

To cite this article: Quan Nguyen Van* and Minh Tran Thu (2026). Exploring the Commercial Appeal of Music Events: The Role of Fusion between Modern Music and Traditional Cultural Elements in Vietnam. International Journal of Education, Business and Economics Research (IJEER) 6 (4): 68-94

EXPLORING THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL OF MUSIC EVENTS: THE ROLE OF FUSION BETWEEN MODERN MUSIC AND TRADITIONAL CULTURAL ELEMENTS IN VIETNAM

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<https://doi.org/10.59822/IJEER.2026.6405>

ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of the live music industry has intensified competition among event organizers to create distinctive and memorable experiences that enhance audiences' behavioral intentions and commercial success. In response to the growing demand for culturally meaningful experiences, contemporary music events increasingly integrate traditional cultural elements into modern performances. However, empirical evidence explaining how such cultural fusion influences the commercial appeal of music events remains limited, particularly in emerging creative economies such as Vietnam. Drawing upon Experience Economy Theory and Authenticity Theory, this study investigates the relationships among cultural fusion, perceived authenticity, commercial appeal, and cultural identity. Specifically, the study examines the direct effect of cultural fusion on commercial appeal, the mediating role of perceived authenticity, and the moderating role of cultural identity. A quantitative research approach was employed using survey data collected from 220 attendees of five major Vietnamese music events incorporating traditional cultural elements. The proposed conceptual model was analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings reveal that cultural fusion positively influences both perceived authenticity and the commercial appeal of music events. Perceived authenticity further exerts a significant positive effect on commercial appeal and partially mediates the relationship between cultural fusion and commercial appeal. In addition, cultural identity significantly strengthens the positive relationship between cultural fusion and perceived authenticity, indicating that audiences with stronger cultural attachment perceive culturally integrated performances as more authentic. These findings extend the literature by integrating Experience Economy Theory and Authenticity Theory into a unified framework explaining consumer responses to culturally integrated music events. The study also provides practical implications for event organizers, artists, policymakers, and destination marketers seeking to enhance the competitiveness of music events while simultaneously promoting Vietnamese cultural heritage and supporting the sustainable development of the creative economy.

KEYWORDS: Commercial appeal; cultural fusion; cultural identity; music events; perceived authenticity.

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Published Online: July 2026

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The global live music industry has experienced remarkable expansion over the past decade, becoming an important driver of cultural tourism, destination branding, and the creative economy. According to the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), global recorded music revenues reached US\$29.6 billion in 2024, representing the tenth consecutive year of growth, while subscription streaming exceeded 752 million paid users worldwide, reflecting the continuously increasing global demand for music consumption. Although these figures refer to the recorded music sector, they demonstrate the rapid expansion of the broader music industry and provide strong momentum for the growth of live music events, concerts, and music festivals as complementary forms of music consumption. Alongside industry growth, live music events have evolved beyond their traditional role as entertainment activities to become complex experiential products capable of generating substantial economic, social, and cultural value (Getz & Page, 2016). Contemporary audiences increasingly expect concerts and music festivals to deliver memorable experiences characterized by emotional engagement, immersive environments, cultural storytelling, and opportunities for social interaction rather than simply high-quality musical performances. Consequently, event organizers face growing pressure to differentiate their offerings by designing distinctive experiences that strengthen attendance intention, increase willingness to pay, encourage positive word-of-mouth, and promote long-term visitor loyalty.

The increasing demand for experiential consumption has coincided with a growing global interest in cultural authenticity and local identity. Rather than consuming standardized entertainment products, audiences increasingly value experiences that meaningfully reflect local traditions, cultural heritage, and destination identity. This trend has encouraged event organizers worldwide to incorporate indigenous cultural resources into contemporary performances as a strategy for creating distinctive event brands and enhancing market competitiveness. Countries such as South Korea, China, Japan, and Indonesia have successfully integrated traditional music, costumes, historical narratives, and cultural symbolism into modern music productions, creating globally recognizable cultural products while simultaneously reinforcing national cultural identity. Vietnam has recently experienced a similar transformation. The rapid development of its cultural and creative industries has encouraged organizers of concerts, music festivals, and large-scale entertainment events to incorporate Vietnamese traditional musical instruments, folk melodies, traditional costumes, historical imagery, and indigenous artistic symbols into contemporary performances. These culturally integrated productions have attracted considerable public attention and generated extensive discussions regarding their artistic innovation, cultural significance, and commercial potential. This development is consistent with UNESCO's recognition that cultural and creative

industries constitute an increasingly important source of sustainable economic development while simultaneously contributing to cultural preservation and social cohesion.

Despite these developments, empirical research explaining whether the integration of traditional cultural elements actually enhances the commercial attractiveness of music events remains limited. Existing studies have extensively examined the influence of event quality, service quality, visitor satisfaction, emotional experience, and perceived value on behavioral intentions (Cole & Chancellor, 2009; Andersson et al., 2017; Tanford & Jung, 2017). Likewise, tourism and heritage studies have established authenticity as a major determinant of visitor satisfaction and loyalty (Wang, 1999; Rickly, 2022). Separately, research on cultural hybridity has demonstrated that combining local heritage with contemporary artistic expression can generate innovative cultural products capable of enhancing competitiveness (Bhabha, 1994; Pieterse, 2009). Nevertheless, these research streams remain largely disconnected, and limited empirical evidence explains how cultural fusion influences commercial appeal through audiences' perceptions of authenticity, particularly within the context of contemporary live music events. This research gap is particularly evident in emerging cultural markets such as Vietnam. While the commercialization of traditional heritage through contemporary music performances has expanded rapidly, little empirical evidence explains whether audiences perceive these culturally integrated performances as authentic, whether authenticity subsequently enhances commercial appeal, or whether these relationships differ according to individuals' cultural identity. Addressing these questions is important not only for advancing event management and cultural tourism research but also for providing evidence-based guidance for artists, event organizers, and policymakers seeking to balance commercial success with cultural preservation.

