

DEVELOPING SILK-BASED TOURISM IN ASSOCIATION WITH SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE IN LAM HA, LAM DONG PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

As sustainable tourism development evolves and circular economy principles take deeper root, the inclusion of traditional crafts, particularly sericulture, in experiential tourism has emerged as an appealing strategy embraced across various countries. This paper seeks to recommend strategic directions for the development of silk-based tourism in Lam Ha, Lam Dong province, an area with a long-standing tradition of mulberry cultivation, silkworm farming, and silk weaving, and where local resources are favorable. Based on field research and a review of successful tourism examples from places like Van Phuc (Hanoi), Tan Chau (An Giang), San Kamphaeng (Thailand), and Como (Italy), the study proposes four main types of tourism products: (1) experiences related to silk farming; (2) educational tourism focused on traditional crafts; (3) creative and wellness tourism that includes silk; and (4) shopping and souvenirs related to silk. These product divisions not only align with current market trends but also foster sustainable local economic development and preserve cultural heritage.

Keywords: Silk-based tourism, agricultural tourism, sustainable tourism, Lam Ha.

1. INTRODUCTION

As Vietnam's tourism sector progressively embraces sustainable development while preserving cultural identity, the use of traditional values to enhance tourism products has become an inevitable trend. The tourism industry in traditional craft villages, mostly recognized for revered handicrafts such as mulberry cultivation, silkworm farming, silk reeling, and weaving, is increasingly recognized as a model that integrates cultural preservation with economic development and environmental sustainability [1-3].

Sericulture and silk weaving are essential parts of the local culture and can play a significant role in developing experiential, educational, artistic, and wellness tourism. International programs such as the "Farm to Fashion" initiative in Chiang Mai (Thailand) and the "Italian Silk Road" initiative in Como (Italy) have shown the socioeconomic feasibility and highlighted the potential of combining traditional silk craftsmanship with cultural and agri-creative tourism [4, 5].

Lam Ha district in Lam Dong Province is a key region in Vietnam for mulberry agriculture, silkworm breeding, and silk production, excelling in both scale and quality. The district's People's Committee reports that Lam Ha presently dominates the province with more than 3,500 hectares of mulberry farms and an annual cocoon production of over 5,000 tons [6]. Grower cooperatives and silk farms provide raw materials for textile manufacturing and

create a solid base for the long-term development of silk tourism within a circular economy framework. However, the underutilization of this potential is largely due to the poor linkage between agriculture, industry, and services, as well as the lack of distinctive silk tourism in the area.

This work aims to combine local and global experiences in the growth of silk tourism, examine the local context of Lam Ha district, and suggest suitable tourism plans. The key aim is to find ways to grow silk tourism with added value alongside sustainable agriculture, thus enhancing the local tourism environment and preserving traditional crafts within a modern context.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Traditional craft village tourism

Craft village tourism refers to a type of cultural tourism where visitors have the opportunity to experience and learn traditional handicrafts in the local community [7]. It is this type of tourism that the World Tourism Organization [8] gives immense importance to, as it not only contributes to traditional knowledge conservation but also enables employment generation, income growth, and sustainable development promotion in rural areas. UNWTO also emphasizes that the success of craft village tourism depends largely on the integration of production, visitor experience, and product consumption. The combination of cultural preservation with technological application and innovation is considered a necessary direction in the context of globalization and international integration [9].

2.2. Developing silk-based tourism

Sericulture and silk weaving are among the traditional handicrafts that hold high cultural and economic value. Globally, countries such as Thailand, China, and Italy have developed tourism models based on silk production that integrate manufacturing, experience, education, and creativity. For example, the “Farm to Fashion” model in Chiang Mai (Thailand) offers visitors the chance to explore and participate in the entire silk production process, from mulberry cultivation to weaving [4]. In Como (Italy), the “Italian Silk Road” project combines industrial silk heritage with museums, creative workshops, and cultural tourism activities [5].

In Vietnam, the Van Phuc Silk Village in Hanoi, and the Tan Chau Silk Village in An Giang, represent two prominent examples of silk-based craft village tourism. However, reports and studies show that these villages have problems like disrupted traditional production methods, reliance on outside materials, and a lack of intergenerational skill transmission, which affects the authenticity and sustainability of the visitor experience. Thus, newer integrated innovative models will be required that harmonize modern tourism consumption trends with innovation and local identity [10-14].

