themselves through shared cultural elements. This includes both self-perception and the sense of belonging to a particular group - whether defined by nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, or other culturally distinct communities. Cultural identity is not static; rather, it can transform dynamically through interaction with new environments, especially in the context of globalization.

Acculturation Theory, proposed by John W. Berry, describes the cultural and psychological changes that occur when different cultures come into contact and interact. It goes beyond the mere adoption of another culture to encompass reciprocal influences and mutual transformation between cultural groups.

2.3. Research Methodology

2.3.1. Quantitative Method

The quantitative method was employed through a survey investigating how young people receive, evaluate, and utilize music that incorporates traditional elements in their daily lives. The questionnaire was structured into sections, including personal information, perceptions of music, attitudes toward traditional culture, and musical behavior. The survey form was developed based on previous studies and adapted to suit the target demographic - Vietnamese youth. Specifically, the research team conducted the survey among university students in the Hanoi area. A total of 46 valid responses were collected. Among the respondents, the majority were between the ages of 19 and 22 (accounting for 80.4%), followed by the age groups 15 - 18 (10.9%) and 22 - 29 (8.7%). In terms of gender, females overwhelmingly comprised 84.8% of the participants, while males accounted for only 15.2%.

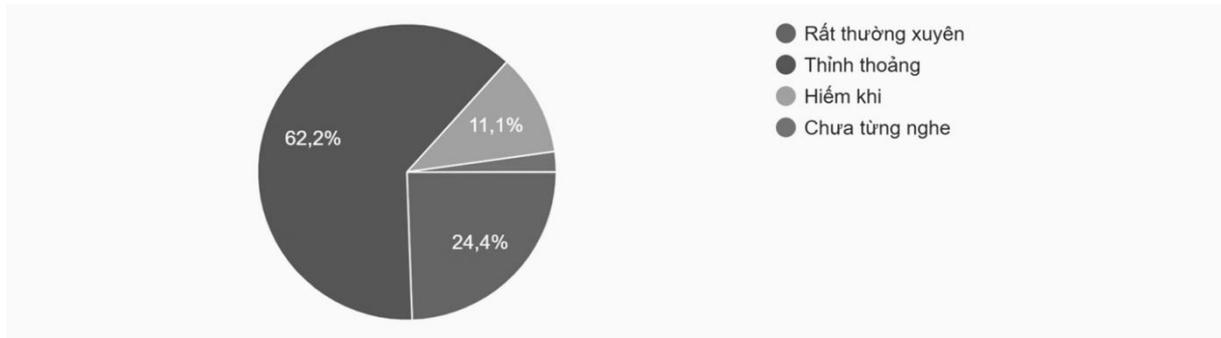


Figure 1. Frequency of Listening to Songs with Traditional Elements among Young People

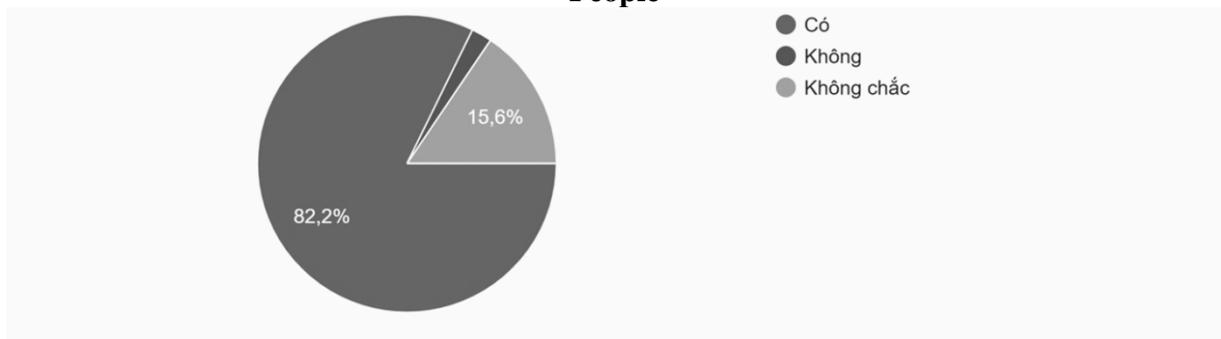


Figure 2. Level of Interest in Vietnamese Culture among Young People after Listening to Songs with Traditional Elements

