

Orientation of the model for connecting traditional craft village tourism and regional tourism in the Red river delta

Định hướng mô hình kết nối du lịch làng nghề truyền thống - du lịch vùng Đồng bằng sông Hồng

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ABSTRACT

Currently, the integration of traditional craft village tourism with key tourist destinations in the Red River Delta remains limited due to the lack of a comprehensive planning framework, underdeveloped transportation infrastructure, and weak collaboration among stakeholders. These challenges hinder the effective exploitation of the tourism potential of craft villages and their sustainable development. With the aim of enhancing connectivity in the development of craft village tourism, this article analyzes the current situation and proposes a model for linking traditional craft village tourism with regional tourism in the Red River Delta. The proposed model seeks to foster stronger connections between craft villages, local authorities, tourism enterprises, and communities, contributing to the establishment of a sustainable craft village tourism network, the preservation of traditional cultural values, and the socio-economic development of the region.

Summary: Tourism connectivity model; traditional craft village tourism; Red River Delta.

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional craft villages not only preserve unique cultural values but also play a crucial role in the socio-economic development of the Red River Delta (RRD) region. These villages are deeply intertwined with local history, architecture, customs, and labor practices, while also holding significant potential for tourism development, particularly in the forms of ecological, cultural, and experiential tourism. However, the integration between craft villages and the regional tourism system remains inconsistent, resulting in the underutilization of their tourism potential. Challenges such as inadequate transportation

infrastructure, insufficient support services, and weak linkages between craft villages, tourism enterprises, and local authorities hinder the sustainable development of craft village tourism. In the context of globalization, many countries have successfully developed craft village tourism models that generate substantial economic benefits. Therefore, an appropriate tourism connectivity model is essential to balance heritage conservation and economic development. This article analyzes the current state of craft village tourism and proposes a model for linking traditional craft villages with regional tourism. The objective is to optimize tourism potential while ensuring sustainable development.

2. CURRENT STATUS OF TRADITIONAL CRAFT VILLAGE TOURISM AND POTENTIAL FOR TOURISM CONNECTIVITY

a. Traditional Craft Village Tourism Activities

Tourism activities in traditional craft villages (TCVs) in the Red River Delta have experienced certain developments. However, several limitations still need to be addressed to enhance efficiency and attractiveness for visitors.

- Tourism Services and Hands-on Craft Experiences

Currently, craft village tourism is primarily concentrated in a few well-known locations, such as Bát Tràng and Phù Lãng ceramic villages, Phú Vinh bamboo and rattan weaving village, Chuông conical hat village, Văn Lâm embroidery village, and Vạn Phúc silk village. Some villages have introduced hands-on experiences tailored for students, but overall, these activities remain fragmented and lack distinct features to attract visitors.

Tourism activities are mainly organized around craft households, production facilities, and some heritage sites. However, there is no comprehensive planning for tourism development. The rapid urbanization process has significantly altered the traditional spatial characteristics of these villages, negatively impacting the tourism experience.

- Heritage Experience Services

At present, only 4 out of 15 craft villages have organized heritage-based tourism activities, which include visits to communal houses, pagodas, ancient banyan trees, village wells, and communal courtyards. However, the information provided

to tourists regarding cultural, architectural, and historical values remains limited. The current approach primarily focuses on tangible heritage, while intangible values such as traditional lifestyles, customs, and construction techniques have yet to be effectively explored and promoted [4]



Fig 1. Swedish Princess Visits Handicraft Production in Phu Vinh



Fig 2. Tourists Visiting the Handicraft Village Space in Phu Lang



Fig 3. Exploring the Handicraft Village Landscape by Bicycle in Ninh Van



Fig 4. Visiting the Conical Hat Products in Chuong Village

- Agricultural Culture Experience Services

Most traditional craft villages have yet to develop tourism services that offer agricultural cultural experiences, with the exception of Van Lam village, which integrates with the Trang An tourism route. However, this activity remains spontaneous, lacking systematic organization and a well-defined tourism brand



Experience traditional fish trapping with bamboo baskets.

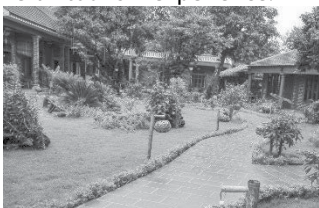


Tourists' Gardening Experience in Landscape Architecture

Fig 5. Experiential Agricultural and Cultural Tourism in Yan Đuc Village [10]

Accommodation Services

Only two craft villages, Bat Trang and Van Lam, have developed comprehensive accommodation services to meet visitor demands. Favorable factors such as climate, land availability, and scenic landscapes provide advantages for these villages. However, other craft villages have yet to focus on developing lodging facilities, limiting visitors' length of stay and overall tourism experience.



