

PHYGITAL MARKETING AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT IN URBAN CULTURAL TOURISM: EVIDENCE AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS FROM HO CHI MINH CITY

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Abstract

As digital transformation and the development of smart tourism become increasingly important options, visitor experience management in urban cultural tourism increasingly depends on the ability to connect physical spaces, digital platforms, and post-trip interactions. This study analyzes the role of Phygital marketing in visitor experience management at urban cultural tourism spaces in Ho Chi Minh City. Based on an exploratory-descriptive design, the study combines field observations, expert consultations, and quantitative surveys with 500 respondents belonging to five groups related to urban cultural tourism experiences. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to assess digital touchpoint infrastructure, phygital interaction levels, visitor emotional responses, and the ability to maintain connections after the experience. The results show that urban cultural spaces in Ho Chi Minh City have the potential to generate positive emotions, visual effects, and sharing behavior on digital platforms. However, the phygital experience remains limited by uneven connectivity infrastructure, insufficient personalization of digital content, and weaknesses in post-visit engagement. Based on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework, this study proposes policy implications for standardizing phygital touchpoints, developing connectivity infrastructure, personalizing cultural content, and building mechanisms for maintaining relationships with tourists after their trip. The research results provide initial evidence for the application of phygital marketing in managing tourist experiences and developing urban cultural tourism in Ho Chi Minh City.

Keywords: Phygital Marketing; Visitor Experience Management; Urban Cultural Tourism; Post-Visit Engagement; Ho Chi Minh City.

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation is changing how tourists access, experience, and remember cultural destinations in urban spaces. The tourism experience is no longer confined to museums, historical sites, festivals, or cultural spaces, but is shaped by multiple touchpoints before, during, and after the trip. Therefore, visitor experience management

has become a crucial issue for cities aiming to develop cultural tourism in a smart, competitive, and distinctive way.

In this context, Phygital marketing offers a suitable approach to connect physical and digital touchpoints into a seamless experiential journey. Previous studies have shown that the phygital experience is formed from a combination of physical and digital elements, thereby restructuring the customer journey and customer experience (Belghiti et al., 2018; Mele et al., 2023). Simultaneously, technologies such as AI, AR/VR, IoT, chatbots, mobile applications, and interactive interfaces are changing how customers receive information, perceive value, and interact with service providers (Hoyer et al., 2020).

In urban cultural tourism, phygital marketing is not just about bringing technology to the destination. The core value of phygital lies in its ability to reorganize the tourist experience: interpreting cultural content, expanding the physical space with a layer of digital information, activating emotional responses, promoting sharing, and maintaining relationships with the destination after the trip. This approach aligns with Batat's (2022) phygital customer experience (PH-CX) framework, where phygital is viewed as a framework for managing a continuous value stream between online and offline, while simultaneously meeting both the tangible and emotional needs of customers.

Ho Chi Minh City is a suitable setting for studying this issue due to its system of museums, historical sites, cultural spaces, art events, urban festivals, and destinations associated with urban memory. The digital transformation in the cultural and tourism sectors also facilitates the deployment of phygital touchpoints such as QR codes, digital exhibitions, virtual tours, multilingual content, social media platforms, and interactive tools at the destination. However, technology only creates value when connected to the visitor journey and with a clear post-visit engagement mechanism.

The research gap lies in the fact that many studies on Phygital marketing still focus on retail or consumer services, while the application of phygital marketing to urban cultural tourism has not been fully analyzed. Studies on customer experience and customer journey have confirmed that experience is the cumulative result of multiple touchpoints, stages, and cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Becker and Jaakkola, 2020). However, in urban cultural tourism, it is still necessary to clarify how physical and digital touchpoints impact tourist perceptions, support cultural interpretation, and maintain connections after direct experiences.

Based on this, this study analyzes Phygital Marketing and Visitor Experience Management in Urban Cultural Tourism in Ho Chi Minh City. Drawing on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework, the study views digital infrastructure, interactive devices, and cultural content as stimuli; tourists' emotions, interests, and personalized perceptions as organismic responses; and post-trip sharing, feedback, and continued connection as behavioral responses (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974; Donovan and Rossiter, 1982). From this, the article proposes policy implications to improve the quality of phygital touchpoints, personalize content, and enhance post-visit engagement in destination management.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Theoretical background

2.1.1 Phygital Marketing in urban cultural tourism

Phygital marketing is understood as a way of organizing experiences through the connection between physical and digital touchpoints, aiming to create a seamless journey for tourists. In urban cultural tourism, phygital marketing is not simply about adding technology to museums, historical sites, festivals, or cultural spaces, but rather about how technology expands the accessibility, interpretation, and memorization of cultural experiences.

