

Crafting Event Experiences to Promote Heritage: Insights from Designed Events to Promote Vietnamese Culture Employing Digital Technologies

Nguyen Trung Kien

Hanoi Architectural University, Vietnam

Email: kien.nt@hau.edu.vn

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Abstract

Currently, designing of event experiences to promote cultural heritage is gaining momentum. At the same time, employing digital technologies is regarded as a major technique in creative design practices. In the context of rapid digital transformations, re-interpretation of heritage through digital technologies - such as AR/VR integration, interactive LED systems, and projection mapping - offers new forms of event experiences and audience engagements while promoting culture and sustainable heritage preservation. This study examines the ways in which exciting event experiences have been created promoting Vietnamese heritage and local culture employing digital event graphic design and technologies for the preservation of cultural heritage.

The research adopts a case study methodology. It closely examines three case studies: the *Hue Festival*, the interactive installation project “*Memories in Motion*”, and the experiential program “*A Night as a Scholar*” at the *Temple of Literature*. Data were collected from media reports, visual materials, and event videos. The study evaluates the effectiveness of the integration of different forms of digital technologies in enhancing audience experiences at events. It probes into digital event designs and ascertains the role of digital technologies in creating exhilarating event-place experiences while preserving and reimagining cultural heritage.

It reveals that employing digital technologies bring in exciting multi-sensorial experiences to events, which communicate stories and histories while unfolding places comprised of both architectural and interior spaces. In fact, beyond improving visual identity and audience experience, the study asserts that integrating cultural heritage into digital event design serves as a strategy for promoting local cultural values. It is also sustainable: it simultaneously reduces resource waste, enhances educational values through the reusability of digitized content, and contributes toward the creation of sustainable and multisensory design experiences at the same time.

Keywords: Digital Technology, Event Graphic Design, Heritage, Local Culture, Spatial Experience, Vietnam.

Introduction

In the context of the current global digital transformation, cultural heritage serves not only as a trace of history but also as a vital source of inspiration in the creative arts and design industries. In Vietnam, the exploration and reinterpretation of local cultural elements in graphic design, fashion, and architecture have gradually emerged as a prominent trend, reflecting a growing awareness of traditional values - particularly among the younger designers.

The integration of traditional cultural components with digital technologies such as Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), interactive LED systems, and projection mapping has introduced new approaches for the creative sector in general and for digital event graphic design in particular. This combination contributes to the preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage in innovative, contemporary, and sustainable ways and present them through exciting and exhilarating spatial experiences. Events thus become not just situation where spectators watch the screens, but immerse in the totality of experience generated by spaces, displays, interactions and imaginations.

This study focuses on examining how such engaging experiences have been created to present Vietnamese indigenous heritage so that people can be persuaded to preserve and reimagine heritage through digital technologies. Its aim is to advance the concept of technology-driven sustainable experiential design - an inevitable global trend that not only minimizes environmental impacts but also promotes cultural continuity, transmission, and adaptation through digital means.

Its objectives are:

1. To ascertain the spatiality of experiential design of events
2. To identify how technologies could be employed to promote experiential design of events.
3. To identify the graphic principles and digital practices that could be employed to promote experiential design of events.
4. To promote sustainable ways of producing events which are experientially rich and technologically advanced.

Theoretical Framework

This paper deals with a number of theoretical ideas such as 'culture,' 'graphic design,' 'heritage,' 'digitization,' and 'event experience.' According to UNESCO (2001), culture encompasses the totality of a society's spiritual, material, and emotional characteristics, forming its identity and shaping human creativity. Similarly, Rapoport (1969) asserts that culture determines the form and aesthetics of space, serving as the foundation for all the design activities. Lowenthal (1985) emphasizes that cultural heritage is not merely a remnant of the past but rather a reinterpretation in the present, reflecting collective memory and national identity through time.

Frascara (2004) defines graphic design as a visual communication act that conveys messages and emotions through a visual language. Graphic design, although is considered to be essentially an art of producing graphical work such as book covers, advertisements, and other printed material, it is also a central facet of architecture, interior design and landscape architecture. Indeed, the built-environment comprises objects and elements that possess graphically articulated materials. Take a surface of a building such as a wall that carries doors and windows: its composition poses a graphic design challenge, as same as positions words or images on a book cover. Thus, graphic art has been an essential skill of designers such as architects and interior designers.