Homestay



Entrance Gate of the Homestay House

Fig 6. Hospitality Services of La Belle Vie Homestay in Ninh Hai

- Recreational Services Associated with Intangible Cultural Heritage

Some craft villages have organized intangible cultural heritage activities, such as *quan họ* folk singing in Phu Lang, *xoan* singing in Hương Canh, and *ca tru* performances in Thu Sy, along with traditional folk games like cockfighting, swing competitions, and clay pot breaking. However, these activities have not been effectively leveraged as distinctive tourism products and remain primarily community-oriented rather than tourist-focused.

- Spiritual and Cultural Tourism Services

Currently, spiritual tourism has not received systematic investment in the surveyed craft villages. Most spiritual tourism activities are integrated with heritage site visits and primarily cater to domestic visitors. The potential of temples, pagodas, communal houses, mother goddess worship, and folk legends has yet to be fully explored and developed into a structured tourism product.

- Culinary Tourism Services

Only 4 out of 15 craft villages offer culinary tourism services, with Van Lam village having the most well-developed model. However, food safety and hygiene management remain inadequate, leading to issues such as counterfeit or low-quality products. Additionally, the increasing popularity of modern fast food has reduced the appeal of traditional cuisine.



Restaurant



Spatial Design Associated with Traditional Craft Villages

Fig 7. Pilot Model of Traditional Craft Village Tourism in Phu Lang

- Handicraft and Souvenir Services

All surveyed craft villages offer souvenir products; however, these items lack distinctiveness and have seen little innovation over the years. Some products are bulky and difficult to transport, while others face competition from imported goods, particularly from China, which diminishes the brand value of local craft villages.

b. Potential for Tourism Development in Traditional Craft Villages

- Historical Value

Traditional craft villages are not only centers of production but also repositories of historical and cultural heritage, preserving the developmental imprints of local communities and regions. With a history spanning hundreds of years, each craft village represents a segment of the cultural-social value chain, reflecting the settlement, production, and economic development processes of indigenous inhabitants.

Long-standing craft villages such as Bat Trang, Van Phuc, and Hương Canh serve as testaments to the resilience of traditional crafts and illustrate the intricate relationship between village

architecture and urbanization. Notably, the development of craft villages surrounding Thăng Long – Hanoi contributed to the formation of a distinctive commercial urban structure, exemplified by the "36 streets" of Hanoi's Old Quarter, which showcases the interaction between economic-political centers and traditional production regions.

Moreover, craft villages like the sedge mat-weaving villages in Thái Bình are closely linked to land reclamation and territorial expansion, reflecting adaptation strategies to natural conditions and landscape transformations in coastal areas. The evolution of these villages has not only influenced residential spatial organization but also shaped unique cultural identities and social structures.

From a tourism perspective, the historical value of craft villages can serve as a key attraction through specialized tour routes, craft village museums, and exhibition spaces displaying traditional products alongside historical documentation and reenactments of ancient production methods. Proper conservation and sustainable utilization of craft village heritage contribute not only to tourism development but also to preserving the architectural and cultural identity of rural Vietnam. [3]

- Artistic and Craftsmanship Value of Handicrafts

Handicrafts from traditional craft villages in the Red River Delta are not merely functional objects but embody aesthetic excellence, intricate craftsmanship, and distinct cultural identities. Each village specializes in unique products that reflect the technical expertise and creative mindset of artisans across generations. The diversity in design, crafting techniques, and materials used ensures that even within the same industry, products maintain unique characteristics. [8]

In ceramics, the differences in shaping techniques, decorative motifs, and glazing methods between Bát Tràng, Phù Lãng, and Hương Canh have created distinctive product lines. Artisans in Phù Lãng employ natural materials such as alluvial soil from the Cầu River, paddy field mud, and wood ash to develop their signature rustic, earthy glazes with a sculptural essence. The innovative handling of materials and production techniques enhances both the functional and artistic value of these products, attracting both domestic and international visitors.

Beyond ceramics, the bamboo and rattan weaving craft of Phú Vinh is highly regarded for its refined weaving techniques and precise detailing. The fusion of traditional handcrafting skills with modern design trends has enabled these products to align with the demands of the tourism market. High-aesthetic-value handicrafts not only attract tourists but also create opportunities for international promotion of Vietnamese craftsmanship.