Studies show that phygital experiences are formed from the intersection of the physical environment, digital platforms, social interaction, and the ability to personalize content (Belghiti et al., 2018; Batat, 2022; Mele et al., 2023). In urban cultural tourism, this intersection is particularly significant because tourists not only seek convenience but also expect to access historical narratives, local identity, and emotions associated with the destination.

Therefore, in this study, Phygital Marketing is considered an experience management mechanism where technology does not replace cultural space but plays a role in activating, interpreting, and extending the value of that space. This approach distinguishes the study from phygital approaches primarily focused on retail or consumer services.

2.1.2 Visitor Experience Management in a Phygital Context

Visitor experience management focuses on designing, coordinating, and evaluating the visitor experience across multiple stages and touchpoints. According to customer experience studies, experience is not a single reaction, but the cumulative result of cognitive, emotional, sensory, social, and behavioral responses throughout the interaction with an organization or destination (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Becker and Jaakkola, 2020).

In the phygital environment, visitor experience management needs to focus on three main layers: connectivity readiness, which is the readiness of the connectivity infrastructure; experience interaction, which is how visitors access and react to digital content in the physical space; and post-visit engagement, which is the ability to maintain interaction after the visit ends. These three layers help assess whether technology truly creates value for the visitor journey, or is merely a disconnected tool.

Studies on smart tourism show that digital technology can support service personalization, increase access to information, enhance interaction, and improve destination management capabilities. Gretzel et al. (2015) view smart tourism as the development based on information technology, data, and intelligent business ecosystems to create value for destinations, businesses, and visitors. Buhalis and Amaranggana (2015) also emphasized that smart tourism destinations can enhance the experience through personalized services based on data and insights into tourist needs.

However, in urban cultural tourism, technology needs to be linked to the ability to interpret culture, service quality, local stories, and the authenticity of the destination. If technology only creates visual effects without clarifying cultural values, phygital tourism may become a superficial form of digitalization rather than a meaningful visitor experience.

2.1.3 Urban Cultural Tourism and the Requirements for Smart Destination Governance

Urban cultural tourism is a form of tourism associated with tourists accessing cultural resources within urban spaces, including tangible and intangible heritage, museums, architecture, art, festivals, local lifestyles, cuisine, urban memory, and contemporary creative practices. Richards (2018) argues that cultural tourism has evolved from a heritage-focused approach to a broader experiential field encompassing living culture, urban creativity, and new forms of cultural consumption. UNWTO (2018) also emphasizes the increasingly close relationship between tourism and culture, where culture serves as both a resource to attract tourists and a foundation for sustainable destination development.

In an urban context, cultural tourism does not take place at a single attraction, but often spans multiple spaces, layers of information, and forms of interaction within a single journey. Tourists can start by searching for content on social media, continue with experiences at museums or historical sites, expand through check-ins, sharing photos, reading more historical stories, and finally end with feedback or intentions to return. This multi-touchpoint nature makes urban cultural tourism a suitable context for applying Phygital marketing.

For Ho Chi Minh City, the potential for developing urban cultural tourism stems from the combination of historical heritage, dynamic urban life, museum systems, art spaces, cultural events, and its position as a major tourism center of Vietnam. However, this potential can only be transformed into experiential value when physical and digital touchpoints are managed as a system. Therefore, managing urban cultural tourism in a phygital context requires coordination between destination management agencies, cultural organizations, tourism businesses, technology platforms, and the local community towards smart destination governance.

2.1.4 The S-O-R Framework in Analyzing Tourist Phygital Experiences

This study uses the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework to explain how phygital factors influence tourist experience and behavior. According to this framework, external factors such as connectivity infrastructure, interactive devices, digital content, exhibition spaces, and cultural interpretation act as stimuli, impacting the tourist's internal state, or organism, thereby shaping behavioral responses.

In this study, the organism includes positive emotions, excitement, level of focus, perception of personalization, and the cultural value of the experience. This stage demonstrates that the same technology can produce different responses depending on the context, content, usability, and tourist expectations.