Heritage on the other hand has a unique power and presence in almost everything, including buildings, places, and even graphic arts. As Shah (2018) points out, heritage is more than the presence of material objects left behind by the past; it is a visible record of human history, encompassing both physical structures and culturally meaningful things and places. In the 21st century, heritage exists within dynamic urban contexts where archaeological landscapes intersect with contemporary development pressures, governance frameworks, and

identity formation. Understanding heritage therefore requires moving beyond material stabilization towards examining the sense-of-place and cultural meanings that give sites historical and social significance (Shah,2025).

In fact, presenting the values of retaining, preserving and celebrating heritage to public is an enormous task and this can be achieved by means of the preserved buildings and objects as well as by exciting exhibitions and cherishable events. As Ababneh (2016) and Jokilehto, (2007) point out, it involves the processes of identifying, interpreting, understanding, and valuing cultural properties while identifying the most relevant tools and techniques that can be employed to present them to the public (Lowenthal, 1985).

Today however, such presentations to the public can be done effectively by means of graphic art which are highly digitized. Digitization is understood as the process of transforming information and experiences from physical to digital forms. Rahaman (2021) argues that digitization goes beyond simple data preservation: it enables the recreation and dissemination of cultural heritage through digital technologies, introducing new perspectives for contemporary graphic design practices.

In this context event experiences become extremely important. This is because, it is the power of an event and its experience that can create deep feelings and emotions among the participants of an event. Indeed, event experiences focus on engaging people through emotion, active participation, and unique atmospheres rather than passive attendance. They involve Immersion: engaging multiple senses with interactive spaces, localized culture, and thematic design. Connection: fostering genuine community and networking rather than standard corporate transactions and most significantly, Surprise and Delight: This means adding small, thoughtful touches like digital interactive settings, custom food and beverage details or unexpected live performances. In other words, crafting exciting and impactful event experiences is no small task: they require a deep level of understanding of the subject matter being presented as well as the tools and techniques available not to mention the skills in articulating them to the fullest to create such experiences.

This however, does not end there. These theoretical perspectives align with Fry (2009) who proposes the concept of design for sustainability, which focuses on creating products and experiences capable of sustaining cultural continuity, minimizing resource waste, and fostering human engagement with heritage in the digital transformation era.

Given this, the above theoretical foundation provides a basis for analyzing practical case studies and supports an interdisciplinary approach that connects culture, applied design, digital technology and event experiences.

Review of Literature

Much research that examines digitized graphic design and spatial experiences they contribute to in the context of heritage exist. For example, Junwen Lu et al. (2025) assert that the sustainability of digital heritage projects, including the design and implementation of advanced technologies such as VR and XR, depends on maintaining a balance between technical systems and social systems.

According to Cao Thi Van (2024), digitization represents a crucial advancement in the preservation and dissemination of Vietnamese fine art heritage, achieved through technologies such as 3D scanning, virtual reality (VR), and digital databases. He highlights the essential role of technology in archiving and education, while documenting several practical initiatives such as the digitization of Hue monuments and the Cham Sculpture Museum. However, the research lacks an in-depth exploration of the role of graphic design in shaping heritage experiences and communication.

In contrast, Thuy (2023) emphasizes that while Vietnam's cultural heritage preservation efforts have achieved considerable progress, they continue to face challenges in balancing heritage conservation with economic developments. She underlines the importance of policy frameworks and community participation in achieving sustainable outcomes. However, there is a paucity of research that examine technology, design and experience together. In other words, there exists a research gap in the integration of heritage, technology, and design, particularly in

understanding how digital experience design can simultaneously enhance preservation effectiveness and promote heritage in a sustainable and culturally resonant manner.

4. Research Methods

Interdisciplinary Approach

This research adopts an interdisciplinary framework encompassing graphic design, cultural studies, and digital technology to analyze how Vietnamese cultural heritage is preserved and reinterpreted within digital environments. The study integrates theoretical perspectives from design communication, cultural sustainability, and digital media to establish a comprehensive foundation for understanding heritage representation in contemporary visual design.

Case Study Method

The research employs a case study methodology, examining three representative examples in Vietnam: the *Hue Festival*, the interactive installation project “*Memories in Motion*”, and the “*A Night as a Scholar*” experience program at the *Temple of Literature*.

Data were collected through visual observations and content analysis of media and communication materials related to these events. Based on these findings, the study proposes strategic directions for digital event design in Vietnam, emphasizing the creative and sustainable integration of digital technology in the preservation and reinterpretation of cultural heritage while creating wholesome spatial event experience.