According to the survey data, although 62.2% of young respondents reported that they do not frequently listen to songs featuring traditional elements, as many as 82.2% expressed curiosity and interest in folk culture after being exposed to such musical forms. This suggests that music can serve as an effective medium for cultural promotion. Through diverse musical expressions, listeners not only gain a deeper understanding of traditional aesthetics but also

experience a sense of curiosity and enjoyment, which may encourage them to actively seek out more knowledge about national history. However, alongside these positive signs, it is also necessary to raise questions about why a majority of young people still have limited exposure to music that incorporates traditional elements. Could this be due to the limited number of compositions by artists, or is it a result of ineffective communication and outreach efforts that fail to make such content easily accessible to young audiences? In reality, although most listeners show interest when they hear or watch songs with traditional features, the number of those who proactively seek out similar content remains relatively low.

2.3.2. Case Study Method

The case study method was the primary approach applied in this research, implemented through the analysis of two musical works - “Bắc Blink” and “Đào Liễu” - based on four specific criteria: (1) musical elements; (2) imagery and social messaging; (3) social and media impact; and (4) cultural and social value.

The research team selected “Bắc Blink” and “Đào Liễu” for analysis because both works employ musical language and visual elements that align with the preferences of young audiences - from musical arrangement and performance style to the use of social media for dissemination. Bắc Blink became a viral sensation on social media platforms, garnering millions of views and ranking on trending lists in multiple countries. Meanwhile, Đào Liễu also made a strong impression through a reality television program, bringing the traditional art of *chèo* closer to younger viewers. The success of these works affirms that traditional culture can indeed be revitalized and effectively promoted in contemporary contexts - not only avoiding decline but also gaining international reach.

3. “BẮC BLINK” AND “ĐÀO LIỄU”: HOW YOUNG PEOPLE USE MUSIC TO PRESERVE CULTURAL IDENTITY

3.1. Bắc Blink

More than just a musical product, Hòa Minzy’s music video Bắc Blink is a work of creative art that honors the cultural beauty of the Kinh Bắc - Bắc Ninh region. Rather than recreating a traditional setting in a nostalgic or conventional manner, the MV deliberately incorporates traditional elements such as *quan họ*, *xâm*, and *chèo* - distinctive Northern Vietnamese vocal art forms - into a modern musical rhythm, resulting in a composition that feels both familiar and novel. It is this intersection of the old and the new that allows traditional music to resonate with a younger audience.

Hòa Minzy chose her own homeland - an area renowned for its rich history, romantic *quan họ* folk songs, ancient communal houses, and vibrant cultural heritage - as the primary source of inspiration for the MV. This region is closely associated with singing traditions, festivals, and unique spiritual values. However, Bắc Blink does not follow the conventional path of strict cultural reproduction; instead, it explores the beauty of local culture through a contemporary lens, skillfully blending tradition with the pulse of the modern era.

Hòa Minzy’s Bắc Blink stands as a representative case illustrating how popular art can serve as an effective medium for reinterpreting, translating, and disseminating traditional culture to modern youth. By combining folk materials from the Kinh Bắc - Bắc Ninh region with electronic hip-hop music, Bắc Blink becomes more than a musical work - it becomes an artistic manifesto, where cultural identity is reconstructed through a deeply personal and creative lens.