To address these gaps, this study integrates Experience Economy Theory (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) and Authenticity Theory (Wang, 1999; Rickly, 2022) to investigate the influence of cultural fusion on the commercial appeal of music events. Specifically, the study examines the direct effect of cultural fusion on commercial appeal, the mediating role of perceived authenticity, and the moderating role of cultural identity. By combining these complementary theoretical perspectives, this research explains how integrating Vietnamese traditional cultural elements into contemporary music performances creates memorable and authentic experiences that stimulate favorable market-oriented behavioral intentions. This study contributes to the literature in several ways. First, it extends event management research by conceptualizing cultural fusion as a strategic experiential attribute capable of enhancing the commercial appeal of contemporary music events. Second, it integrates Experience Economy Theory and Authenticity Theory into a unified framework explaining both the experiential and psychological mechanisms underlying consumer behavioral intentions. Third, it identifies cultural identity as an important boundary condition influencing audiences' evaluations of culturally integrated performances. Finally, by providing empirical evidence from Vietnam, an emerging creative economy with rich cultural heritage, this study contributes to the growing international literature on cultural consumption, creative industries and event management. The study is constructed by 5 parts including (1) Introduction; (2) Theoretical background and hypothesis development; (3) Methodology; (4) Findings and discussion; and (5) Implications and conclusion.

2.0 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Commercial appeal of music events

The commercialization of live music events has become an increasingly important topic in event management, tourism, and cultural marketing research. As music festivals and concerts evolve into highly competitive cultural products, event organizers are required not only to deliver artistic performances but also to create experiences that generate sustainable economic returns. Consequently, understanding the commercial appeal of music events has become essential for explaining audiences' behavioral intentions and evaluating event performance (Andersson et al., 2017; Tanford & Jung, 2017). Although commercial appeal has not been formally established as a standardized construct in the literature, previous studies consistently conceptualize it through consumers' favorable market-oriented responses toward an event. Rather than representing a single outcome, commercial appeal reflects the extent to which a music event successfully attracts potential audiences, stimulates purchase decisions, creates customer loyalty, and enhances its market competitiveness. In tourism and event research, these outcomes are commonly operationalized using multiple behavioral indicators, including attendance intention, ticket purchase intention, willingness to pay, perceived value, revisit intention, and recommendation (positive word-of-mouth) intention (Cole & Chancellor, 2009; Andersson et al., 2017; Tanford & Jung, 2017). Among these indicators, attendance intention and ticket purchase intention represent consumers' pre-consumption behavioral responses and are widely considered direct measures of an event's market attractiveness. Meanwhile, willingness to pay reflects the monetary value that audiences assign to the anticipated event experience, whereas perceived value captures consumers' overall evaluation of the trade-off between the benefits received and the financial, temporal, and psychological costs incurred. Following consumption, revisit intention and recommendation intention indicate customer loyalty and long-term commercial sustainability, making them widely accepted indicators of successful event marketing (Andersson et al., 2017; Cole & Chancellor, 2009).

A substantial body of literature demonstrates that the commercial appeal of music events is determined by several interrelated event attributes. Among these, event quality has consistently emerged as one of the strongest predictors of visitors' behavioral intentions. Event quality generally encompasses the quality of performances, event programming, venue facilities, accessibility, staff services, organization, and overall atmosphere. Empirical evidence indicates that high-quality event experiences significantly enhance perceived value, visitor satisfaction, expenditure, revisit intention, and positive word-of-mouth (Cole & Chancellor, 2009; Andersson et al., 2017). Furthermore, a comprehensive meta-analysis by Tanford & Jung (2017), synthesizing findings from dozens of festival studies, concluded that festival activities, entertainment programs, environmental quality, and perceived value are among the most influential determinants of visitor satisfaction and loyalty. Another important antecedent is artist attractiveness, particularly in contemporary music events where performers constitute one of the primary motivations for attendance. Previous studies suggest that audiences are attracted not only by artists' musical competence but also by their popularity, stage presence, emotional connection with fans, and ability to deliver memorable live performances (Leante, 2016). These characteristics enhance the experiential value of concerts and strengthen consumers' intentions to attend future events and recommend them to others. Research on live music attendance further indicates that emotional engagement with performers contributes

substantially to consumers' overall event evaluation and behavioral intentions. Beyond performance quality, recent event literature increasingly emphasizes the importance of authenticity and cultural uniqueness as strategic sources of competitive advantage. Authenticity refers to audiences' perceptions that an event genuinely represents local traditions, cultural identity, or artistic heritage rather than merely providing commercial entertainment. Cultural uniqueness, meanwhile, reflects the degree to which an event offers distinctive cultural characteristics that differentiate it from competing events. Tanford & Jung's (2017) meta-analysis identified authenticity and uniqueness as significant contributors to visitor satisfaction and loyalty across diverse festival contexts. Similarly, studies on heritage and cultural festivals demonstrate that culturally distinctive event attributes enhance perceived value and strengthen visitors' behavioral intentions by creating memorable and meaningful experiences.