Responses are expressed through sharing, check-in, livestreaming, digital feedback, intention to return, and the level of engagement after the trip. These responses not only reflect personal experiences but also contribute to spreading the destination's image. If infrastructure is weak, content lacks personalization, or post-visit engagement mechanisms are absent, the value of phygital marketing will be difficult to translate into long-term engagement.

Therefore, the S-O-R framework allows for research and evaluation of Phygital marketing not only at the level of technology presence at the destination, but also at the level of whether technology actually creates visitor experience value in urban cultural tourism.

2.2 Research Methodology

To analyze the role of Phygital marketing in managing the visitor experience in urban cultural tourism spaces in Ho Chi Minh City, this study uses an exploratory-descriptive design, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. This approach is suitable for a topic still developing in Vietnam, where while phygital applications have appeared in practice, they have not been fully systematized from a visitor experience management perspective.

The research process was conducted in three stages. The first stage involved a theoretical overview and the development of an analytical framework. The research team reviewed works related to Phygital marketing, customer experience, visitor experience management, smart tourism, urban cultural tourism, and the S-O-R model. The goal of this stage was to establish key indicator groups for evaluating the phygital experience, including digital infrastructure, the level of physical-digital interaction, visitors' emotional responses, and the ability to maintain connections after the trip.

The second stage involved field observation and expert consultation. The research team observed several urban cultural tourism spaces such as museums, historical sites, exhibition spaces, cultural events, and destinations that utilize technology in the visitor experience. Simultaneously, the team consulted experts in marketing, tourism, culture, and technology to review the suitability of the measurement indicators. This phase helped adjust the survey tools, ensuring that the measurement content accurately reflected the practical context of Ho Chi Minh City.

The third phase was quantitative surveying. The study used a purposive quota sampling method with a sample size of $n = 500$, distributed across five groups: managers, cultural experience producers or operators, urban residents, domestic tourists, and international tourists. This sample structure allowed for a comparison of perceptions between the experience providers and the experience recipients, thereby identifying the gap between management expectations and visitor actual usage.

Survey data were processed using descriptive statistics, focusing on the average score of each indicator group. The objective of the analysis was not to test causal relationships, but rather to identify the current state and readiness of phygital touchpoints and bottlenecks in visitor experience management. Based on theories of Phygital marketing,

smart tourism, visitor journey, and urban cultural tourism, the study developed four indicator groups: Digital Infrastructure and Access, Phygital Cultural Experience, Visitor Interaction and Emotional Response, and Post-Visit Connectivity and Experience Diffusion. These groups reflect, respectively, connectivity infrastructure, the quality of cultural experiences supported by technology, visitor responses during visits, and the ability to maintain relationships after direct experiences.

Table 1: Measurement Indicators for Phygital Visitor Experience in Urban Cultural Tourism

No.	Measurement Indicators	Code
Digital Infrastructure and Access		
1	Free Wi-Fi/Internet is available and easily accessible at cultural tourism sites.	INF1
2	Digital guidance tools, such as QR codes, AR markers or digital maps, are placed in convenient and visible locations.	INF2
3	Interactive devices, such as touchscreens, VR headsets or audio guides, function properly and support the visitor experience.	INF3
4	Charging stations or on-site technical support are available to help visitors maintain digital interaction during the visit.	INF4
Phygital Cultural Experience		
5	Visitors actively use their phones or digital devices to scan codes, access cultural information or interact with exhibits.	PHY1
6	Digital content, such as videos, 3D materials, multilingual explanations or optional interpretation modes, is personalized for different visitor groups.	PHY2
7	The combination of physical space and digital elements helps make cultural stories, heritage values or local identity more vivid and memorable.	PHY3
8	Waiting time for technology-supported services is reasonable and does not interrupt the visitor journey.	PHY4
Visitor Interaction and Emotional Response		
9	Visitors spend more time interacting with digital cultural content than merely observing the physical space.	BEH1
10	Visitors show positive emotional responses, such as surprise, enjoyment, curiosity or concentration, when using phygital touchpoints.	BEH2
11	Visitors engage in check-in, photo sharing, livestreaming or other forms of user-generated content at digital touchpoints.	BEH3
12	Visitors interact or exchange opinions with companions, staff or other visitors regarding technology-supported cultural content.	BEH4
Post-Visit Connectivity and Experience Diffusion		
13	There is a clear call to action (CTA) encouraging visitors to leave digital feedback after the visit.	CON1
14	Social media, website or digital platform information is clearly displayed to help visitors continue connecting with the destination.	CON2
15	There is a digital system, such as an app, cloud gallery or virtual certificate, that helps visitors preserve and revisit their travel memories.	CON3

