

# CHANGING TRENDS OF TRADITIONAL FESTIVALS AND SOME ISSUES RAISED IN FESTIVAL MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION TODAY

## MUDANÇAS NAS TENDÊNCIAS DOS FESTIVAIS TRADICIONAIS E ALGUMAS QUESTÕES HOJE LEVANTADAS NA GESTÃO E ORGANIZAÇÃO DE FESTIVAIS\*

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**Abstract:** Festivals play an essential role in the spiritual life of Vietnamese people. Every year, in Vietnam, thousands of festivals are held. These become indispensable spiritual activities, especially when spring comes (from January to March every year). In recent years, traditional festivals have tended to change, giving rise to many complicated phenomena, requiring a rethinking of management work and setting requirements for management, building a code of conduct in the festival to suit the new context. Surveying reality in some localities in the country, studying the reports of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism on festival activities in the past 3 years, this study focuses on analyzing the current situation of festivals, changes in traditional festivals, and festival management activities, thereby proposing solutions to improve the current festival management policy.

**Keywords:** Changing trends. Traditional festivals. Festival management festival organization. Vietnam.

**Resumo:** Os festivais desempenham um papel essencial na vida espiritual do povo vietnamita. Todos os anos, no Vietnã, milhares de festivais são realizados. Estes se tornam atividades espirituais indispensáveis, especialmente quando chega a primavera (de janeiro a março de cada ano). Nos últimos anos, os festivais tradicionais tenderam a mudar, dando origem a muitos fenômenos complicados, exigindo um repensar do trabalho de gestão e estabelecer requisitos para a gestão, construindo um código de conduta no festival para se adequar ao novo contexto. Levantando a realidade em algumas localidades do país, estudando os relatórios do Ministério da Cultura, Esportes e Turismo sobre as atividades dos festivais nos últimos 3 anos, este estudo se concentra em analisar a situação atual dos festivais, as mudanças nos festivais tradicionais e as atividades de gestão dos festivais, propondo assim soluções para melhorar a atual política de gestão dos festivais.

**Palavras-chave:** Mudança de tendências. Festivais tradicionais. Organização de festivais de gestão de festivais. Vietnã.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, traditional festival activities are being restored and developed rapidly. Every year, around 8,000 festivals take place across the country, including 322 historical festivals, 544 religious festivals, and more than 7,000 folk festivals (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2021). Preserving and promoting the value of the festival is the right and necessary thing (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2014). For each locality, traditional festivals become an important resource to promote economic and social development, an effective means to promote and introduce culture, people, and homeland to tourists nationally and internationally (UNESCO, 2004). Traditional festivals have become a special type of culture, an indispensable spiritual food in the spiritual life of each people.

Vietnamese festivals are cultural events organized in the community (Giau, 1983; Duy, 2002; HongVu, 2022). The ceremony is a system of acts and movements to show respect for the gods, reflecting people's legitimate dreams before the life they are unable to fulfill. The association is a community's cultural, religious, and artistic activity, derived from life's needs (Ngoc, 2002; Duy, 2002). Festival is a compound word, each having a dialectical relationship with the other. Traditional festivals form from the need for belief (belief), specifically expressed through rituals of worshiping gods and saints. Belief is the basis of arising and integrating cultural activities, creating the overall phenomenon of traditional festivals.

Traditional festivals are a form of community cultural activities of general nature, expressing cultural creations accumulated and passed down through many generations, imprinted in rituals, religious rites, beliefs, customs and traditions, literature and art, ceremonial costumes, food and drink offerings, games, folk games, etc. The organization of traditional festivals aims to meet spiritual needs, and help people consciously connect with their national roots and the community they live, from which they have the responsibility to contribute efforts in respecting the religion. creation and restoration of monuments and the exchange, exchange, and creation of culture (National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2001). Therefore, traditional festivals play an important role in the transmission and promotion of cultural values, contributing to the preservation and promotion of national cultural identity.

Along with the process of economic development and international integration, the transformation of traditional festivals as well as the appearance of many new types of event

organization is an objective necessity in today's cultural life. Therefore, there should not be a rigid view, taking the principles of organizing traditional festivals as a model for organizing modern festivals and events, but it is also necessary to have management policies and The right solution to improve the efficiency of festival management.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Festival**

A festival is a cultural event organized by the community (Ngoc, 2002; Duy, 2002; ICOMOS, 2004). "Ceremony" is a system of acts and movements to show respect for the gods, reflecting people's legitimate dreams in front of a life that they themselves have not been able to fulfill (Van. & Dao, 2020; Vuhong, 2022). "Association" is the community's cultural, religious, and artistic activities, derived from life's needs (Giau, 1983; Long & Van, 2020; Van & Dao, 2020).