2.3. Sustainable agricultural tourism and the circular economy

Agritourism is beyond just farm visits; it is a tool for promoting sustainable agriculture and economic empowerment of the local community. In climate change and resource diminishment, the circular economy has a place in the development of tourism. It is a practice aimed at improving resource efficiency and reducing waste throughout the entire value chain [15].

The incorporation of sericulture, a conventional farming activity, with tourist services comprising silk reeling, hand-weaving, and creative workshops, as well as wellness services,

represents a circular agricultural tourism concept. This approach helps keep the traditional handicraft alive and creates new value-added opportunities for the local economy [8].

3. METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative research to examine practical models, and propose strategic directions for improving silk tourism linked to sustainable farming in Lam Ha district.

- Data were collected from scholarly journals, academic publications, thematic reports, and the official websites of relevant organizations at both national and international levels. These sources focused on the topics of craft village tourism, agricultural tourism, circular economy, and sustainable development.

- Direct observations were made at mulberry production, silkworm rearing, silk reeling, and weaving sites in Lam Ha district. The goal was to assess the current status of traditional sericulture practices and how they stand regarding tourism potential as well as readiness for integration into a tourism value chain.

- A detailed examination was conducted to identify the features of successful tourism development models, looking at aspects like agri-tourism value chains, visitor experiences, community involvement, use of technology, and sustainable practices in creating tourism products.

4. RESULT

4.1. Selected models of Silk-based tourism development

(1) Van Phuc Silk Village (Hanoi)

Van Phuc Silk Village, located in Ha Dong District, Hanoi, is one of the oldest traditional silk weaving villages in Vietnam, dating back more than 1,000 years. Despite many historical changes, the village has preserved its renowned reputation for producing soft, fine silk, a quality so prized that this silk was once used as tribute to the imperial court and exported to many countries. Newer efforts have integrated tourism with the craft community to conserve and promote traditional cultural elements. Van Phuc has become a major draw for domestic and foreign tourists. The cultural space of the village continues to be preserved and enhanced through tourism products such as weaving workshop tours, áo dài fittings, silk product purchases, and cultural festivals with direct visitor participation. All these elements contribute to a very dynamic model of craft village tourism while also diversifying to Hanoi's tourism offerings [16, 14, 11].

Nonetheless, substantial hurdles underlie these accomplishments. A major issue with the current approach is that it disrupts the traditional production chain. Currently, Van Phuc no longer engages in mulberry cultivation, silkworm rearing, or local silk processing. The majority of raw materials are sourced from external locations, so constraining the thoroughness of the tourist experience and diminishing the authenticity of the complete “farm-to-fabric” process. Significantly, estimates from the media and industry stakeholders suggest that China imports over 70% of the silk products available in Van Phuc. Although more economical, these imports frequently lack quality and fail to embody the village's cultural identity. This circumstance engenders confusion for travelers and constitutes a significant threat to the integrity of the Van Phuc silk brand [17, 10, 18].

Table 1. Tourism development model of Van Phuc silk village (Hanoi)

Key Components	Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preservation of the cultural space of traditional craft villages. - Guided tours to silk weaving workshops. - Áo dài fitting experiences. - Cultural events and festivals organized within the village. - Integration of OCOP certification and digital platforms into marketing and sales. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tourist appeal to both domestic and international markets. - Enhanced brand value of the craft village. - Contribution to the preservation of local heritage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The village no longer cultivates mulberries or raises silkworms locally. - Raw materials are sourced from other regions, disrupting the traditional production chain. - Approximately 70% of silk products sold are imported from China, leading to reduced authenticity and confusion among visitors. - Inconsistent product quality has eroded consumer trust in the Van Phuc silk brand.

(2) Tan Chau Silk Village (An Giang)

The tourism development model of the village, which integrates cultural heritage with handicraft production, has achieved success. Visitors to Tan Chau will have the opportunity to admire lustrous Lãnh Mỹ A silk fabrics and participate in many production stages, from harvesting Mặ Nưa fruits to dyeing textiles and weaving silk, and they will also listen to artisans who share stories about the cultural and historical legacy of the village. In addition, famous fashion designers like Vo Viet Chung and Nguyen Cong Tri have showcased Tan Chau silk on international runways, which has greatly helped promote Vietnamese silk craft worldwide [13].