The literature also identifies novelty as a significant motivational factor in live event consumption (González-Cutre & Sicilia, 2019). Consumers increasingly seek unique and memorable experiences that differ from everyday entertainment. Novel performances, innovative stage production, creative event design, and unexpected experiential elements increase visitors' excitement and emotional stimulation, thereby enhancing overall satisfaction and future attendance intentions. Novelty has therefore been recognized as an important experiential attribute contributing to festival competitiveness within increasingly saturated entertainment markets. Finally, emotional experience constitutes one of the most influential psychological mechanisms underlying audiences' behavioral responses. Live music events provide immersive multisensory experiences capable of generating excitement, joy, nostalgia, social bonding, and emotional resonance. These emotions shape visitors' perceptions of value and satisfaction, which subsequently influence revisit intention, recommendation intention, and willingness to purchase future event experiences. Numerous empirical studies consistently demonstrate that emotional experiences mediate the relationship between event attributes and behavioral intentions, highlighting their central role in determining the commercial success of music events (Cole & Chancellor, 2009; Andersson et al., 2017).

2.2 Music events as cultural consumption experiences

Contemporary music events have evolved beyond their traditional role as occasions for musical performance to become complex experiential and cultural consumption settings. Rather than merely listening to live music, audiences increasingly seek immersive experiences that combine entertainment, emotional engagement, social interaction, self-expression, and cultural meaning. This transformation reflects broader changes in consumer behavior, in which experiences are valued more highly than tangible products and are regarded as important sources of personal identity and memorable consumption (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Getz & Page, 2016). The Experience Economy provides one of the most influential theoretical foundations for understanding consumer behavior at music events. Pine & Gilmore (1999) argue that economic value has progressively shifted from goods and services toward experiences that actively engage consumers on emotional, intellectual, aesthetic, and participatory dimensions. In this context, successful events are no longer evaluated solely by the quality of performances but by their ability to create memorable experiences that remain meaningful long after the event has ended. This perspective has been widely adopted in tourism and event management research, where memorable experiences are consistently associated

with higher visitor satisfaction, perceived value, loyalty, and positive behavioral intentions (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Getz & Page, 2016).

Building upon this perspective, Event Experience Theory conceptualizes events as multidimensional experiences created through interactions among event design, physical settings, social environments, and participants' subjective interpretations. Getz (2012) argues that the value of an event lies not merely in its programmed activities but in the holistic experiences co-created between organizers and attendees. Likewise, Berridge (2012) emphasizes that event experiences emerge from a combination of sensory stimulation, emotional engagement, social participation, and symbolic meaning, making audience experience the central outcome of successful event design. Accordingly, visitors evaluate music events not only according to artistic performance but also according to the overall atmosphere, opportunities for interaction, emotional immersion, and the uniqueness of the experience. The experiential nature of music events is further explained by the concept of cultural consumption, which views consumption as a process through which individuals construct meanings, express identities, and participate in shared cultural practices. Consumer choices increasingly reflect symbolic values rather than purely functional benefits, particularly within leisure and entertainment contexts (Bourdieu, 1984). Live music events therefore function as cultural spaces where audiences negotiate social identity, lifestyle, and personal values through participation. Attendance at concerts and festivals represents not only entertainment consumption but also participation in cultural communities and collective experiences that reinforce a sense of belonging and self-expression.

Recent research on live music consumption supports this perspective by demonstrating that audiences attend concerts for a variety of experiential motivations extending beyond music itself. Brown & Knox (2017) found that live music attendees value emotional engagement with performers, opportunities for social interaction, feelings of togetherness, atmosphere, and memorable moments as much as musical performance. Similarly, Webster & McKay (2016) argue that contemporary music festivals create temporary communities in which participants experience social bonding, identity affirmation, and emotional connection, thereby enhancing the overall value of the event. These findings indicate that the success of music events increasingly depends on their ability to satisfy experiential and symbolic needs rather than simply providing entertainment. In addition to entertainment, music events have become important venues for identity construction. Participation enables individuals to communicate personal tastes, cultural affiliations, and social identities while simultaneously strengthening emotional attachment to artists, communities, and cultural traditions. This identity-related dimension has become particularly significant among younger generations, whose consumption behaviors are increasingly motivated by authenticity, self-expression, and meaningful experiences rather than passive entertainment (Richards, 2015). Consequently, music festivals and concerts are increasingly designed as platforms that facilitate emotional resonance, community participation, and cultural engagement. Furthermore, the growing emphasis on memorable experiences has reshaped the strategic management of music events. Memorable tourism and event experiences are characterized by novelty, meaningfulness, emotional intensity, and active participation, all of which positively influence visitor satisfaction, recommendation intention, revisit intention, and destination loyalty (Kim et al., 2012). Within music events, memorable experiences arise not only from artistic excellence but also from

immersive staging, audience participation, cultural storytelling, and opportunities for meaningful interaction. These experiential elements enhance consumers' perceptions of value while strengthening the long-term commercial sustainability of music events.