Festivals are collective activities and are often related to beliefs and religions (Hinh, 2003 & 2007). In the past, people believed in heaven and earth and gods. Traditional festivals reflect that phenomenon. Religion strongly influences festivals (Van, 2019; Phong & Van, 2020). Religion through festivals to flaunt prestige, festivals through religion to deify mundane things (Dao & Van, 2020). But over time, in many festivals, the religiosity gradually diminished and was only heavily cultural.

### **Vietnamese traditional festival**

Traditional festivals are a type of cultural activity and spiritual products of the people formed and developed in the historical process (Ngoc, 2002; Van 2019 & 2020). Vietnamese people for thousands of generations have had a tradition of "When drinking water, remember the source" (thanks to generations of Vietnamese people who have contributed to building and preserving the country). A festival is an event that demonstrates the precious tradition of the community, honoring sacred images, identified as "Gods" - real people in national history or legends (Hinh 2003; Van). 2020; Vuhong, 2022; Long & Van, 2022). The image of the gods has converged with the noble qualities of human beings (Figure 2003 & 2007; Van, 2020 & 2022). Those are heroes against foreign invaders; those who explore new lands, and create careers; those who cope with natural disasters, except evil beasts; healers who save lives; Legendary characters have dominated life on earth, helping people to be good, keep a happy life, etc.

The festival is an event to remember and pay tribute to the merits of the gods to the community and nation (Giau, 1983; Duy, 2002; Vu, 2022). The festival is an occasion for people to return to their source, the natural origin or the origin of the nation has a sacred meaning in everyone's mind (Hong Van, 2022). The festival shows the strength of the village community, the locality, or, more broadly, the nation. They worship the same god and share the same goal of solidarity to overcome difficulties and win a happy and prosperous life (Long & Van, 2020 & 2022).

The festival is also the need to create and enjoy the material and spiritual cultural values of all classes of the population; is a form of education, transferring to the next generations to know how to preserve, inherit and promote the precious traditional moral values of the nation in its own way, combining spiritual elements and racing games. talent, entertainment, etc. (Trung & Van, 2020). The festival is an occasion for people to be released, to express their sorrows and worries to the gods, and to ask for help and protection from the gods to overcome challenges to a brighter tomorrow. Festivals in Vietnam are most held in the three months of spring and autumn. These two periods are when people are idle. The weather is warm in spring and cool in autumn, which is favorable for organizing festivals. Two basic factors create comfort and joy for festival goers (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2020).

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Number of Vietnamese traditional festivals**

A country with a long history of building and defending the country for thousands of years is a country like a big family of 54 ethnic groups, so it has many unique identities. The number of nearly 8,000 annual festivals, an average of 22 festivals/day is th, expresses diversity, richness, and unique characteristics of each ethnic group, region, geographical region, history, etc.

According to statistics from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (2021), the whole country has 7,966 festivals, including 7,039 folk festivals, 332 historical-revolutionary festivals, and 544 religious festivals. and nearly 30 imported festivals. In addition, there are internal festivals such as industry, locality, unit, family, etc. Not to mention some "new" festivals that have not been added to statistics, such as tourism, Tet cake, and flower On average, every day in our country, about 22 festivals take place. That is more than an hour,

in Vietnam, there is a festival taking place. In the world, is there any country or nation that "loves" festivals like ours in Vietnam?

In particular, festivals in Vietnam are largely associated with villages, places, and lands as indispensable elements in community life (Long & Van, 2019; Vuhong, 2022; Van, 2022). Every year, perhaps there is no place in Vietnam that does not open a festival. Small is one day, big is many days, and some festivals last for three months. There are many festivals in the region, and the region has become famous and becomes an annual spiritual pilgrimage site in people's lives (Trung & Van, 2020). But also because there are so many festivals (not stopping at this number, because currently there are still many festivals that are on the way to recovery), how to make the festival carry its original meaning, the proper scope of the festival. In line with the trend of modern integration, it is really a dilemma that is almost beyond the control of managers, researchers of society, culture, history, etc.

#### **The trend of changing traditional festivals today**

The village festival of the ancient Vietnamese, the management of the festival is managed by the council of officials, the funeral director, and the word manager. Councils of officials are people appointed by the villagers to take care of worshipping gods and organizing festivals (Van, 2020; Van et al., 2020; Vuhong, 2022). The warden is the head of the line of officials with the task of the celebrant, "the god" (the duty to do the work with the gods) with very strict selection criteria. The warden and the council of officials assign representatives of the armors, factions, groups, and clans to perform the tasks of organizing the festival.