5. Findings

Hue Festival

The *Hue Festival* is a biennial cultural and artistic event aimed at celebrating and promoting the heritage and historical identity of the former imperial capital of Hue. The festival encompasses a wide range of artistic displays, exhibitions, and, most notably, digital light performances. During the opening ceremony of the 2024 *Hue Festival* at *Kien Trung Palace* (Fig.1), a variety of advanced digital technologies - including laser systems, LED matrix displays, holograms, and projection mapping - were employed to creatively reinterpret cultural heritage through contemporary visual experiences. The place that came into being thus possessed nuances of thrilling experience, a sense of history and heritage as well and digital presence, all skillfully composed to create a wholesome festival experience.



Fig. 1: The opening stage of the 2024 Hue Festival Week at Kien Trung Palace

Source: Le Hoai Nhan (thanhvien.vn)



Fig. 2: Performances by domestic and international art troupes

Source: <https://vietnamtourism.gov.vn/en/post/20078>

The design team utilized projection mapping technology to project images onto architectural surfaces such as the *Ky Dai*, *Ngo Mon Gate*, and the *Imperial Citadel*, transforming these historical spaces into immersive stages of light art. The architectural surfaces thus gained life and presented themselves as powerful communicators of the history and cultural heritage they represent.

Traditional *Nguyen Dynasty* motifs - such as dragons, phoenixes, clouds, waves, and courtly patterns - were recreated using 3D graphic techniques and synchronized with an audio system, creating a multisensory experience that intertwined the traditional aesthetics of heritage with the contemporary dynamics of digital technology. Indeed, the place that was produced through space, sound, visuals and the ambience was beyond imagination yet transformed the event to be an exhilarating experience of the past: heritage.

Beyond its aesthetic value, the *Hue Festival* also demonstrates sustainability in digital event design. All visual, audio, and graphic content was digitally produced and archived, allowing for future editing, adaptation, and reuse in subsequent festivals or exhibition contexts. This approach not only reduces material waste but also contributes to the creation of a digital repository of cultural heritage, serving as an important resource for education and cultural tourism.

Interactive Installation Project “Memories in Motion”

The “*Memories in Motion*” project, developed by a group of Communication and Design students from RMIT Vietnam, exemplifies the integration of digital technology and cultural heritage in contemporary design practice. The installation employed a combination of touch screens, Kinect motion sensors, LCD panels, and ambient sound systems to recreate and visualize historical images of old Saigon (Fig.2). Through this interactive system, viewers could explore, compare, and engage with past and present depictions of iconic architectural landmarks such as the *Saigon Opera House*, *Independence Palace*, and the *Ho Chi Minh City People’s Committee*.

The design of this event is unique and has considered a multiplicity of aspects in creating the setting to create the experience. It begins with clear objectives: to encourage play, retain audience and provide information. It also recognizes the audience: the tourists and the students. Identifying its location and the architectural space could not have been better: it was performed at the War remnants Museum, and the ground floor space avoids adverse weather conditions, and is flexible enabling free movements during the interactive process. It presents Ho Chi Minh City People’s Committee, the Saigon Opera House, the Independence Palace, the Caravelle Hotel and the Saigon Tax Trade Centre: unique heritage buildings bound to impress upon the audience.

For digitization, it employs Cameras, LCD screens, Speakers and Monitors and produces artistic rendering using the most sophisticated graphic techniques. Its interactive features are uncontestable. It employs sight, body movements and touch. As the organisers claim, by integrating playful interactive elements to provide information, these additions transformed the experience of the participants to be immersive, and deepened their knowledge, while offering a compelling glimpse into the past.