2.3 Fusion between modern music and traditional cultural elements

2.3.1. Modern music

Modern music encompasses a broad range of contemporary musical genres that have emerged and evolved through globalization, technological advancement, and continuous cultural exchange. Unlike traditional music, which is often closely associated with specific cultural contexts and historical practices, modern music is characterized by innovation, stylistic diversity, digital production, and the integration of influences from multiple musical traditions. Contemporary genres such as pop, electronic dance music (EDM), hip-hop, and indie music have become dominant forms of popular music worldwide and constitute the core repertoire of today's commercial music events (Bennett, 2001; Negus, 1999). Among these genres, pop music represents one of the most commercially successful forms of contemporary music because of its accessibility, melodic simplicity, and broad audience appeal. Pop music continuously incorporates musical elements from different cultures and genres, enabling artists to reach increasingly diverse audiences while maintaining commercial competitiveness (Negus, 1999). This adaptive nature makes pop music particularly suitable for incorporating local cultural elements into contemporary performances.

Similarly, EDM has transformed live music experiences through technological innovation, immersive audiovisual production, and large-scale festival culture. Beyond its musical characteristics, EDM emphasizes multisensory experiences, audience participation, and emotional engagement, making it an important platform for creative experimentation and cross-cultural artistic expression (Anderton et al., 2013). As a result, EDM performances increasingly integrate visual arts, traditional instruments, and cultural storytelling to create distinctive festival experiences. Hip-hop has likewise evolved from a localized urban music culture into a global cultural phenomenon characterized by hybridity and cultural adaptation. Rather than being confined to a single musical style, hip-hop frequently incorporates local languages, traditional sounds, cultural symbols, and indigenous narratives while preserving its expressive and socially communicative functions. This capacity for localization has enabled hip-hop to develop diverse regional identities across Asia, Europe, and Latin America, illustrating the genre's flexibility in accommodating traditional cultural elements within contemporary musical production (Mitchell, 2001). In contrast, indie music places greater emphasis on artistic authenticity, creative independence, and experimentation than mainstream commercial genres. Indie artists frequently explore unconventional musical arrangements and incorporate local cultural influences to construct distinctive artistic identities. Such openness to experimentation has made indie music an important platform for cultural innovation and the reinterpretation of traditional musical heritage within contemporary contexts (Hesmondhalgh, 1999).

Beyond the characteristics of individual genres, scholars increasingly argue that contemporary music should be understood as an inherently hybrid cultural form. Globalization has accelerated interactions among musical traditions, enabling artists to combine diverse cultural resources into innovative creative expressions. Rather than replacing local traditions, modern music increasingly

functions as a flexible platform through which traditional cultural elements can be reinterpreted and communicated to contemporary audiences (Pieterse, 2009). This process reflects broader patterns of cultural hybridization, whereby global and local cultural resources interact to generate new forms of artistic expression. Recent studies further suggest that audiences increasingly value innovation alongside authenticity. While contemporary listeners expect high-quality production, they also seek distinctive performances that reflect local cultural identity and provide experiences unavailable in standardized global entertainment. Consequently, modern music has become an effective medium through which artists and event organizers reinterpret traditional cultural heritage in ways that remain accessible, emotionally engaging, and commercially attractive to diverse audiences (Richards, 2015; Getz & Page, 2016).

2.3.2. Traditional cultural elements

Traditional cultural elements represent the tangible and intangible manifestations of a nation's cultural heritage that embody its historical continuity, collective memory, artistic values, and cultural identity. Within the context of cultural events, these elements extend beyond heritage preservation to become valuable cultural resources that can be creatively reinterpreted in contemporary artistic production. As cultural consumption increasingly emphasizes authenticity and experiential value, traditional cultural elements have become important assets for differentiating music events and creating distinctive audience experiences (UNESCO, 2003; Richards, 2015). In Vietnam, traditional cultural elements comprise a rich and diverse system of tangible and intangible cultural heritage developed through centuries of interaction among fifty-four ethnic groups. These elements include traditional musical instruments, folk melodies, traditional costumes, ethnic decorative motifs, visual arts, historical symbols, ritual practices, and traditional dances. Collectively, they represent the cultural identity of Vietnamese communities while serving as important symbolic resources for contemporary cultural expression (UNESCO, 2003). Among these elements, traditional musical instruments constitute one of the most recognizable components of Vietnamese musical heritage. Instruments such as *the đàn bầu* (monochord), *đàn tranh* (sixteen-string zither), *đàn nguyệt* (moon lute), *đàn đáy*, *đàn nhị* (two-string fiddle), *sáo trúc* (bamboo flute), and various indigenous percussion instruments possess distinctive tonal characteristics that differentiate Vietnamese music from other musical traditions. Beyond their acoustic functions, these instruments embody regional identities, historical narratives, and indigenous performance practices that continue to be transmitted across generations through both formal and informal cultural education. UNESCO's recognition of *Ca trù* and *Đờn ca tài tử* further highlights the cultural significance of these traditional instruments within Vietnam's living musical heritage.