Currently, under the influence of many factors, such as the market mechanism, the development of media, tourism, etc., the traditional festivals in our country have undergone many changes. As follows

##### *About time, festival space:*

Most of the traditional festivals take place in the off-season, that is, from December to February of the lunar calendar every year. This is the "dead season" of sea tourism in the North. Thus, festival tourism is considered an alternative tourism product for sea tourism, in order to contribute to reducing the pressure of seasonality.

Every year, localities often stand out to organize the festival season. Each locality organizes the festival in its own style, so the fit is unique, highly local, and tive to tourists.

Tourists who have participated in a festival in a certain area will still find new features of that festival in another locality. In addition, each locality has a number of games and

festivals that are unique or locally sourced. This also makes the festival season in the locality different from the festivals in other regions.

Most village festivals shorten the duration from 3-5 days to 1 day. Some regional or inter-regional festivals of the pilgrimage nature are held for a long time, such as the Huong Pagoda festival, the Tay Thien Quoc Mau festival, the festivals of the Mother worship, and the festivals associated with tourism, etc. Previously, village festivals were only held in certain spaces in the village. But now, due to many factors, the scale of village festivals has also expanded in space. Many festivals are no longer village festivals but tend to turn into regional festivals, even inter-regional festivals. The audience attending the festival is not only villagers but also domestic and foreign tourists, sometimes leading to overcrowding. The festival space is also expanded into a "super space" with the interaction of media activities.

People attend the Hung Temple festival in Phu Tho, but the whole space of the Hung Temple festival is expanded to the whole country thanks to the media. People do not go to festivals, but can observe and "attend" through TV screens, on social networks, etc. Such an expansion of festival space also poses many management requirements. management of the physical space, and the virtual space of the festival).

*About the purpose of the festival:*

The purpose of people coming to traditional festivals is to pray for "people to live in peace and prosperity" with the belief in "the sacred" (Hinh 2007; Van, 2017; Van, 2020). "The sacred" is a religious sentiment, which is expressed in the festival by the typical symbols of sacred treasures (Dao & Van, 2020; Long & Van, 2020). According to the concept of the people, these sacred objects have special value, bringing good luck to the participants (Giau, 1983). But now, some tourists are no longer excited about the rituals of inviting saints, offering wine, offering flowers, offering sacrifices, and reading testaments, but only expect to be robbed of sacred objects. Some festival organizers hope to attract more tourists because revenue will increase thanks to the consumption of services by tourists. Obviously, the purpose of some festivals has changed.

*About the subject of the festival:*

Previously, in traditional village festivals, people were really the subjects, each participant shouldered something in the organization of the festival. The person carrying the palanquin and receiving Communion is an honor for the whole faction, armor, and family. If in the past, most of the village festivals were performed by the village owner and the village's management council, but now, most of the festivals in rural and mountainous

villages are directed by the authorities at all levels. In some delta festivals, the organizers hire event companies and art troupes to stage the program and organize it. The people, the subject of the festival, only play a passive role like the tourists. In some places, from the decoration of the ceremony, performing arts, and organizing activities, there is little or even an absence of participation from the local cultural and sports industry. It can be seen that the role of the locality and the people - the creative subject of traditional festivals in some places - has been lost.

*About festival participants:*

In the old traditional festivals, the participants in the festival were mainly villagers (except for regional festivals and pilgrimage festivals, etc.). Recently, people's lives have improved, the transportation system has developed, and tourists have a lot of demand to attend festivals, including young people (especially festivals with special activities). strange movements, events, and tastes). Therefore, when a village celebrates a festival, visitors from all over the world participate in large numbers, from tens to hundreds of times higher than the population of the village. Previously, participants in the Gau Tao festival in Pha Long (Muong Khuong district, Lao Cai province) were mainly people in the communes of the Pha Long area, but in the last two decades, the festival has attracted the community. Hmong people in China, Thailand, and the US come to attend. The Perfume Pagoda Festival not only attracts Vietnamese pilgrims but also attracts a large number of overseas Vietnamese in other countries. Hung Temple Festival is attended by thousands of pilgrims and a large number of tourists participate in the festival through virtual space.

Vietnamese festival is very friendly to tourists regardless of their religion, class, or nationality because of the hospitable nature of our people. The second reason is that many festivals are competitive, and challenging in terms of health, ingenuity, talent, etc.