This model too has its challenges. Currently, very few households are engaged in silk weaving, and approximately 20 production facilities are operational, employing nearly 190 workers. The major cause has been the increased scarcity of mặ nưa fruit, coupled with high production costs which makes production more expensive domestically. There is also a problem of the lack of next-generation artisans and competition from industrial products, which is further threatening the long-term viability of the traditional craft industry in the village [19].

Table 2. Tourism development model of Tan Chau silk village (Hanoi)

Key Components	Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preservation and promotion of traditional silk weaving. - Organization of experiential tours, including visits to weaving workshops, fabric dyeing sessions, and the harvesting of mặ nưa fruit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unique silk products that embody strong local cultural identity. - Tourist appeal to both domestic and international markets. - Contribution to the preservation and promotion of traditional craftsmanship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decline in the number of households engaged in silk weaving. - Scarcity of raw materials and rising production costs. - Lack of next-generation artisans and growing competition from industrial textile products.

(3) San Kamphaeng Silk Village (Chiang Mai, Thailand)

San Kamphaeng Silk Village is about 13 kilometers east of downtown Chiang Mai, along the Handicraft highway. This place is renowned for its workshops and showrooms offering Thai handicrafts done the old way; these include silk textiles, ceramics, and silverware, along with lacquerware and paper umbrellas. The visits to the silk weaving shops are of great interest, here guests can see the entire process of making silk, from raising silkworms to reeling cocoons and then dyeing and weaving, using natural and traditional methods.

Tourists will also be invited to take part in interactive workshops such as natural silk dyeing as well as weaving silk fabrics, which will enable them to make their own personalized silk products. Besides boosting visitor engagement, this immersive experience helps keep and promote the the traditional craftsmanship of northern Thailand [20].

Table 3. Tourism development model of San Kamphaeng silk village (Thailand)

Key Components	Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “Farm to Fashion” model: Visitors can experience the entire silk production process, from silkworm rearing and cocoon reeling to dyeing, weaving, and product design. - Hands-on workshops and instructional classes are organized, allowing tourists to directly participate in various stages of silk production. - Silk products are marketed both on-site and via e-commerce platforms, expanding market reach and promoting local craftsmanship to a wider audience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preserves traditional craftsmanship and raises awareness of local cultural identity. - Creates added value through immersive, hands-on experiences. - Generates income and employment opportunities for local communities. - Appeals to tourists interested in cultural and artisanal tourism experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk of over-commercialization, which may compromise the authenticity and traditional value of the craft. - High dependence on tourist arrivals, which makes the model vulnerable to external factors such as pandemics or economic fluctuations.

(4) The “Italian Silk Road” Project (Como, Italy)

The city of Como in northern Italy has long been one of Europe’s leading centers for silk production. To preserve and promote its silk industry history, Como has made a tourism model for cultural and creative tourism called the “Italian silk road,” with the Museo Didattico della Seta at the center.

The museum shows not just things, tools, and papers linked to the nearby silk trade but also gives visitors the chance to touch and try interactive experiences. The program includes guided walks showing how silk is made, starting from raising silkworms and unrolling cocoons to weaving and creating fashion items. Through these things, guests learn deeply about the past and ways of making silk while also taking part in fun workshops. These experiences help share knowledge with the community about old heritage and support the green growth of the local silk trade [5].

Table 4. Tourism development model in Como, Italy

Key Components	Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integration of industrial silk heritage into cultural and creative tourism initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preserves and promotes industrial cultural heritage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reliance on tourist arrivals makes the model vulnerable to external shocks, such as pandemics or

Key Components	Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guided tours of the silk exhibition area that feature historical artifacts, machinery, and archival documents. - Hands-on experiences of the silk production process, encompassing both traditional techniques and modern technologies. - Creative workshops and public education programs aimed at raising awareness and fostering appreciation of silk heritage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generates added value through experiential learning and public education. - Supports the sustainable development of the local silk industry. - Creates employment opportunities and increases community income. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> economic fluctuations. - Excessive commercialization poses a risk of eroding the authenticity and traditional value of the heritage.