Equally important are folk melodies, which represent the oral musical traditions developed within different cultural regions of Vietnam. Musical forms such as *Quan họ*, *Ví Giặm*, *Ca trù*, *Đờn ca tài tử*, *Hát Xoan*, and numerous ethnic minority musical traditions embody local histories, social relationships, and community values through distinctive melodic structures, performance practices, and lyrical expressions. Rather than functioning solely as historical artifacts, these folk melodies remain active cultural resources that continue to inspire contemporary musical creation and festival performances. Recent studies on Vietnamese folk music further demonstrate that traditional melodies remain central to community festivals and cultural events, contributing to both heritage preservation and audience engagement (Norton, 2010). Beyond music itself, traditional costumes

and ethnic motifs play important roles in communicating cultural identity through visual representation. The áo dài, costumes of Vietnam's ethnic minority communities, traditional textiles, embroidery patterns, brocade designs, and indigenous decorative motifs visually communicate regional histories, ethnic identities, and aesthetic traditions. These visual elements enrich stage performances by creating symbolic environments that reinforce audiences' cultural perceptions and emotional engagement. As event experiences become increasingly multisensory, visual representations of cultural heritage contribute significantly to audiences' perceptions of authenticity and uniqueness.

Similarly, traditional visual arts and historical symbols provide important cultural narratives that can be incorporated into contemporary music performances. Architectural imagery, royal heritage, folk paintings such as *Đông Hồ*, lacquer art, imperial motifs, traditional calligraphy, and historical monuments communicate collective memory and national identity while enhancing the storytelling capacity of live performances. The incorporation of these symbolic resources allows audiences to experience cultural heritage through both visual and emotional dimensions rather than solely through historical interpretation. Finally, traditional dances represent embodied expressions of Vietnamese cultural heritage that integrate music, movement, ritual, and communal participation. Dance traditions associated with festivals, court performances, religious ceremonies, and ethnic minority communities enrich music events by providing dynamic visual narratives and reinforcing cultural authenticity. As live performances increasingly emphasize immersive audience experiences, traditional dance contributes to creating culturally meaningful performances that engage multiple sensory dimensions simultaneously. Importantly, these traditional cultural elements should not be regarded as isolated heritage assets but rather as interconnected cultural resources capable of generating holistic event experiences. Contemporary audiences experience cultural authenticity through the simultaneous interaction of sound, visual aesthetics, movement, storytelling, symbolism, and emotional engagement. Consequently, the integration of traditional instruments, folk melodies, costumes, ethnic motifs, visual arts, historical symbols, and traditional dances enables music events to create distinctive cultural atmospheres that strengthen audiences' perceptions of authenticity, uniqueness, and experiential value. Accordingly, this study conceptualizes traditional cultural elements as the integrated tangible and intangible cultural resources of Vietnam including traditional musical instruments, folk melodies, costumes, ethnic motifs, visual arts, historical symbols, and traditional dances that can be incorporated into contemporary music events to communicate cultural identity, enrich audience experiences, and enhance the distinctiveness of event performances.

2.3.3. Cultural fusion

Cultural fusion refers to the creative integration of cultural elements originating from different traditions to generate new forms of artistic expression while maintaining meaningful connections with their original cultural identities. Rather than representing a simple juxtaposition of traditional and contemporary components, cultural fusion is widely understood as a dynamic process of cultural hybridity in which global and local cultural resources interact to create innovative yet culturally meaningful experiences (Bhabha, 1994; Pieterse, 2009). Within contemporary music events, cultural fusion involves incorporating traditional musical, visual, and symbolic elements into modern performances, thereby producing experiences that simultaneously satisfy audiences'

desire for novelty and authenticity. The concept of cultural fusion has attracted growing scholarly attention as globalization has accelerated interactions between local cultural heritage and global popular culture. Bhabha (1994) argues that cultural hybridity generates a third space in which new cultural meanings emerge through negotiation rather than replacement of existing traditions. Similarly, Pieterse (2009) conceptualizes cultural hybridization as an ongoing process through which global and local cultural resources are continuously recombined to create innovative cultural products. Within the creative industries, these perspectives suggest that cultural fusion is not merely an artistic strategy but also an important mechanism for enhancing cultural relevance and market competitiveness.

Recent studies indicate that one of the principal outcomes of cultural fusion is the enhancement of novelty. Contemporary consumers increasingly seek experiences that differ from standardized entertainment products, making novelty a critical source of experiential value. The integration of traditional cultural elements into modern music performances enables event organizers to provide distinctive sensory, aesthetic, and symbolic experiences that cannot easily be replicated by conventional concerts. Novel performances incorporating indigenous musical instruments, traditional storytelling, ethnic visual designs, or heritage-inspired stage production have been found to increase visitors' perceptions of creativity and memorability, thereby strengthening overall event attractiveness (Richards, 2015; Getz & Page, 2016). At the same time, cultural fusion contributes to audiences' perceptions of authenticity, provided that traditional cultural elements are represented respectfully and meaningfully. Authenticity has become a central concept in cultural tourism and event management because visitors increasingly value experiences that genuinely reflect local culture rather than standardized commercial entertainment (Rickly-Boyd, 2012). Research consistently demonstrates that perceived authenticity enhances visitor satisfaction, emotional attachment, destination image, and behavioral intentions. Within music events, authenticity may be achieved by incorporating culturally significant musical traditions, indigenous artistic practices, historical narratives, and local cultural symbolism into contemporary performances, thereby strengthening audiences' perceptions of cultural credibility and experiential quality.