*About festival participants:*

The causes of the above changing trends are identified from both subjective and objective (Van, 2019; Long & Van, 2020 & 2021; Trung & Van, 2020). The trend of changing the role of the subject from the people, the community to all levels of government; The downside of the market mechanism with the tendency to promote the "commercialization" of festivals, considering festivals as a commodity, as a means of business, etc. have raised a series of problems in festival organization and management. , requires an effective solution. Building cultural behavior patterns to preserve and promote the true values of the festival is one of the urgent and important solutions today (Hoa & Van, 2022; HongVu, 2022).



### **Some policy recommendations**

*First, upholding the role of the community in organizing and managing traditional festivals, and building models suitable for each locality.*

Model of festivals organized by the community, under the supervision of local authorities:

This is the initial model of festival management and organization with the participation of the State. The organizers of these festivals are necessary people in the community. The management role of the State is reflected in the supervision, direction, and timely resolution of security, order, food safety, prices, services, etc. The role of state management also needs to be "decentralized" to the community and "institutionalized" by the system of village conventions and conventions, and at the same time combined with promoting the role of village elders, village chiefs, and prestigious people in the village. them, community. Funding for the organization of these festivals is entirely contributed by the community.

In traditional society, the festival management boards are mainly within the family, clan, or hamlet. These management boards operate simply, sometimes spontaneously, but still ensure the organization of the festival which takes place only in a narrow scope, in the space of a village, a field, or a hillside. with the participation of a small number of people in the area (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016). With the current large scale, festivals need a professional festival organizer, with the help and supervision of local authorities. Reality shows that, in the highland countryside, many festival organizers are very confused about organizing the services of welcoming tourists and managing tourists, while local authorities (commune and district levels) do not. Some places interfere too deeply in the organization of the festival program, losing the sacred nature of the festival, and limiting the initiative of the community. Festival organizers in some places have not been trained to master the knowledge of the festival, and have not flexibly and promptly handled situations arising in the process of organizing the festival.

Model of festival organization with the cooperation of the State and the community:

For some festivals of a village or inter-village with an increasingly expanding scale and being raised to local festivals as at present, it is necessary to build a model of close coordination between the role of the community and the community. with the management role of the State.



In this model, the main festival activities are still decided and implemented by the community; however, there has been direction, orientation, and participation of government departments, agencies, and mass organizations. Funding for the festival is also partly funded by the State. The role of the State is evident in ensuring security, order, food safety, advertising, service prices, force management, etc.

Before the festival, the commune government - where the festival is held - needs to hold a meeting of the villagers to discuss the organization of the festival, in which there is a specific assignment of work to the community. Here, the State plays the role of the organizer but the practice of rituals and presiding over the festival must be left to the community. The head of the village is responsible for implementing the festival's activities after reaching an agreement with the government, with the people, and with the people in the village to prepare activities for the festival (National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2001). These festivals are funded or supported by the government. In order for the people to really become the subject, the organizers need to have the participation of village elders, artisans, or prestigious people in the family line. Commune authorities and specialized agencies (culture and information offices) perform the management function by guiding people to prepare and participate in festivals in accordance with the State's regulations and take measures to protect them. ensure security and order during the festival. It is important to pay attention to the issue of decentralization of management. The State directs and coordinates the organization of major festivals (mainly for inspection and supervision), and decentralizes it to non-business units, businesses, and the community to organize. With small-scale folk festivals, authorities at all levels mainly play the role of inspection and supervision; The specific organization needs to empower the community.

*Second, building the self-governance element of the people in traditional festival practice*

The self-governance of the people while practicing traditional festivals is a factor that needs to be taken seriously because of the pragmatic and secularized attitude of the festival-goers, due to the lack of understanding of the sacred meaning and the symbolic value of the festival.

In fact, many festivals taking place today have not yet ensured security, order, food safety, and environmental sanitation. There are still phenomena such as people not complying with the regulations of the temple (salt offerings), bad luck fighting, jostling each other, trampling on altars, and stuffing "bribe" money into the hands of the gods. , littering everywhere, the sale of gods and goddesses is like a flea market, etc. The festival of Phet

Hien Quan (Phu Tho) on February 17, 2019, was forced to stop the robbery ritual to ensure order and security, to avoid the scene of robbery and shoving, which is easy to cause accidents. Thousands of people gathered at the gate of Phuc Khanh Pagoda (Hanoi) to perform the ceremony of offering stars for the first time of the year on the evening of February 18, 2019, causing traffic jams for many hours. The Warehouse Queen Festival 2019 witnessed many people deliberately inserting money through the gap in the palace door after worshipping; Many tourists are upset because they are bothered by the team of worshipers during the ceremony. On the occasion of the early spring festival, many cultural and spiritual tourist attractions, entertainment areas, etc. not only suffer from overcrowding but also have to "struggle" because of indiscriminate waste. Those limitations are the lessons that festival participants themselves need to learn to regulate their deviant behaviors so that the traditional festival takes place in an interesting way but is still rich in humanity.