4.2. Potential for silk-based tourism development in Lam Ha district

To evaluate the readiness and potential of Lam Ha district in developing silk-based tourism, a SWOT analysis was conducted based on field observations and stakeholder interviews.

(1) Strengths

- Leading sericulture base with over 3,500 ha of mulberry farms and more than 5,000 tons of cocoon output
- Existing cooperatives and integrated processing capacity
- Preservation of traditional techniques in silk reeling and weaving
- Natural environment suited to wellness and farm tourism

(2) Weaknesses

- Limited tourism infrastructure and service capacity
- Weak linkage between agriculture, craft, and tourism sectors
- Inadequate skills in hospitality and foreign languages
- Low visibility and absence of a destination brand identity

(3) Opportunities

- Rising demand for experiential and sustainable tourism
- National and provincial support for rural and cultural tourism
- Potential for circular economy-based silk tourism
- Diversification into wellness, creative, and educational offerings

(4) Threats

- Competition from better-known destinations
- Susceptibility to market fluctuations and post-pandemic travel trends
- Risk of cultural commodification without preservation safeguards

5. DISCUSSION AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

From the advantages of the above models, a few pertinent lessons can be gleaned:

Combining heritage conservation with commercialization, these case studies point out the importance of safeguarding traditional values while at the same time creating economic benefits.

Developing a circular value chain, this covers everything from agriculture (mulberry planting and silkworm raising) to creative industries (weaving, designing, and product marketing) plus services (experiential tourism, accommodation, and food).

Enhancing community engagement: Local residents receive education and actively participate in various stages of production and tourism services, thereby fostering inclusive and sustainable development.

Diversifying tourist offerings: Tourists participate as active actors in experiential activities, thereby increasing personalization and emotional connection with the destination.

Based on these insights plus an analysis of current trends in tourism consumption and the specific context of the sericulture industry, conditions in Lam Ha district are highly conducive.

Based on the lessons learned from the aforementioned models, an analysis of the current state of the sericulture industry and tourism consumption trends, as well as the practical conditions in Lam Ha district, such as a high number of households engaged in mulberry cultivation and silkworm farming, large-scale silk reeling and weaving factories operating within a closed-loop system, and the availability of value-added silk-based products, it is feasible to propose four categories of silk tourism products that can be implemented locally. These product categories not only offer rich experiential value but also contribute to the preservation and enhancement of traditional sericulture craftsmanship.

5.1. Experiential tourism based on the silk production process

This product group forms the base of the suggested model, focused on the key steps of the usual sericulture method: growing mulberry trees, raising silkworms, and weaving silk, which are closely connected to the local cultural identity. The target audiences are families, students, and foreign tourists looking for practical, intriguing experiences. Typical activities include

Leaf mulberry picking is done by hand, feeding the worms, and knowing the life cycle of the silkworms from egg to cocoon.

Reeling of cocoons and dyeing naturally with plant-based materials.

Hand-weaving techniques on wooden looms taught by local artists.

This product suits best the open farm or open workshop models and can be implemented easily through cooperation between cooperatives, traditional artisan villages, and tourism enterprises.

5.2. Educational tourism on traditional crafts

Students, cultural and historical researchers, and tourists who are very interested in traditional values make up the target audience for this product group. Major tasks include

Conducting educational workshops on the background of Vietnamese sericulture and the cultural value of silk in both royal and folk traditions.

Developing themed tours based on the life cycle of the silkworm, from mulberry growing to making finished textile products.

Establishing silk museums that display artifacts, old photos, and docu-videos for educative and communicative purposes.

This approach is key for linking tourism with hands-on learning and boosting public awareness of the value and history of traditional crafts.

5.3. Creative and wellness tourism using silk

Silk can be used to make personalized creative tourism experiences and wellness-oriented packages, in line with the rising trends of relaxation, treatment, and wellness tourism. Specific ideas include:

Workshops for silk painting and making fashion accessories where tourists can design their souvenirs;

Making wellness products from silk, such as silk pillows, face masks, and herbal compresses, with info on their skincare and health benefits.

Wellness treatments at the spa mix silk fabrics and organic elements with old methods, creating a special health experience.