- Landscape Value of Traditional Craft Villages

The landscape of traditional craft villages in the Red River Delta is not only a testament to artisanal production spaces but also holds deep cultural and historical significance. These unique landscape elements create an immersive environment for visitors, fostering experiential tourism products of high value.

Integrated Production-Living Spaces:

Unlike industrial zones, craft villages seamlessly integrate production with residential areas, forming a harmonious spatial composition. Visitors can easily distinguish these landscapes through everyday sights—raw materials, unfinished products, and completed handicrafts displayed along village paths and courtyards. Vivid imagery such as ceramic jars lined along alleys, brightly colored silk fabrics drying in the sun, or walls built from ceramic scraps contribute to the village's distinctive character.

These elements provide a strong foundation for experiential tourism, allowing visitors to observe and participate in production processes firsthand.[5]

Water-Inspired Landscapes – The Origin of Craft Villages: Water bodies such as village wells, communal ponds, and wharves play essential roles in both daily life and traditional craft production. Villages specializing in ceramics, silk weaving, and lacquerware are inherently connected to water sources, forming unique regional production landscapes. These features not only enrich the scenic value but also serve as focal points in cultural tourism tours, offering deeper insights into the intrinsic relationship between natural resources and artisanal heritage.

Symbolic Spatial Complexes: The triad of "Communal House – Banyan Tree – Village Pond" is an emblematic feature of Northern Vietnamese rural settlements, including craft villages. These spaces serve as cultural and religious hubs while also functioning as tourist attractions. Craft villages can capitalize on these settings by organizing traditional festivals, craft demonstrations, and cultural performances, thereby enhancing the visitor experience.[7]

Traditional Housing and Homestay Potential: Ancient houses with moss-covered tiled roofs, red-brick courtyards, and trellised gardens evoke a nostalgic charm, making them ideal for homestay tourism. Incorporating traditional interiors, such as intricately carved wooden furniture and parallel couplets, further enriches the authenticity of the visitor experience, particularly for international tourists seeking cultural immersion.

Rural Landscapes – Promoting Ecotourism and Agricultural Experiences: Familiar rural images such as golden haystacks, banana groves, water ponds covered with duckweed, and meandering village paths lined with bamboo hedges have become iconic representations of Northern Vietnamese countryside. These elements provide significant potential for ecotourism development, offering visitors immersive experiences in agricultural activities such as vegetable farming, crop harvesting, and enjoying local culinary specialties. Integrated tourism programs combining craft village visits with authentic rural experiences can enhance the economic value for local communities.

Alleyway Landscapes – Unique Transition Spaces: The narrow village alleys framed by ancient gateways and lush bamboo clusters evoke a sense of tranquility and authenticity. These alleys serve as transitional spaces, linking the craft village to the outside world, providing visitors with a compelling and immersive journey into the heritage-rich village environment.



Fig 8. Attractive Souvenirs and Consumer Products for Tourists [9]

Agricultural Landscapes – Seasonal Tourism Experiences: The Red River Delta is renowned for its agricultural products, including rice, longan, and various vegetables. In many craft villages, seasonal tourism can become a highlight, particularly during harvest seasons when the entire village engages in vibrant agricultural activities. Tourism programs integrating craft village visits with seasonal food

experiences can significantly boost the economic and cultural appeal of these destinations.

- The Value of crafting souvenirs and consumer products for domestic and International Tourists

One of the key factors in enhancing the tourism experience is the integration of traditional craft production spaces with the final products-souvenirs and consumer goods that embody local cultural identity. Traditional craft villages not only serve as cultural heritage sites but also possess significant potential to create distinctive, high-value commercial products that cater to both domestic and international tourists.

These villages have a substantial advantage in producing a diverse range of souvenirs that align with tourist preferences. Items such as decorative ceramics, lacquer paintings, miniature conical hats, article fans, brocade textiles, woven bamboo trays, and intricately carved wooden statues not only exhibit aesthetic value but also serve as prominent cultural symbols. The fusion of traditional craftsmanship with contemporary design enhances the appeal of these products, thereby expanding their market reach within the tourism industry.

Efficient utilization of production spaces, exhibition areas, and interactive experiences presents substantial opportunities for developing craft tourism in a professional and engaging manner. By strategically leveraging these elements, traditional craft villages can strengthen their position as cultural destinations, offering visitors a deeper and more immersive appreciation of local heritage.