Musical Elements

Bắc Bling blends traditional folk music with modern electronic hip-hop. Music producer Masew incorporated various traditional Vietnamese instruments - such as the đàn nguyệt (moon lute), sáo (bamboo flute), đàn nhị (two-string fiddle), and drums - yet arranged them in a contemporary style with fast-paced rhythms. In addition to *quan họ*, the song also integrates other quintessential Northern Vietnamese vocal genres such as *xẩm* and *chèo*. Furthermore, part of Bắc Bling's lyrics draws inspiration from familiar *quan họ* verses in songs like “Ăn một miếng trầu” (“Take a bite of betel”) and “Người ở đừng về” (“Please stay, don't leave”), creating a composition that is both steeped in folk tradition and infused with youthful, experimental energy. Phrases like “ăn một miếng trầu cho lòng ấm thắm” (“a bite of betel to warm the heart”), which once belonged to older generations, are now reimagined through catchy melodies and energetic beats, sparking not only musical enjoyment but also curiosity about the cultural context behind each lyric. With its vibrant rhythm and infectious hooks - combined with the distinctive sounds of *quan họ* - Bắc Bling has quickly captured the attention of young audiences. At the same time, it outlines a promising and innovative trajectory for the revival of folk music in the era of global integration.

Visuals and Social Messaging

One of the key factors behind Bắc Bling's breakthrough lies in its storytelling through both music and visual imagery. The success of the music video is also attributed to its richly symbolic visual language. Cultural symbols such as the áo tứ thân (four-panel traditional dress), áo ngũ thân (five-panel dress), nón quai thao (flat palm hat), Đông Hồ folk paintings, miếng trầu tằm cánh phượng (betel quid folded in phoenix wing shape), and the custom of blackened teeth are not merely decorative elements - they constitute a visual semiotic system in which each detail evokes multiple layers of cultural meaning.

From the very first scenes, the MV opens up an artistic space imbued with the cultural essence of Northern Vietnam. Hòa Minzy makes a striking appearance in a graceful áo tứ thân, holding a traditional fan, vividly recreating the image of an elegant Kinh Bắc woman from the past. A particularly notable and impactful moment in the MV is the depiction of the blackened teeth custom - once a widespread cultural practice in Vietnamese society. Through this artistic revival, the audience is invited to appreciate the ancient beauty and reflect on the profound traditional customs of their ancestors.



Figure 3. Illustrative Image from the MV Bắc Bling

The MV was filmed at well-known landmarks in Bắc Ninh - the cradle of *quan họ* culture. Each frame is meticulously crafted, featuring elements such as Đông Hồ folk paintings and the betel-chewing ritual, all blending harmoniously to create a vibrant cultural tableau of Northern Vietnam. In one scene, Hòa Minzy appears dressed in a traditional áo ngũ thân, with her hair elegantly coiled, showcasing her talent with various traditional musical instruments. A particular shot showing four young women in a room evokes the iconic Đông Hồ painting *Tổ Nữ* (The Elegant Ladies), reflecting the MV's thoughtful investment in reviving folk art. In another scene, as artists Xuân Hinh and Tuấn Cry perform a musical dialogue, the director boldly stages an exaggerated visual composition: Xuân Hinh on a raised platform and Tuấn Cry respectfully standing beside him - a scene reminiscent of the famous Đông Hồ painting *Đám cưới chuột* (The Rat's Wedding), creating a unique cultural connection. Throughout the MV, the image of the áo tứ thân, closely associated with the Kinh Bắc region, appears alongside trays of betel quids shaped like phoenix wings. In Vietnamese culture, the betel quid symbolizes emotional expression and the refinement of Vietnamese women. Within the *quan họ* tradition, the act of offering betel is elevated to a cultural ritual, exemplified by the elegant and artful invitations extended between the male and female singers (*liền anh* and *liền chị*).

Another highlight of the MV lies in its thoughtful costume design. Throughout the video, Hòa Minzy wears eight different outfits, ranging from purely traditional garments to subtly modernized adaptations. These include a striking fuchsia pink ensemble featured in the opening “*vinh quy báỉ tồ*” (homecoming) scene, complete with a hand-braided *yếm* (traditional bodice) and a modernized *nón quai thao* (flat palm hat); a light pink costume for the *hầu đồng* (spirit mediumship) scene, consisting of a puff-sleeve áo dài embroidered with handmade patterns, a long skirt, and a metallic headpiece; a black *yếm* paired with a sequined skirt in the pottery-making scene; and a traditional áo tứ thân with *nón quai thao* during the Lim Festival sequence - each look conveying a distinct aesthetic. The male artists in the MV are equally memorable. Artist Xuân Hinh appears in a black traditional áo dài embroidered with floral motifs, complemented by a *khăn xếp* (traditional headscarf) and black sunglasses, while Tuấn Cry wears a vibrant, modern streetwear outfit. Together, these styles embody the convergence of folk culture and urban hip-hop. The visual contrast between the older artist's traditional attire and the younger artist's hip-hop-inspired fashion within the same frame underscores the multidimensional nature of identity - where the old and the new do not conflict, but rather complement one another in shaping a “cultural self” that is both individual and rooted in community. This juxtaposition does not disrupt the visual cohesion of the MV. On the contrary, it accentuates the richness and vitality of Vietnamese culture as it flows and adapts within the contemporary era.