It can be said that traditional festivals have contributed to promoting the image of the land and people, becoming a driving force for sustainable socio-economic development for the locality and the country. Besides maintaining and restoring festival activities to be richer and more attractive, the management and organization of festivals also need attention. The conservation and development of the festival must go hand in hand with raising people's awareness of historical and cultural values and the sense of preserving the ecosystem in general. In particular, it is necessary to foster and improve the management capacity and experience of the community, step by step empowering local people to self-govern. Depending on the scale, nature, and characteristics of the festival, the State's intervention level is more or less, however, the State should only focus on administrative management, legal institutions, and orientation, and The specific organization must leave the community autonomous and accountable.

Continue to well implement the regulations and regulations on the management, protection, and promotion of cultural values of the festival, thereby improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the state management of the festival in the direction of assigning it to the community. The community is the cultural subject directly involved in the management and practice of rituals. Only in this way can the community's initiative, creativity, and voluntariness be promoted. Promoting community self-governance is essentially upholding the democratic spirit of "people know, people discuss, people do, people check" in festival management and organization. This rule seems to be immutable over time and is an important factor to consider in promulgating normative documents in festival management.

*Third, develop a code of cultural conduct at festivals*

General principles of code of conduct: Preserve and promote the value of festival heritage towards sustainable development. Protect the uniqueness and diversity of cultural elements of the festival (rituals, the art of words (worship, words of vows, etc), decorative arts, performing arts, culinary arts, games, etc. from the whole of the festival). Respecting the purpose of organizing the celebration of the local community is to educate the patriotic tradition, national pride, the principle of "drinking water, remember the source", and honor the merits of ancestors, and heroes history has merit in protecting and building the homeland and country; forming good behavior, attitude, and awareness for each person (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2016). Eliminate the trend of organizing festivals for the purpose of personal gain, pursuing material interests, and serving group interests. Take measures to protect relics and scenic spots; ensuring security, order, social safety, traffic safety, fire prevention and fighting, food hygiene, and safety, and environmental sanitation.

Cultural behavior of state management agencies, and local authorities where the festival is held: Members of the festival organizing committee have uniforms and badges; decentralize the community to organize festivals, do not act for the community in organizing festivals, services, and activities; strengthen propaganda of the festival's purpose, meaning, and value; have a gentle attitude, respect visitors, build signboards for visitors to participate in festival activities and services, notify phone numbers and hotlines to receive feedback from tourists. guest; directly participate in tasks that are difficult for local communities to perform, such as security, order, social safety, food safety, and environmental sanitation; strengthen inspection and supervision (Government, 2020).

Cultural behavior of the local community where the festival is held: Respect and strictly comply with the regulations of the management agency, and the festival organizers; have a sense of responsibility to perform well the assigned tasks; have a gentle attitude, respect tourists, and enthusiastically helps tourists when they have difficulties (Trung & Van, 2020).

Cultural behavior of tourists: Have a respectful attitude towards historical figures, respect customs, spirituality, beliefs, and taboos of the festival; respect and strictly implement the regulations of the State, the organizing committee, and the festival management board; respect and be gentle with local residents, individuals and businesses doing business in services; having a gentle, polite attitude, respecting the elderly, yielding to children, helping pregnant women and people with disabilities; dress politely, in accordance with fine customs

and traditions, do not swear, do not swear, do not push, adversely affect the solemn atmosphere of the festival; keeping the environment clean, etc. (Government, 2020).

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

In the flow of modern life, dealing with traditional festivals is posing new challenges and opportunities. The festival is a mirror reflecting the unique cultural features of the nation and is also an environment for preserving, enriching, and promoting that national culture. The festival is the "red thread" throughout the preservation of culture. The process of continuing the festival in life always involves movement and poses new challenges in life and management.

Traditional festivals make an important contribution to the preservation, enrichment, and promotion of the national cultural identity. Keeping the true nature of traditional festivals means preserving the national cultural identity from being integrated or dissolved in the trend of globalization and world cultural and economic integration.

Traditional festivals are recovering strongly and are interested in the whole society from many angles. In the multi-dimensional relationship with other areas of life today, preserving and promoting the value of traditional festivals requires understanding, research, management, organization, etc. for the work to happen. selecting, preserving, and promoting the positive values of traditional festivals to serve the increasing and diverse needs of today is a necessity.

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