(Source: Compiled by the research team)

2.3 Proposed Conceptual Framework

This study constructs a conceptual framework based on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) model. According to this model, elements from the destination environment act as the Stimulus, influencing the visitor's perceived state (Organism) and shaping their output behaviors (Response). This framework is suitable for research on

Phygital marketing in urban cultural tourism, where the visitor experience is created from the connection between digital infrastructure, cultural spaces, interpretive content, and participation behavior. In the proposed model, Stimulus consists of two groups: Digital Infrastructure and Access and Phygital Cultural Experience. The first group reflects the availability of Wi-Fi, QR codes, digital maps, interactive devices, charging stations, and technical support. The second group shows how digital elements are integrated into cultural spaces through multilingual digital content, AR/VR, audio guides, cultural interpretation, and seamless physical–digital touchpoints. Organism reflects the internal experience of tourists, encompassing Emotional Engagement such as surprise, enjoyment, curiosity, and concentration, and Perceived Personalization and Cultural Value such as relevance, accessibility, cultural meaning, and immersion. This layer demonstrates that technology is only valuable when it makes cultural content more accessible, relevant, and meaningful.

Response represents post-experience behaviors, including Experience Diffusion and Participation such as check-in, photo sharing, livestreaming, UGC, and interaction with others, and Post-Visit Engagement such as digital feedback, social media connection, digital memory preservation, revisit intention, and continued engagement. Therefore, the model views Phygital marketing as a mechanism for managing the tourist experience, where technology is the means of connecting infrastructure, cultural content, emotions, and post-experience behaviors. This forms the basis for building indicators to measure and analyze survey results and propose policy implications for urban cultural tourism in Ho Chi Minh City.

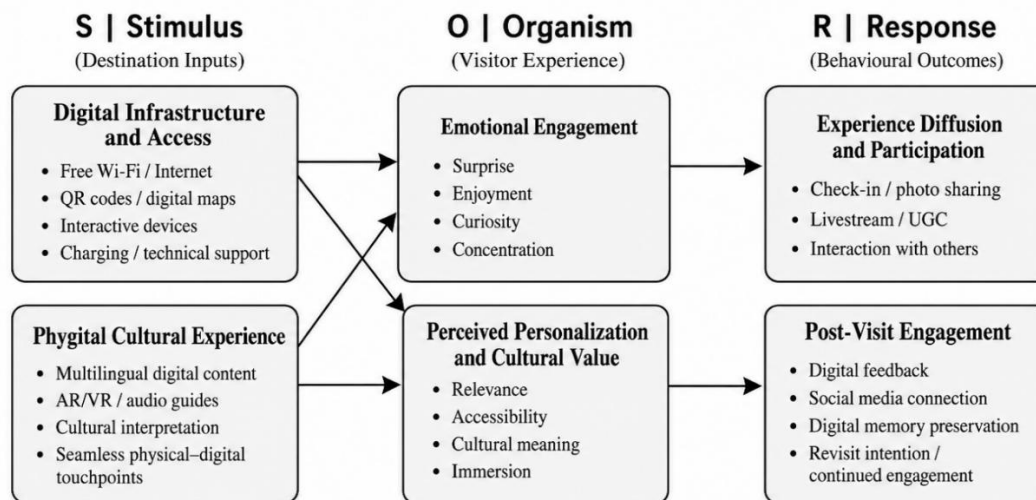


Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework for Phygital Visitor Experience Management in Urban Cultural Tourism

(Source: Developed by the research team based on the S-O-R framework and literature on Phygital Marketing, visitor experience management, smart tourism and urban cultural tourism)

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 The Development Context of Urban Cultural Tourism in Ho Chi Minh City

Ho Chi Minh City is gradually positioning culture and cultural tourism as an important component in its urban development strategy. According to the cultural industry development orientation until 2030, the city prioritizes many fields directly related to urban cultural tourism, such as film, performing arts, fine arts, photography, exhibitions, advertising, fashion, and cultural tourism.