3. CURRENT STATUS OF THE CONNECTION BETWEEN TRADITIONAL CRAFT VILLAGE TOURISM AND TOURISM IN THE RED RIVER DELTA REGION

a. Linkages Between traditional craft Village Tourism and Heritage sites and Scenic destinations

The integration of traditional craft village tourism (TCVT) with heritage tourism and scenic destinations in the Red River Delta (RRD) plays a crucial role in enhancing the value and appeal of both tourism models. Many traditional craft villages in the region are strategically located near significant cultural heritage sites and renowned landscapes, facilitating the formation of interconnected tourism routes. Notable examples include Bat Trang pottery village, which is situated near the Thang Long Imperial Citadel, the Temple of Literature, and Hoan Kiem Lake; Dong Ho painting village, located near But Thap Pagoda and Do Temple; Van Lam embroidery village, adjacent to the Tam Coc - Bich Dong tourist area; and Van Phuc silk village, nestled within Hanoi's urban area. However, in practice, these connections remain fragmented and have not been effectively utilized.

Key limitations include: (1) A lack of strong linkages between heritage site visits and craft village experiences, resulting in tourists primarily making short shopping stops without engaging in in-depth exploration of production processes and cultural heritage; (2) An underdeveloped transportation and service infrastructure, with few dedicated tourist routes or integrated tourism products that combine these two tourism forms; (3) Insufficient investment in experiential tourism products, leading to a lack of attractive tour programs capable of drawing visitors from nearby heritage sites.

To address these issues, a sustainable tourism development strategy is needed, emphasizing the creation of integrated tourism products such as heritage site visits combined with

hands-on craft-making experiences and local culinary exploration. This model not only extends tourists' stay but also fosters the conservation and sustainable development of traditional craft villages in the region.

b. Linkages Between traditional craft Village Tourism and Agricultural and Ecotourism

The integration of TCVT with agricultural and ecotourism not only diversifies tourism offerings but also promotes the sustainable development of local communities. This approach aligns with modern tourism trends, maximizing the value of natural landscapes, traditional production spaces, and indigenous cultural elements. The RRD possesses significant advantages in this regard, with its extensive network of craft villages interwoven with specialized agricultural and aquaculture zones, such as rice fields and fruit-growing areas (Hung Yen's longan, Bac Giang's lychee), aquaculture regions (Ha Nam, Thai Binh, Nam Dinh), and villages specializing in fish sauce production and traditional agricultural products.[1]

However, the development of integrated tourism models combining craft villages and agriculture remains limited. Firstly, the lack of comprehensive planning has resulted in fragmented and uncoordinated development, with no well-structured tourism routes. Secondly, investment in tourism services and experiences remains insufficient, with most activities restricted to sightseeing rather than immersive experiences such as harvesting crops, processing traditional foods, or participating in craft-making. Additionally, policies supporting businesses and households to engage in these integrated tourism models remain inconsistent and ineffective.

To enhance the connection between TCVT and agricultural tourism, a comprehensive planning strategy is required, identifying key potential areas and defining distinctive tourism products. Investment in infrastructure, support services, and eco-tourism and community-based tourism experiences will improve tourism quality, increase economic value for local communities, and attract a growing number of domestic and international visitors.

4. PROPOSED MODEL FOR CONNECTING TRADITIONAL CRAFT VILLAGE TOURISM WITH TOURISM IN THE RED RIVER DELTA REGION

a. Orientation for connecting traditional craft Village Tourism in the Red River Delta

Developing a model for linking traditional craft village tourism (TCVT) with tourism in the Red River Delta (RRD) should be based on the spatial distribution of tourism resources, historical values, and the development potential of each area. To maximize the advantages of natural, cultural, and economic factors, the proposed model focuses on three main tourism routes integrating river and road networks, alongside the formation of three sub-regions for tourism development, each associated with prominent cultural and natural heritage sites.

- Development of River-based Tourism Routes Combined with Road Networks

The river system in the RRD is not only a crucial geographical feature but also a foundation for developing specialized tourism routes, ensuring flexible connections between craft villages and major tourist destinations. Leveraging existing river tourism routes and integrating them with the road network along embankments can yield multiple benefits, such as restoring natural ecosystems, reducing pressure on road infrastructure,

and offering unique perspectives on the riverside craft village landscapes. Attractive stopovers, such as boat docks and riverfront promenades, will enhance the tourism experience and add value to both craft village tourism and cultural tourism.