Cultural fusion also enhances differentiation within increasingly competitive entertainment markets. As commercial concerts become progressively standardized through global production formats, integrating local cultural heritage enables music events to establish distinctive brand identities that are difficult for competitors to imitate. Richards (2015) argues that festivals increasingly employ local culture as a strategic resource for destination branding and event differentiation, allowing organizers to create unique experiential products while simultaneously promoting cultural sustainability. Consequently, cultural fusion contributes not only to artistic innovation but also to competitive positioning within the event industry. Besides, previous studies suggest that emotional responses represent one of the strongest determinants of memorable event experiences and subsequent behavioral intentions (Kim et al., 2012). Cultural symbols, traditional music, historical narratives, and indigenous artistic expressions evoke feelings of nostalgia, cultural pride, belonging, and emotional resonance among audiences. Such emotional responses enrich experiential value by transforming concerts from entertainment activities into meaningful cultural experiences. Particularly for domestic audiences, performances incorporating traditional cultural heritage may strengthen emotional attachment through shared collective memory and cultural familiarity. In

addition, cultural fusion facilitates the construction and reinforcement of cultural identity. Cultural identity is increasingly recognized as an important motivational factor underlying participation in cultural events, particularly among younger generations navigating globalization and digital culture. Rather than rejecting global popular music, contemporary audiences often seek opportunities to reconnect with local heritage through innovative artistic forms that remain relevant to modern lifestyles. By integrating traditional cultural elements within contemporary musical performances, cultural fusion enables audiences to simultaneously experience global entertainment and reaffirm their cultural identity. This process has been observed across numerous Asian countries where traditional heritage has been successfully incorporated into commercial popular culture.

South Korea provides one of the most prominent examples of heritage-based cultural fusion. While K-pop is generally regarded as a globalized music industry, numerous productions have deliberately incorporated traditional Korean instruments, hanbok costumes, historical narratives, traditional dance movements, and indigenous visual aesthetics into contemporary performances. Scholars argue that this integration has strengthened the international distinctiveness of Korean popular culture while simultaneously reinforcing national cultural identity and expanding the global competitiveness of the Korean Wave (Lie, 2015; Howard, 2020). Comparable developments have been observed in China, where contemporary popular music increasingly incorporates traditional opera, folk melodies, Chinese classical instruments, calligraphy, and historical aesthetics into mainstream entertainment. Studies suggest that these hybrid performances enable younger audiences to reconnect with traditional culture while preserving commercial appeal in highly competitive entertainment markets (Clark, 2012). Similar trends have also emerged in Japan, Indonesia, and Thailand, where contemporary music festivals integrate indigenous artistic traditions with modern performance technologies to create culturally distinctive visitor experiences. Despite these advantages, the literature also identifies several challenges associated with cultural fusion. One of the most frequently discussed concerns is over-commercialization, whereby traditional cultural heritage is transformed into market-oriented entertainment products that prioritize commercial value over cultural significance. Closely related is the problem of superficial cultural representation, in which traditional elements are incorporated merely as decorative visual features without preserving their original meanings or cultural contexts. Such practices may result in authenticity loss, reducing audiences' perceptions of cultural credibility and potentially weakening both heritage preservation and experiential quality (Cohen, 1988; Rickly-Boyd, 2012).

Consequently, scholars emphasize that successful cultural fusion requires a careful balance between innovation and cultural integrity, ensuring that traditional heritage remains meaningful rather than becoming a commodified performance.

2.4 Theoretical foundation

This study draws primarily upon Experience Economy Theory (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) and Authenticity Theory (Wang, 1999; Rickly, 2022) to explain how the fusion of modern music with traditional Vietnamese cultural elements enhances the commercial appeal of music events. Together, these theoretical perspectives provide complementary explanations for why audiences value culturally integrated performances and how such experiences influence market-oriented behavioral intentions.

2.4.1. Experience economy theory

Experience Economy Theory proposed by Pine & Gilmore (1999) argues that contemporary economies have evolved beyond the production of goods and services toward the creation of memorable experiences. In the experience economy, consumers seek emotional, aesthetic, educational, and immersive experiences that generate lasting personal value rather than merely functional benefits. Consequently, organizations increasingly compete by designing distinctive experiences capable of creating emotional engagement, customer satisfaction, and long-term loyalty. Within event management research, Experience Economy Theory has become one of the most influential frameworks for explaining visitor behavior at festivals, concerts, and cultural events. Rather than evaluating events solely according to artistic performance or service quality, audiences increasingly assess the overall experiential value generated through entertainment, aesthetics, participation, escapism, and emotional immersion (Getz & Page, 2016). Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that memorable event experiences positively influence perceived value, satisfaction, recommendation intention, revisit intention, and willingness to pay, all of which contribute to the commercial success of events (Kim et al., 2012; Andersson et al., 2017). In the context of this study, the fusion of modern music with traditional Vietnamese cultural elements represents an experiential innovation that enriches audiences' consumption experiences. The integration of traditional musical instruments, folk melodies, cultural symbolism, historical narratives, costumes, and visual arts into contemporary performances creates multisensory experiences that extend beyond conventional concerts. Such experiences enhance emotional engagement, cultural immersion, and perceived uniqueness, thereby increasing perceived value and strengthening audiences' intentions to attend, revisit, recommend, and purchase tickets. Accordingly, Experience Economy Theory provides the primary theoretical explanation for the positive relationship between cultural fusion and the commercial appeal of music events.