Social and Media Impact

Within just 72 hours of its release, Hòa Minzy's *Bắc Bling* surpassed 9 million views, ranking as the 6th most-viewed music video globally within 24 hours. It also reached the #1 spot on YouTube Vietnam's Trending chart and appeared on charts in numerous countries such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Australia. As of May 24, 2025, the MV had garnered over 200 million views on YouTube, just over two months after its debut. These figures demonstrate the powerful appeal of a modern music product infused with cultural elements - proving that young audiences are far from indifferent to traditional culture. The key issue lies not in cultural disinterest, but in whether the cultural expression aligns with their aesthetic codes. A wave of cover performances, remixes, and short-form videos on TikTok - featuring the MV's settings, costumes, or soundtrack - reveals the viral influence the

MV has had among young people. This is a generation seeking not only to "honor tradition" but also to "live with tradition."

A pivotal factor in the viral success of *Bắc Bling*'s media campaign was the "Proud To Be Local" effect - local pride. Rather than merely using Bắc Ninh as a backdrop, the MV elevates the province into a central character, where both its culture and people take on leading roles. Bắc Ninh becomes the protagonist, with every custom, individual, and setting treated as part of a living heritage. As a result, the MV transcends its status as an individual artistic creation by Hòa Minzy and emerges as a symbolic cultural legacy for the community - where local culture becomes a unifying force, evoking regional pride, particularly in the consciousness of the younger generation.

Cultural and Social Value

From honoring the heritage of Kinh Bắc to creatively expressing cultural identity through modern musical language, *Bắc Bling* illustrates the vast potential of tradition when approached innovatively. This production demonstrates that, with strategic investment, traditional culture can transcend local boundaries and become a strong cultural bridge that confidently connects Vietnam with the global stage.

More than just an artistic achievement, *Bắc Bling* also holds significant potential for promoting local identity. The settings featured in the MV could be developed into attractive tourist destinations, thereby stimulating the tourism sector and fostering multi-sectoral value chains that contribute to sustainable economic growth.

Notably, the participation of veteran artist Xuân Hinh - a symbol of traditional *chèo* - alongside younger performers like Hòa Minzy and Tuấn Cry, reflects a spirit of intergenerational dialogue within traditional arts. This collaboration not only helps preserve folk art forms in contemporary society but also breathes new life into them, reigniting love and deep cultural connection among young audiences.

Considering all these factors, it is evident that *Bắc Bling* is not merely a successful artistic and media product, but a representative case of how tradition can be accessed through fresh, creative methods to engage younger publics. The integration of music, visuals, cultural symbols, and media strategy has contributed to reshaping Vietnamese youth's musical tastes - from favoring foreign trends to confidently listening to, appreciating, and embracing their own cultural heritage. *Bắc Bling* affirms that tradition is not preserved by locking it away, but by continuing its story - using new materials, speaking the language of the younger generation, and embracing the aspiration to elevate Vietnamese culture beyond local confines and into the global cultural stream.

3.2. Đào Liễn

Đào Liễn represents the revival of Vietnamese folk literature and ritual music through a modern performance style. Originally a lục bát (six-eight) poem, the title *Đào Liễn* is derived from the opening line "*Đào Liễn một mình*" and is also known as *Đường thư*. Much like other contemporary music pieces combining electronic sounds and rap, *Đào Liễn* was performed on the show *Anh trai vượt ngàn chông gai* ("Brother Overcomes a Thousand Obstacles") in the format of a mini music concert. At its core, the performance fuses a traditional *chèo* (Vietnamese opera) melody with rap, one of the newest genres in the Vietnamese musical landscape. The result is a compelling blend of East and West, ancient and modern - infusing

the piece with cheerful energy, while still carrying a subtle melancholy. This bittersweet duality is characteristic of *chèo*, which often offers metaphorical reflections on life's paradoxes. The performance reaffirms that tradition should not be confined to classical stages but must be brought to the public through artistic formats accessible and engaging to younger audiences.