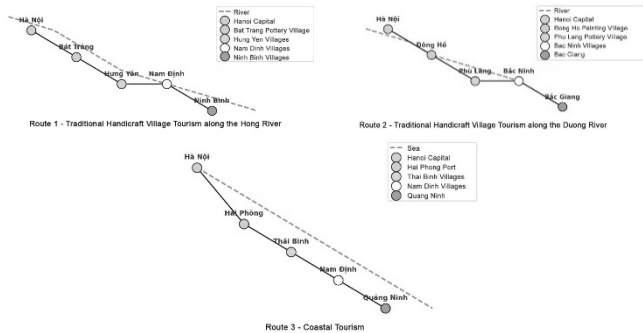
Three key river-based tourism routes are proposed:

- + TCVT along the Red River, linking with the Day River tourism route, creating a seamless connection from Hanoi to provinces along the Red River.

- + TCVT along the Duong River, connecting traditional craft villages north of Hanoi with Bac Ninh and nearby provinces.

- + Coastal Craft Village Tourism, focusing on the potential of coastal craft villages, integrated with marine ecosystems and ancient port systems.

- Sub-Regional Development Based on Heritage Clusters



Zoning tourism development into sub-regions helps establish a structured approach that capitalizes on distinct strengths, forming sustainable and highly distinctive tourism clusters. Based on the UNESCO-recognized cultural and natural heritage sites in the RRD, three key sub-regions for traditional craft village tourism development are identified:

Sub-Region 1: Traditional Craft Village Tourism Cluster Associated with the Thăng Long Imperial Citadel and Hùng Temple

This sub-region encompasses numerous long-standing traditional craft villages, such as Bat Trang ceramics, Đông Ho folk paintings, Van Phuc silk, and Phu Vinh bamboo and rattan weaving. It forms a strategic connection between Hanoi and neighboring provinces, including Vinh Phuc, Bac Ninh, and Hung Yen. This cluster leverages the rich historical and cultural heritage of the region, creating a comprehensive tourism network that integrates heritage sites with traditional craft experiences.

Sub-Region 2: Traditional Craft Village Tourism Cluster Linked to the Trang An Heritage Site

Covering the provinces of Ninh Binh, Ha Nam, Nam Định, and Thai Binh, this sub-region specializes in craft villages closely associated with cultural spaces and natural landscapes. Notable villages include Van Lam embroidery village, Ninh Van stone carving village, and Nga Son sedge mat weaving village. The integration of these craft villages with the Trang An heritage complex enhances the region's tourism appeal by offering a blend of historical, artistic, and ecological tourism experiences.

Sub-Region 3: Traditional Craft Village Tourism Cluster Associated with Ha Long Bay

This cluster includes the coastal provinces of Quang Ninh, Hai Phong, and Hai Duong, where coastal craft villages specialize in seafood processing, wooden boat building, and fish sauce production. These villages hold strong potential for developing

an integrated eco-tourism model that combines craft village experiences with marine tourism, leveraging the unique cultural and environmental assets of the coastal region.

Development of Small-Scale Road-Based Tourism Routes

Alongside river-based tourism routes, the road network must be effectively utilized while maintaining control over landscape quality and infrastructure. Road connections between craft villages and cultural heritage sites should be limited to distances under 30 km to ensure reasonable travel times. This allows visitors to engage more deeply with craft village activities without being distracted by excessive travel distances.

The proposed approach to linking traditional craft village tourism with broader regional tourism in the Red River Delta not only supports the conservation and promotion of traditional craft values but also expands opportunities for sustainable tourism development. It fosters stronger inter-provincial cooperation and enhances the overall attractiveness and brand identity of the region's tourism sector.

b. Model for connecting tourism products and Activities

In the context of sustainable tourism development in the Red River Delta, establishing a structured model for linking tourism products (TP) and traditional craft village tourism (TCVT) is essential. This model aims to optimize visitor experiences, increase economic value, and preserve cultural heritage. Based on the spatial distribution and potential of craft villages, three primary connectivity models are proposed: nucleus-based connectivity, route-based connectivity, and cluster-based connectivity.

Nucleus-Based Connectivity Model

This model integrates craft village tourism with major tourism hubs, including national and provincial-level tourism zones and key tourist cities. Leveraging the existing visitor flow from these established destinations enables craft villages to attract tourists more effectively while fostering a complementary relationship between village tourism products and larger tourism centers.

The nucleus-based model is categorized into three types:

Craft villages located within provincial or regional tourism zones

These villages benefit from direct access to a steady stream of visitors. A prime example is Van Lam village (Ninh Binh), which is situated within the Tràng An heritage site, providing ideal conditions for developing cultural and community-based tourism.