Official reports show that the city currently has the largest cultural activity scale in the country, with a large workforce and a significant number of businesses, creating a favorable foundation for the formation of technology-integrated cultural experience models (Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee, 2026; ITPC Ho Chi Minh City, 2024).

Along with this, the digital transformation process in the cultural and tourism sectors is creating favorable conditions for the implementation of Phygital marketing. Many museums, attractions, and cultural spaces in the city have begun to apply tools such as QR codes, virtual tours, 3D exhibitions, audio guides, robotic guides, AR/VR, and multilingual platforms.

These developments show that urban cultural tourism in Ho Chi Minh City is gradually shifting from a traditional sightseeing model to a digitally-supported experiential model. Furthermore, the city's recognition by UNESCO as a Creative City of Film in 2025 also contributes to strengthening its international image as a dynamic, creative cultural destination with strong potential for developing phygital experiences in the future (VietnamPlus, 2025; Vietnam News, 2024; UNESCO, 2026; Nhan Dan, 2025).

However, this potential has not automatically translated into a complete experiential ecosystem. In practice, the deployment of technology at destinations remains fragmented and uneven in terms of infrastructure, level of personalization, and the ability to extend the visitor experience beyond the trip. This context highlights the need to reassess the current state of visitor experience management in urban cultural tourism from a phygital perspective.

3.2 Current Status of Phygital marketing in Urban Cultural Tourism in Ho Chi Minh City

To assess the current status of applying Phygital marketing in urban cultural tourism, the study combined field observation and quantitative survey with a sample size of $n = 500$ using the purposive quota sampling method.

The sample was divided equally among 5 target groups: Destination Managers (P1), Cultural Space Operators (P2), Urban Residents (P3), Domestic Visitors (P4), and International Visitors (P5), each group consisting of 100 people. Descriptive statistical results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Survey Results on the Current State of Phygital Marketing in Urban Cultural Tourism in Ho Chi Minh City

No.	Measurement Indicators	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	Mean
Digital Infrastructure and Access		3.5	3.2	2.8	3.0	3.1	3.12
1	Free Wi-Fi/Internet is easily accessible at cultural tourism sites.	3.8	3.0	2.5	2.4	2.6	2.86
2	Digital guidance tools (QR codes, AR markers, signage) are conveniently positioned.	3.6	3.5	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.42
3	Interactive devices (VR, audio guides, touchscreens) function properly.	3.4	3.3	2.9	3.1	3.3	3.20
4	Charging stations or technical support are available for visitors.	3.2	3.0	2.4	3.2	3.3	3.02
Phygital Cultural Experience		3.6	3.8	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.58
5	Visitors actively scan codes or interact with digital content during the visit.	4.0	4.2	3.8	4.3	4.5	4.16
6	Digital content is personalized (e.g., multilingual, optional interpretation modes).	3.5	3.8	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.26
7	The combination of physical space and digital elements creates an impressive cultural experience.	3.8	4.2	3.5	3.8	3.8	3.82
8	Waiting time for technology-supported services is reasonable.	3.1	3.0	2.9	3.3	3.2	3.10
Visitor Interaction and Emotional Response		3.8	3.7	3.8	4.0	4.0	3.86
9	Visitors spend more time interacting with digital cultural content than merely observing.	3.5	3.6	3.4	3.8	3.9	3.64
10	Visitors show positive emotional responses (enjoyment, surprise, curiosity) when using phygital touchpoints.	4.0	3.8	4.1	4.5	4.6	4.20
11	Visitors engage in check-in, photo sharing or livestreaming at digital touchpoints.	4.2	3.8	3.9	4.3	4.3	4.10
12	Visitors interact with companions or other visitors regarding technology-supported cultural content.	3.3	3.6	3.8	3.4	3.2	3.46
Post-Visit Connectivity and Experience Diffusion		2.9	2.7	2.4	2.5	2.3	2.56
13	There is a clear call to action (CTA) encouraging visitors to leave digital feedback.	3.2	2.8	2.5	2.4	2.2	2.62
14	Social media or website information is clearly displayed for continued connection after the visit.	3.0	2.9	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.84
15	There is a system for preserving digital memories, such as cloud photo storage or virtual certificates.	2.5	2.4	2.0	2.2	2.0	2.22

(Source: Compiled by the research team)

Analysis of Key Findings:

3.2.1 Digital Infrastructure and Access: The foundation exists but is not yet stable

The Digital Infrastructure and Access group scored an average of 3.12, indicating that digital infrastructure at urban cultural tourism sites remains moderate rather than fully stable. A positive point is that digital guidance tools such as QR codes or AR markers are conveniently located (3.42). However, the accessibility of free Wi-Fi/Internet only reached 2.86, particularly low in the Urban Residents group (2.5) and Domestic Visitors group (2.4). This shows that if the connectivity infrastructure is not stable, phygital initiatives will struggle to be fully effective.