This group of items is best for use in eco-resorts, nature-focused homestays, or through community-based cooperative tourism-production systems.

5.4. Silk shopping tourism and souvenir product development

This group aims to raise economic value by linking tourists with local businesses. Lam Ha district has the opportunity to promote its silk souvenirs, which reflect various aspects of its cultural identity. Suggested tries include:

Silk giving items showcasing local designs, like scarves, ties, handbags, keychains, and greeting cards printed on silk.

Green boxes that show where it comes from, the tale of the craft, and the makers for each item.

Market booths at visitor spots, paired with live shows of silk unspooling or weaving to increase interaction.

QR code put in for being able to trace and show clear telling of product origin.

The growth of this item group improves income for local people and keeps old skills as a valued high-quality artisan making way.

6. CONCLUSION

Lam Ha District has enormous potential to develop tourism based on silk, taking advantage of its strong foundation in traditional sericulture, which includes mulberry planting, raising silkworms, and silk reeling and weaving. An examination of successful domestic and international models, such as Van Phuc Silk Village (Hanoi), Tan Chau Silk Village (An Giang), San Kamphaeng (Thailand), and the Italian Silk Road project (Italy), plus field research conducted in Lam Ha, shows that the combination of heritage preservation with tourism development forms a feasible and sustainable strategy that can yield long-term economic, cultural, and social benefits.

The four suggested types of products, sericulture experience tourism, education tourism focused on traditional crafts, creative and wellness tourism using silk, and silk shopping tourism, can enhance local tourism and help move from traditional farming to a combined agri-tourism and circular economy approach.

However, successful implementation of these policies requires active participation by local governments, companies, and citizens-infrastructure development, human resources training, branding, and market linkages. If planned for and backed adequately, silk-based tourism products in Lam Ha can become an integral aspect of uniqueness within the tourism

industry of that region while also playing a significant role in the conservation as well as promotion of Vietnam's traditional craft heritage under the context of sustainable tourism development worldwide.

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TÓM TẮT

PHÁT TRIỂN DU LỊCH TỪ NGHỀ TƠ LỤA GẮN VỚI NÔNG NGHIỆP BỀN VỮNG TẠI LÂM HÀ, TỈNH LÂM ĐỒNG

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Khi các du lịch bền vững và kinh tế tuần hoàn ngày càng phát triển, du lịch trải nghiệm thông qua nghề thủ công truyền thống ngày càng có ý nghĩa quan trọng. Nghiên cứu được thực hiện nhằm xem xét tính khả thi của việc định vị Lâm Hà, tỉnh Lâm Đồng trở thành trung tâm du lịch gắn với lụa tơ tằm, nhờ vào các lợi thế về trồng dâu, nuôi tằm và dệt lụa. Về cơ bản, địa phương có nhiều lợi thế để phát triển du lịch nông nghiệp, tuy nhiên hiện vẫn thiếu mô hình tích hợp hiệu quả giữa nông nghiệp, nghề thủ công truyền thống và sự tham gia của du khách. Nghiên cứu này thực hiện quan sát thực địa và phỏng vấn các bên liên quan tại địa phương, đồng thời so sánh với các mô hình tương tự ở Việt Nam, Thái Lan và Ý, qua đó đề xuất phát triển theo hướng bền vững và kinh tế tuần hoàn. Nghiên cứu xác định bốn loại hình sản phẩm du lịch chính liên quan đến nghề tơ lụa: trải nghiệm nghề ươm tơ - dệt lụa, du lịch giáo dục, hoạt động sáng tạo - chăm sóc sức khỏe, và sản phẩm lưu niệm. Phương pháp phân tích SWOT, kết hợp với các tài nguyên tại địa phương đã làm rõ các điểm mạnh, điểm yếu, cơ hội và thách thức của địa phương. Kết quả nghiên cứu đưa ra các gợi ý thực tiễn cho các bên liên quan, góp phần xây dựng hướng phát triển du lịch cho địa phương, kết hợp giữa trải nghiệm thực tế với tư duy kinh tế tuần hoàn, hướng đến phát triển nghề truyền thống và phát triển nông thôn.

Từ khóa: Du lịch tơ lụa, Du lịch nông nghiệp, Du lịch bền vững, Lâm Hà.