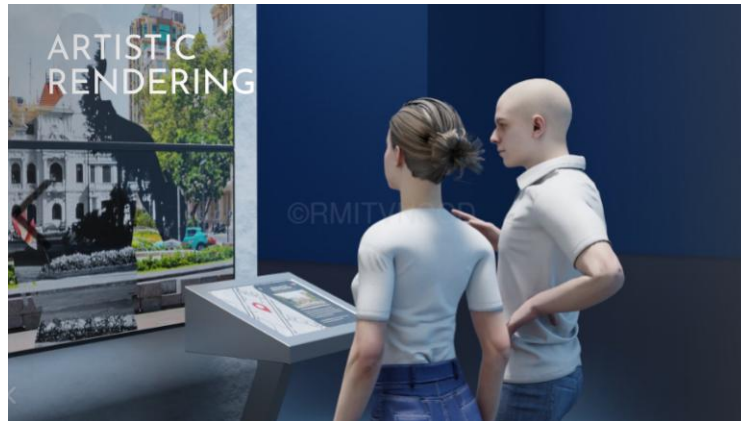


Fig. 3: Interactive Spatial & Art work
Source: RMIT Vietnam



Fig. 4: Digital Art work
Source: RMIT Vietnam



Fig. 5: Integrated architectural spaces, technologies and graphics
Source: RMIT Vietnam

The use of Kinect motion sensors enabled real-time tracking of participants' gestures, dynamically altering the displayed visuals in response to movement. This personalized interaction transformed the exhibition into a digitally immersive experience, fostering emotional engagement and encouraging reflection on urban memory and cultural transformation.

The project demonstrates a commitment to sustainable experience design. All visuals, sounds, and display data were fully digitized, archived, and designed for reuse, allowing the exhibition to be replicated or adapted for future educational and cultural applications. This approach not only minimizes material consumption but also contributes to the preservation and dissemination of Vietnam's urban cultural heritage in the digital era.

“A Night as a Scholar” Interactive Cultural Experience at the Temple of Literature

The project “*A Night as a Scholar*” represents an interactive cultural experience collaboratively organized by the Center for Cultural and Scientific Activities of the Temple of Literature and Samsung Vietnam. Under the theme “Galaxy AI Understands Vietnamese, Honoring Vietnamese Knowledge”, the event exemplifies the convergence of advanced digital technology and traditional cultural heritage, offering participants a new mode of engagement with Vietnam's academic and historical legacy through technology-driven storytelling.

The program was structured into five experiential zones - Registration, Initiation, Discourse, Examination, and Veneration - each designed to evoke a different stage in the scholarly journey of ancient Vietnam. Within these zones, participants interacted with cutting-edge Samsung technologies, including Galaxy AI, the Galaxy S25 series, and 3D Mapping projection systems, which collectively transformed the historical site into an immersive digital heritage space.



Fig. 3: Doctoral Stele

Source: The Center for Cultural and Scientific Activities of the Temple of Literature

One of the most distinctive features of the event was the use of Gemini Live, which enabled visitors to converse with and explore the Doctoral Stele heritage through AI technology (Fig.3). The highlight of the program took place in the Veneration area, where 3D mapping projection presented a visual narrative titled “*Tinh hoa đạo học*” (The Essence of Confucian Learning) (Fig.4), celebrating the intellectual achievements of Vietnam's scholars. The visual design - characterized by simplicity, dynamism, and aesthetic harmony - was integrated with stage performance to create a multi-sensory and emotionally engaging experience.

Held at 58 Phố Quốc Tử Giám, Đống Đa, Hà Nội, Vietnam, the 3D Mapping Show included the following:

- A giant visual projection on the facade of Thai Hoc House which narrates the history of Confucianism and royal examinations.
 - AI Turtle Scholar which is an interactive digital integration allowing visitors to ask questions and learn study wisdom with a modern twist.
 - The Virtual Calligraphy where visitors can test drawing ancient characters in the air via smart virtual devices.
- Live Heritage Music: Traditional instruments like the monochord (đàn bầu) echo through the historic courtyards



Fig. 4: presented a visual narrative titled “Tinh hoa đạo học” (The Essence of Confucian Learning)
Source: The Center for Cultural and Scientific Activities of the Temple of Literature

Indeed, this event underscores the potential of digital experience design in heritage interpretation and education. By combining traditional symbolism with modern technology, the project demonstrates how interactive digital design can bridge generational gaps, enhance youth engagement with cultural history, and contribute to sustainable cultural dissemination in the era of digital transformation and produce a setting of enthralling experience of the historical past.

General Observations

The three examined cases differ in their objectives, forms, and technological approaches, yet they share a common principle: the integration of cultural heritage into digital experiential spaces. This convergence demonstrates that Vietnamese cultural heritage serves as a rich source of design inspiration, while digital technology functions as a bridge that revitalizes and enhances the accessibility of heritage for broader audiences - particularly younger generations.

Sustainability in digital event design lies not only in minimizing resource consumption but also in the reusability of digital content, the dissemination of cultural values, and the creation of long-term educational impact. These elements collectively define a sustainable approach to digital cultural practices.