2.4.2. Authenticity theory

While novelty and innovation contribute to memorable experiences, previous research suggests that audiences also evaluate cultural events according to their perceived authenticity. Authenticity Theory argues that tourists and event participants increasingly seek experiences that are perceived as genuine, culturally meaningful, and connected to local heritage rather than artificially constructed for commercial purposes (Wang, 1999). Authenticity has become a central concept within tourism and event management because it shapes visitors' perceptions of credibility, emotional attachment, destination image, and behavioral intentions (Rickly, 2022). In cultural events, authenticity is not determined solely by historical accuracy but also by audiences' subjective perceptions that cultural expressions meaningfully represent local traditions and identities. Consequently, contemporary research increasingly conceptualizes authenticity as a socially constructed perception emerging through interactions between cultural producers and audiences.

Within the present study, Authenticity Theory complements Experience Economy Theory by explaining why cultural fusion enhances commercial appeal only when traditional cultural elements are integrated in ways that preserve their cultural meanings and symbolic significance. The incorporation of Vietnamese traditional music, costumes, visual arts, and historical symbolism is expected to strengthen audiences' perceptions of cultural authenticity by creating experiences that are both innovative and culturally credible. Such perceptions increase emotional resonance and

experiential value while encouraging favorable behavioral intentions, including attendance intention, recommendation intention, and revisit intention. Conversely, previous studies caution that excessive commercialization or superficial incorporation of traditional culture may reduce perceived authenticity, weaken emotional engagement, and diminish audiences' evaluations of cultural experiences (Cohen, 1988; Rickly, 2022). Therefore, authenticity represents an important theoretical mechanism through which cultural fusion influences the commercial attractiveness of music events.

2.5 Hypothesis development

2.5.1. Cultural fusion and perceived authenticity

The relationship between cultural fusion and perceived authenticity within event tourism can be robustly conceptualized through the lens of Authenticity Theory, particularly the paradigms of constructive and existential authenticity (Wang, 1999). Constructive authenticity posits that authenticity is not a static, immutable property inherent in an object or ritual, but rather a fluid social construct that is continuously interpreted, negotiated, and projected by tourists based on their socio-cultural backgrounds, preconceptions, and expectations (Cohen, 1988). When a cultural event implements "cultural fusion" - the strategic integration of traditional heritage elements with contemporary expressions, it does not inherently dilute the historical core. Instead, it creates a liminal space where the historical continuity of heritage is revitalized to match modern sensibilities, thereby offering a highly engaging anchor for tourists (Rickly, 2022). Recent empirical evidence in event branding emphasizes that the structural integrity, uniqueness, and consistency of an event's theme are core precursors to fostering heightened perceived authenticity (He et al., 2023). The efficacy of cultural fusion lies in its execution as a deliberate, meaningful, and artistic synthesis rather than a fragmented, mechanical commodification of heritage. When this structural consistency is maintained, contemporary attendees perceive the modern adaptations not as an artificial "cheapening" or desecration of the sacred past, but as a dynamic and living evolution of culture (Rickly et al., 2023). Consequently, a well-orchestrated cultural fusion acts as a powerful cognitive cue that enhances the audience's perception of authenticity. Based on these theoretical foundations, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Cultural fusion has a significant positive effect on attendees' perceived authenticity of the music event.

2.5.2. Perceived authenticity and commercial appeal

The conceptual nexus linking perceived authenticity to the commercial behavior of attendees is one of the most vital mechanisms within the framework of the Experience Economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). When consumers perceive an experience or an object as genuine, whether it is the objective authenticity of an artifact or the existential authenticity of an emotional state, they develop an intensified psychological connection to the event or destination (Wang, 1999). This cognitive and emotional attachment significantly inflates the consumer's perceived value, thereby overriding the conventional financial barriers and perceived transaction costs associated with premium services (Andersson et al., 2017). Extensive empirical studies and recent systematic meta-analyses within event tourism confirm that perceived authenticity serves as a critical determinant driving post-consumption behaviors, including attendee satisfaction, destination loyalty, revisit intentions, and

positive word-of-mouth (recommendation intention) (Getz & Page, 2016; Rickly, 2022). Contemporary tourists increasingly seek out experiences that offer profound "existential meaning" to reinforce their own personal narratives. As a result, cultural events that successfully project high levels of authenticity create a distinctive competitive advantage, manifesting directly as enhanced commercial appeal and a heightened consumer willingness to pay a price premium (Andersson et al., 2017). Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: Perceived authenticity has a significant positive effect on the commercial appeal of the music event.

2.5.3. Cultural fusion and commercial appeal

To elucidate the direct path between cultural fusion and commercial appeal, Pine & Gilmore's (1999) Experience Economy Theory offers an ideal analytical framework. Within this paradigm, modern economic offerings must transcend traditional goods and services to deliver "memorable experiences" that engage consumers across four distinct realms: education, entertainment, esthetics, and escapism. Cultural fusion represents an innovative design strategy that actively merges these realms. By blending the comforting familiarity of cultural heritage with the novelty of contemporary production, cultural fusion addresses the modern tourist's inherent novelty-seeking behavior and craving for cultural distinctiveness (Kim et al., 2012). From an empirical perspective, established literature in festival and event management demonstrates that programs boasting highly creative, hybrid cultural contents achieve substantial commercial milestones (Getz & Page, 2016). These innovative formats optimize both the functional and hedonic values of the event, which drastically increases the public's initial attendance intentions, ticket consumption rates, secondary spending on auxiliary services, and digital media engagement (Kim et al., 2012). Therefore, we hypothesize:

H3: Cultural fusion has a significant direct positive effect on the commercial appeal of the music event.