3.2.2 Phygital Cultural Experience: Good attraction but limited personalization

The Phygital Cultural Experience group scored 3.58, reflecting a positive signal in combining physical space with digital content. The indicator of visitors actively scanning codes, accessing content, and interacting with technology reached 4.16, the highest in the International Visitors group (4.5), showing that visitors are willing to participate if touchpoints are conveniently designed. The combined effect of physical space and digital elements also reached 3.82, showing that phygital touchpoints have the potential to enhance the attractiveness of cultural experiences. However, personalized digital content only reached 3.26, indicating that digital content is not yet truly stratified according to language, needs, and interpretive depth of each visitor group.

3.2.3 Visitor Interaction and Emotional Response: Outstanding Strengths

This is the group of indicators with the highest score, with an average of 3.86. Positive emotional response when using phygital touchpoints reached 4.20, especially high in Domestic Visitors (4.5) and International Visitors (4.6). Check-in behavior, sharing photos, or livestreaming scored 4.10, indicating that the destination experience has the potential to create easily shareable moments in the digital environment. However, interaction between visitor groups regarding technological content only reached 3.46, showing that current experiences are still more individualistic than communal.

3.2.4 Post-Visit Connectivity and Experience Diffusion: The Weakest Link

The Post-Visit Connectivity and Experience Diffusion group only scored 2.56, the lowest among the four indicator groups. Digital memory storage systems such as cloud photo storage or virtual certificates only scored 2.22, indicating that tourists have few tools to retain or continue interacting with the experience after leaving the destination. CTAs encouraging digital feedback also only scored 2.62, the lowest in the International Visitors group (2.2). Thus, while on-site experiences can generate positive emotions and sharing effects, the experience lifecycle is interrupted after the trip. This is a major bottleneck in visitor experience management.

Overall, Phygital marketing in urban cultural tourism in Ho Chi Minh City has strengths in visitor interaction and emotional response, but is limited in digital infrastructure, personalized digital content, and especially post-visit engagement. The issue is not about the presence or absence of technology, but about the ability to connect technology with cultural content, the visitor journey, and mechanisms for maintaining relationships after the experience.

4. DISCUSSION

Research results show that Phygital marketing in urban cultural tourism in Ho Chi Minh City is developing in an uneven structure. Its strengths lie in its ability to evoke emotions, stimulate interaction, and encourage sharing behavior among tourists. However, crucial foundational elements such as connectivity infrastructure, content personalization, and post-visit engagement remain limited. This indicates that the main issue is not whether

technology is present at the destination, but rather the extent to which technology is integrated into the entire visitor journey.

On the positive side, the Visitor Interaction and Emotional Response group achieved the highest average score ($M = 3.86$). Within this group, positive emotional responses from tourists scored 4.20, while check-in, livestreaming, or sharing behaviors at digital touchpoints scored 4.10.

These results suggest that urban cultural tourism spaces in Ho Chi Minh City have the potential to create emotionally rich and easily shareable experiences in the digital environment. Phygital touchpoints, when properly designed, can help tourists not only receive information but also participate in, remember, and share cultural experiences.

However, current phygital experiences are still limited by unstable digital infrastructure. The Digital Infrastructure and Access group only achieved an M of 3.12, with free Wi-Fi/Internet access scoring quite low (2.86).

This is a significant bottleneck because tools such as QR codes, AR markers, audio guides, and digital content all depend on connectivity. When the infrastructure is not stable enough, the tourist experience is easily disrupted, reducing the effectiveness of technological touchpoints at the destination.

Another issue is the limited level of personalization. Although the Phygital Cultural Experience group achieved a relatively positive score ($M = 3.58$), the indicator for personalized digital content only reached 3.26.