Musical Elements

Various musical materials were employed in *Đào Liễu*, including traditional music, rap, and electronic music. However, this performance goes beyond a simple remix; it was carefully composed to produce a lyrical and culturally rich folk song. Over a contemporary base of electronic drums and bass, the performance retains the hát nói (recitative) structure typical of ca trù - a highly intellectual and complex musical form recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2009. Musically, *Đào Liễu* exemplifies the acoustic "translation" of cultural sound. Traditional music is not relegated to a mere background layer, but treated as an equal counterpart to modern elements in the harmonic and rhythmic structure. This redefines the relationship between "classical" and "contemporary" in the aesthetic perceptions of young audiences, allowing them to approach musical heritage not as something distant or outdated, but as a natural and integral part of today's diverse musical environment.

Visual Aesthetics and Cultural Message

In the performance of *Đào Liễu* on *Anh trai vượt ngàn chông gai*, artists appeared in traditional Vietnamese attire such as áo tứ thân, khăn vấn (wrapped headscarves), and yếm (bodices), evoking the image of Northern women from the past. The garments featured motifs like water waves and lotus flowers - symbols associated with Buddhism - highlighting the subtle and profound nature of Vietnamese culture. The stage design skillfully incorporated imagery recalling ancient folktales: "Peach and willow by the riverside," "Carrying water while waiting for someone," and "The pink yếm reflected in the rippling stream." These visual cues not only illustrated the song's content, but served as conduits of collective memory, linking visual aesthetics with spiritual and cultural values. For instance, the image of a woman beside a water bucket not only evokes nostalgia but also symbolizes the traditional Vietnamese ideal of femininity - patience, sacrifice, and cultural rootedness.

Chèo and ca trù are typically unfamiliar to younger audiences. Therefore, making folk art more public-facing - as seen in *Đào Liễu* - offers a fresh and creative approach to showcasing traditional values. The artists displayed ingenuity in communicating aesthetic messages through onstage visuals and costume design. By relying entirely on traditional Vietnamese materials - rather than borrowing foreign stylistic elements - the performance helps establish an internal Vietnamese aesthetic identity, affirming that the younger generation can regard traditional culture as a boundless source of inspiration. This also suggests a promising educational direction: art-based cultural education, allowing young people to "touch tradition" through aesthetic experience rather than rote memorization.



Figure 4. Illustration of the MV *Đào Liễu*

Social and Media Impact

Đào Liễu emerged as one of the most striking and viral performances in the entire program *Anh trai vượt ngàn chông gai* (“Brother Overcomes a Thousand Obstacles”). The performance video was shared hundreds of thousands of times across social media platforms. The fusion of folk-electronic instrumentation and modern rap from *Đào Liễu* was widely cited and reused in numerous TikTok videos. The performing group, **Nhà Trẻ**, won the fourth showcase night with a score of 3,020 - the highest of the evening - garnering high praise from both the judges and the audience. This widespread popularity goes beyond simple admiration; it signifies a growing cultural trend in which traditional art forms are increasingly embraced by younger generations. This strong virality proves that traditional arts - if innovatively reimaged and properly repositioned - need not remain static cultural “ornaments” in festivals, but can instead become vibrant artistic languages with the power to shape contemporary cultural trends.

Following the broadcast, many young people began actively researching *chèo*, *quan họ*, Northern Vietnamese folk songs, and other classical melodies. The impact of *Đào Liễu* has thus proven to be more than temporary - it has triggered a broader cultural awakening and reflection. Rather than viewing folk music as outdated or obsolete, many youths have come to recognize the aesthetic value and cultural depth embedded in genres like *chèo* and *quan họ*. *Đào Liễu* effectively narrows the gap between highbrow (academic) arts and mass audiences. Through a popular entertainment format, cultural values that were once confined to museums or classical stages have been revived in accessible and shareable formats. This marks a **positive step in the democratization of culture**, where art forms previously labeled as “niche” or “for the elderly” are now being organically and actively embraced by the youth - enabled by digital platforms and creative forms of expression.