Craft villages located 5–10 km from a major tourism zone

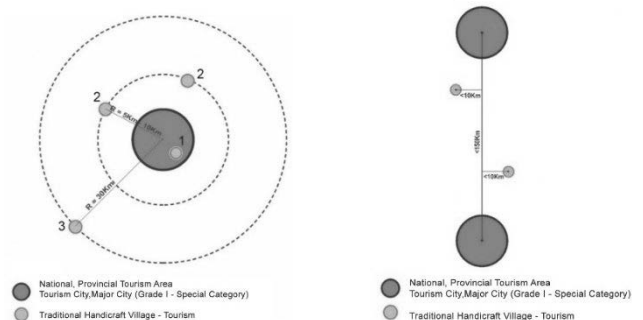


Fig 9. Nucleus-Centered Connectivity Model **Fig 10.** Linear Connectivity Model

The close proximity allows easy visitor access via bicycles or personal vehicles, making it suitable for both independent travelers and short-term tour groups. Notable examples include Bat Trang ceramics village and Van Phuc silk village (Hanoi),

which are well-integrated into the tourism ecosystem of the capital city

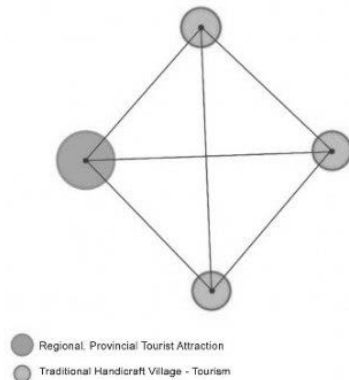


Fig 11. Cluster Connectivity Model

Villages Located Approximately 30 km from Provincial or Regional Tourism Centers: This distance is suitable for day trips, attracting both domestic and international visitors. Craft villages within this category should develop additional experiential services to enhance their appeal and encourage tourists to spend more time at the destination.

- Route-Based Connectivity Model

For craft villages that are not in close proximity to major tourism hubs or tourist cities, establishing tour routes that link multiple key destinations helps increase visitor traffic and creates mutual support among tourism sites. This model is typically organized by travel agencies with well-defined itineraries, where craft village tourism serves as a supplementary attraction to primary tourist sites. Due to its short-term nature and focus on sightseeing, villages following this model primarily cater to group tours rather than independent travelers.

- Cluster-Based Connectivity Model

This model applies to craft villages that lack the geographic advantage of being near major tourism centers but can form interconnected tourism clusters to enhance their overall appeal. Villages within such a model must collaborate closely to ensure product diversity and complementarity, avoiding redundancy in tourism offerings.

Key factors in developing a cluster-based connectivity model include:

Development of High-Quality Accommodation Services: Given the considerable distance from major tourism hubs, craft villages within this model need to offer well-developed lodging facilities to accommodate overnight visitors, making them suitable for 1-2 day tour packages.

Ensuring Product Differentiation in Tourism Offerings: Destinations within the cluster model must exhibit distinct characteristics to attract visitors and avoid monotony. For instance, a single tourism route should not focus excessively on religious sites such as temples and pagodas unless significant architectural or historical differences exist between them.

Utilizing Online Information Channels and Expanding Market Reach: This model is suitable for both group tours and independent travelers, especially when promoted through digital platforms. Craft villages in Nam Định, Thái Bình, and Hà Nam hold strong potential for development under this approach.

5. CONCLUSION

The integration of traditional craft village tourism with

regional tourism in the Red River Delta plays a crucial role in preserving cultural values, enhancing economic efficiency, and fostering sustainable tourism development. Based on an analysis of spatial characteristics, potential, and current tourism development trends in the region, the proposed connectivity model consists of three river-and-road-based tourism routes, aligned with three sub-regions structured around distinctive cultural and natural heritage clusters. Additionally, the tourism product system and craft village tourism activities are organized into three formats: nucleus-centered connectivity, route-based connectivity, and cluster-based connectivity, aiming to optimize visitor experiences and increase local economic value.

To successfully implement the proposed connectivity model, close collaboration among government authorities, businesses, local communities, and scientific organizations is essential. Key measures for improving the efficiency and sustainability of this model include infrastructure investment, policy development, and the application of digital technologies in tourism promotion and management. These strategic initiatives will contribute to the long-term success of craft village tourism as an integral part of the broader tourism network in the Red River Delta.

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