Moreover, the analyzed cases underscore the essential role of graphic design in transforming cultural narratives into compelling visual experiences. Through this process, designers maintain and reinterpret local cultural identity within the context of an increasingly globalized and digitized creative environment. Graphic design thus operates as a mediator - translating traditional heritage into contemporary visual language while fostering both cultural continuity and innovation.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal significant parallels with both international and domestic research on the digitalization of cultural heritage. Similar to Cao Thi Van (2024), this research affirms that the digitization of heritage through technologies such as AR/VR integration, interactive LED systems, and projection mapping plays a vital role in preserving, archiving, and disseminating cultural values. These technologies allow heritage to transcend its material limitations, offering multisensory experiences for audiences while contributing to education and the promotion of Vietnamese culture among younger generations.

Furthermore, the results align with the perspective of Junwen Lu et al. (2025), who argue that digital heritage should be understood as a socio-technical system in which human and technological factors jointly shape cultural experiences. The application of AR/VR, interactive design, and user experience in projects such as the Hue Festival and Memories in

Motion demonstrates the integration between technological and social dimensions in digital event design.

The study's findings are also consistent with Luu Thi Thu Thuy (2023), emphasizing the importance of community engagement and cultural preservation policies. Digital events associated with heritage, such as "Experiencing a Night as a Scholar" at the Temple of Literature, have effectively raised public awareness of local cultural values, in accordance with Vietnam's (2016) National Strategy for Sustainable Cultural Industry Development.

Distinct from previous research, which has primarily approached heritage from the perspectives of preservation, education, or information technology, this study foregrounds digital event graphic design as a medium for cultural experience. Rather than merely converting heritage into digital data, the study views design and technology as tools for reinterpreting heritage through emotion, visual language, and interaction. In doing so, preservation becomes a creative act - both conserving and transforming culture.

This approach diverges from Cao Thi Van (2024), who focuses on artistic archiving, and Junwen Lu et al. (2025), who propose a heritage management model. The present study extends the discourse by analyzing design language, visual elements, sound, and light as communicative media in cultural expression. The analyzed projects demonstrate how heritage can be transformed into immersive experiences where audiences can observe, interact, and feel - thereby fostering sustainable experience design. Moreover, the study underscores the reusability of digital content as a key component of sustainability.

Rooted in the practical context of Vietnamese design, this research reflects a distinctive approach: creative practices in Vietnam often intertwine with local culture and artistic innovation, where heritage functions both as an object of preservation and a source of creative inspiration. The growth of the cultural and creative industries, alongside the National Digital Transformation Policy (2020), has accelerated innovation in heritage engagement through experiential technologies. Consequently, young designers - such as the student collective behind *Memories in Motion* - have boldly combined digital technologies with storytelling art to reinterpret heritage through contemporary design languages.

This distinctive perspective also reflects the inherent characteristics of graphic design, where aesthetic, emotional, and experiential values are equally prioritized alongside cultural significance. The study ultimately asserts that graphic design serves as an effective medium for cultural heritage preservation in the digital age, contributing to sustainable cultural development.

Conclusions

This research examines the possibilities of employing re-interpretation of heritage through digital technologies - such as AR/VR integration, interactive LED systems, and projection mapping. It revealed that in fact, such technologies offer new forms of event experiences and audience engagements while promoting culture and sustainable heritage preservation. This study revealed the ways in which exciting event experiences have been created at three situations promoting Vietnamese heritage and local culture employing digital event graphic design and technologies for the preservation of cultural heritage.

The findings indicate that digital technologies have become an effective tool in producing exhilarating and impactful experiences and can be employed to promote the idea of preserving and promoting Vietnam's cultural heritage. The application of AR/VR integration, interactive LED systems, and projection mapping enables the reconstruction and reimagination of heritage spaces through multisensory interaction, thereby enhancing public awareness and appreciation of cultural values.

Looking ahead, the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI), the metaverse, and virtual spatial design is expected to further expand the potential for preserving and reconstructing Vietnamese heritage, moving towards a comprehensive model of digital heritage representation. Technology and culture thus coexist, interact, and evolve together toward sustainable development.

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Ethical Research Practice: This study strictly follows standard ethical research guidelines.

Availability of Data:

This paper presents only some of the data produced through this research. However, most of the data generated through this research is available for scrutiny and can be provided upon request.

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