Cultural and Social Value

Through the performance *Đào Liễu*, traditional folk melodies, *chèo* opera, and ethnic instruments such as the đàn bầu (monochord zither), đàn tranh (Vietnamese zither), and trống cơm (rice drum) - which have been gradually fading into obscurity - are now being revived under the modern musical lens. The work not only contributes to the preservation of traditional musical heritage but also conveys a positive cultural message about the relevance of folklore in the contemporary context. Traditional music, once confined to nostalgic spaces such as village communal houses, *chèo* stages, or folk festivals, is now recontextualized on modern stages with refined production techniques. This shift creates a new aesthetic framework in which tradition is no longer “trapped” in the past, but naturally coexists with

and enriches modern artistic life. Since folk music inherently contains elements of collective memory, its reappearance through modernized forms reactivates these memories within the community, profoundly influencing young generations - who are often disconnected from their cultural roots. Moreover, a defining feature of traditional music in Vietnam is its inseparable link with ritual practices - from *chèo* singing in funerals, *trống cơm* drums during festivals, to *hò kéo lưới* (net-pulling chants) that pray for a bountiful harvest. When these elements are adapted into contemporary arrangements, the rituals are not only preserved, but they also become more accessible to modern audiences.

Today, music allows traditional culture to break free from its “ethnic enclosure.” Rather than being limited to books or museum spaces, folk culture is reimagined into highly engaging artistic products. Young people are no longer passive outsiders, but instead become creative agents and cultural transmitters. This marks a significant advancement in cultural preservation - from museumization to creative revitalization. The *Đào Liễu* stage exemplifies this transformation, where underground artists like Nhà Trè rap over *chèo* melodies while still preserving the essence of the original form. Such innovative reinterpretations that respect the core structure of tradition without dismantling it represent a flexible and effective preservation strategy - one that retains the soul of the nation while allowing heritage to live on in the rhythm of modern times.

3.3. The Role of Music in Building and Preserving Cultural Identity Among Vietnamese Youth

It is evident that music - particularly compositions infused with folk elements such as Northern Vietnamese folk songs, *ca trù* influences, or lyrics bearing indigenous cultural nuances - has become an effective bridge connecting younger generations to their cultural identity. The flow of contemporary music, when blended with traditional cultural rhythms, creates a unique fusion between the modern and the ancestral, enabling Generation Z to gain a deeper understanding of their nation’s core cultural values. Modern music has shown a remarkable ability to “modernize” traditions, reimagining folk cultural elements such as *cải lương*, *tuồng*, *chèo*, and *dân ca* in innovative, accessible ways. Through modern musical arrangements and music videos that incorporate traditional motifs, young people are given opportunities to engage with their cultural heritage without necessarily attending museums or academic courses.

Moreover, music helps foster a sense of community among those who appreciate and value the arts, facilitated through online platforms such as artists’ fan pages or live cultural events like contemporary folk music festivals. When culturally inspired music products are widely disseminated on platforms like YouTube or TikTok, national cultural identity is likewise spread more broadly and effectively. A prime example is the music show *Anh trai vượt ngàn chông gai*, where contemporary music was harmoniously fused with traditional culture. Cultural values were vividly brought to life on stage through sound, imagery, and emotional resonance, reflecting the creativity and cultural responsibility of Vietnamese youth - dynamic and adaptive, yet firmly rooted in their national identity.