This indicates that content at destinations still primarily provides general information, lacking true stratification based on language, needs, depth of understanding, or characteristics of specific tourist groups. In the context of urban cultural tourism, personalization is not just about technical convenience, but also about helping tourists access cultural content in a more appropriate and meaningful way.

The most obvious weakness lies in the Post-Visit Connectivity and Experience Diffusion group, with the lowest average score ($M = 2.56$). Specifically, digital memory storage systems like cloud photo storage or virtual certificates only scored 2.22, while CTAs encouraging digital feedback scored 2.62.

This result shows that the tourist experience lifecycle is being interrupted after leaving the destination. Without mechanisms for feedback, memory storage, content re-tracking, or maintaining connections through digital platforms, phygital experiences struggle to transform into long-term relationships between tourists and destinations.

From a visitor experience management perspective, the above results reflect a paradox: Ho Chi Minh City has the potential to create rich and engaging cultural experiences, but lacks the foundation to sustain them as a continuous chain.

Therefore, the direction of phygital development in urban cultural tourism needs to shift from a applying technology at the destination mindset to a "managing the entire experiential journey" mindset, encompassing pre-trip, during-trip, and post-trip aspects.

5. CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study analyzes the role of Phygital marketing in visitor experience management for urban cultural tourism in Ho Chi Minh City. Based on a survey of $n = 500$ and descriptive statistical analysis, the results show that phygital experiences in urban cultural tourism spaces have strengths in terms of emotion, interaction, and digital reach. Tourists demonstrate a high level of engagement in activities such as scanning QR codes, interacting with digital content, checking in, and sharing experiences.

However, the study also points out three main limitations. First, the connectivity infrastructure is not yet stable enough, as evidenced by the low scores of free Wi-Fi/Internet. Second, digital content is not clearly personalized for each tourist group. Third, post-visit engagement is weak, especially in tools for preserving digital memories, post-trip feedback, and maintaining connection with the destination.

These results show that Phygital marketing can support the development of urban cultural tourism, but it is only effective when implemented as a comprehensive experience management mechanism. Technology needs to be connected with infrastructure, cultural content, tourist emotions, and post-trip activities. This forms the basis for proposing policy implications to improve the quality of tourist experiences and the competitiveness of Ho Chi Minh City as a destination.

5.2 Policy Implications

Based on the limitations identified from the survey results, the study proposes three main groups of policy implications for developing Phygital marketing in urban cultural tourism in Ho Chi Minh City.

Pillar 1: Developing Phygital Connectivity Zones at urban cultural destinations

The first priority is to improve connectivity infrastructure at museums, historical sites, exhibition spaces, festivals, and cultural destinations with high visitor numbers. The city needs to aim for the development of Phygital Connectivity Zones, where free Wi-Fi/Internet, QR codes, digital maps, charging stations, and technical support are seamlessly integrated. Stable connectivity infrastructure will help tourists access digital content more conveniently, while also enabling tools like AR/VR, audio guides, and interactive devices to function effectively during their visits.

Pillar 2: Personalizing Cultural Content in the Visitor Journey

Survey results show that personalized digital content remains a weakness. Therefore, destinations need to develop multi-layered digital content tailored to different tourist groups. Content can be designed according to language, age, interest level, visit duration, or cultural themes chosen by visitors. Instead of simply providing general information, the digital content system needs to support tourists in accessing cultural stories in a way that is easy to understand, engaging, and more relevant to their individual needs. This is a

crucial condition for increasing perceived personalization and deepening the value of the experience.

Pillar 3: Building a Post-Visit Engagement Mechanism

The biggest weakness of the current phygital infrastructure is the disconnect after the trip. Therefore, destination management organizations and cultural space operators need to develop post-visit engagement tools, such as digital feedback, social media connections, cloud photo storage, virtual certificates, personalized follow-up content, and CRM. These tools help visitors retain memories, continue interacting with the destination, leave feedback, and form the intention to return. If implemented synchronously, post-visit engagement can transform a short-term experience at a destination into a long-term relationship between the visitor and the city.

In short, policy implications should focus on three directions: strengthening phygital infrastructure, improving the quality of personalized cultural content, and extending the post-visit experience lifecycle. These are the necessary conditions for Ho Chi Minh City to develop urban cultural tourism in a smarter, more distinctive, and sustainable way.

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