In the digital age, traditional methods of disseminating cultural values via textbooks or academic materials are becoming less appealing. Music has thus emerged as a soft educational tool - more engaging and capable of reaching younger audiences. It not only reflects cultural values but also conveys messages of history, morality, lifestyle, and national identity in a vivid and impactful way. Music videos such as *Tự Hào Việt Nam* or *Việt Nam Ôi! Mùa Xuân Đến Rồi* are not only artistically refined but also rich in cultural inspiration. It can be affirmed that music enables young people to engage with traditional culture more

naturally and proactively than conventional forms of education. It also stimulates national pride, a sense of cultural preservation, and the potential to generate new cultural expressions from the foundation of heritage. Furthermore, the proliferation of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, alongside entertainment apps such as YouTube and Spotify, as well as reality music shows like *Anh Trai Say Hi*, *Anh trai vượt ngàn chông gai*, *Bài Hát Của Chúng Ta*, and *Rap Việt*, have made it easier for young audiences to access both mainstream music and songs embedded with traditional cultural elements.

Today, under the influence of globalization, young people's perspectives on traditional culture are expanding. In addition to appreciating cultural values through artistic consumption, many young artists actively recreate traditional elements within their own musical works. Folk elements are increasingly being explored in songwriting and have received strong support from the community. However, there has recently been a growing skepticism among certain audience segments regarding the authenticity behind the use of traditional materials. Is it driven by a genuine passion for folk culture, or merely a strategic move to create personal branding and attract public attention? Are these artists seeking to forge a new pathway for tradition to resonate with contemporary youth, or are they simply capitalizing on a fleeting trend?

Indeed, traditional culture has become a popular movement among Vietnamese youth, and its positive impact cannot be denied. Today's young generation growing up in the digital age values personal freedom and self-expression. They are leveraging their talents and boundless creativity to continue the cultural narrative of the nation. However, young artists must also approach cultural adaptation with care. Any reinterpretation of tradition must avoid distortion or offense and always demonstrate respect for cultural heritage.

4 . CONCLUSION

This study has offered a fresh perspective on how Vietnamese youth engage with and reinterpret traditional cultural identity through modern music. In the context of globalization and the increasing influence of modern lifestyles on the aesthetic sensibilities and worldviews of the younger generation, music has emerged as a flexible medium for self-expression while maintaining a vital connection to the nation's cultural roots. Survey results indicate that young people are not indifferent to tradition; instead, they are actively exploring and approaching traditional cultural elements in creative ways. Music products that blend traditional instruments and folk materials with contemporary lyrics, melodies, and techniques not only help shape a new aesthetic but also create an intergenerational dialogue between the past and the present. Meanwhile, social media and digital platforms play a crucial role in disseminating these values, bringing traditional culture closer to Generation Z - a generation born in the digital age but still seeking to define its national identity. From these research findings, it is clear that preserving cultural identity among youth does not necessarily require a closed or conservative approach, but can instead be achieved through innovation, adaptation, and creativity. The harmonious combination of tradition and modernity not only fosters a vibrant cultural flow but also exemplifies the proactive spirit of cultural adaptation among Vietnamese youth in a globalized world.

To promote the integration of traditional and modern music and contribute to the preservation and development of cultural identity, the government and cultural management agencies can implement several strategies. These include enhancing the presence of traditional music education in schools through extracurricular activities or integration into

core subjects, encouraging young artists to collaborate with traditional folk artists to create music that blends inheritance with innovation, and organizing competitions or music festivals that provide platforms for young musicians to create and perform hybrid works. In addition, public and private arts institutions, along with artists, can invest in developing dedicated digital platforms for contemporary folk music or designate specialized sections within existing platforms, helping to establish this genre in the minds of listeners. These approaches will further highlight music's role as a bridge between past and present, contributing to the preservation of national identity within the flow of cultural integration.

Although this study has partially clarified how Vietnamese youth preserve cultural identity through their reception and creation of contemporary music, several limitations remain. First, the current research focuses primarily on descriptive surveys and lacks in-depth analysis of how demographic factors and digital media influence cultural behavior. Additionally, the paper does not yet compare the phenomenon of preserving cultural identity through music in Vietnam with other Asian countries such as China, Japan, etc. Given the rapid development of digital culture, exploring the relationship between identity, technology, and artistic behavior will be a crucial direction for understanding the role of youth - as emerging cultural agents - in the preservation and renewal of national cultural heritage. This will be a promising trajectory for the group's future research.

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