2.5.4. The mediating role of perceived authenticity

While cultural fusion can spark initial curiosity, aesthetic pleasure, and short-term entertainment value, critical heritage scholars warn that unbridled cultural modification carries severe risks of alienation, heritage distortion, and commercial vulgarization (Cohen, 1988). This theoretical tension implies that the direct path from cultural fusion to commercial appeal is not universally linear or unconditionally positive; rather, its commercial success hinges structurally on the cognitive filter of "perceived authenticity" (Rickly, 2022). The logic for this mediation mechanism is grounded in the classic stimulus-organism-response framework that cultural fusion acts as an environmental stimulus; however, before this stimulus can translate into positive behavioral outcomes or commercial support, it must first be cognitively processed and legitimized by the audience as a coherent and authentic representation of culture. If the cultural fusion is deemed "authentic," it unlocks a profound commercial appeal. Conversely, if the fusion is viewed as contrived, superficial, or overly commodified, its commercial viability plummets (He et al., 2023; Rickly et al., 2023). This mediating structure is widely utilized and highly validated in top-tier tourism research. Hence, we propose:

H4: Perceived authenticity significantly mediates the relationship between cultural fusion and the commercial appeal of the music event.

2.5.5. The moderating role of cultural identity

From a theoretical standpoint, the impact of cultural fusion on cognitive and behavioral outcomes is not uniform across all event attendees; it is heavily conditional upon the individual's level of cultural identity attachment. Drawing from Social Identity Theory, individuals with a highly conservative, traditional cultural identity maintain rigid, purist standards regarding their heritage. They possess a heightened sensitivity toward any perceived deviations, cross-cultural contamination, or modifications of historical narratives (Wang, 1999). Conversely, individuals possessing a globalized, cosmopolitan identity or exhibiting a pattern of cultural omnivorousness are significantly more receptive to cultural hybridity, viewing fusion as a sign of creative vitality and artistic resonance (Rickly, 2022). Consequently, cultural identity operates as a psychological valve that alters the strength and direction of the paths within the model. For attendees with an intensely traditional cultural identity, the positive effect of cultural fusion on perceived authenticity may be significantly attenuated due to an overarching anxiety regarding heritage desecration. For culturally flexible or open-minded cohorts, however, this relationship will be heavily amplified. To examine this individual variance, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Cultural identity significantly moderates the relationship between cultural fusion and perceived authenticity of the music event.

Based on the above hypotheses, the authors proposes the following research model:

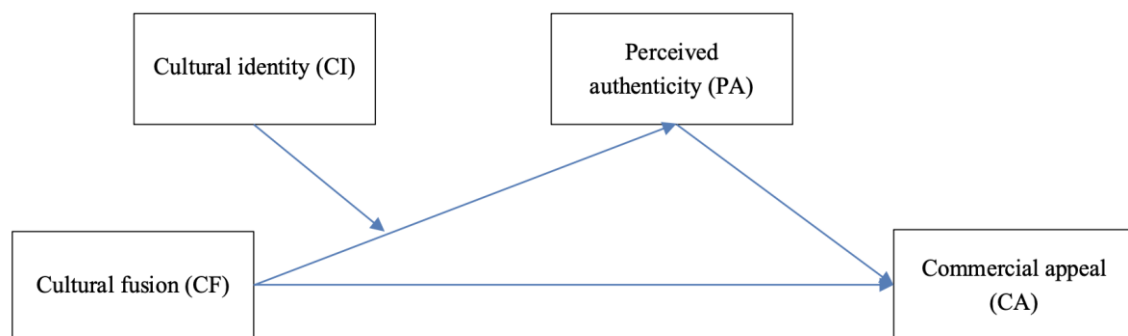


Figure 1: Proposed research model

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research approach and measures

This study employed a quantitative research approach to examine the proposed conceptual model. The measurement scales were adapted from established studies whenever validated instruments were available and were modified to fit the context of contemporary Vietnamese music events incorporating traditional cultural elements. All constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 - “Strongly disagree” to 5 - “Strongly agree”.

Cultural fusion was conceptualized based on cultural hybridity and cultural integration perspectives in cultural and creative industries research (Bhabha, 1994; Pieterse, 2009; Richards, 2015). These studies emphasize the blending of traditional cultural heritage with contemporary creative expression. Accordingly, the construct was operationalized using 5 items, capturing perceived integration of traditional and modern elements, harmony between cultural heritage and contemporary music, creativity in cultural blending, clarity of cultural representation, and overall coherence of the fused performance experience.

Perceived authenticity was measured based on established authenticity scales commonly used in tourism and event studies, particularly the multidimensional conceptualization of authenticity in cultural consumption research (Wang, 1999; Rickly, 2022) and subsequent operationalizations in event contexts. The construct was operationalized using 5 items, reflecting perceived genuineness, cultural credibility, integrity of cultural representation, emotional authenticity of experience, and perceived meaningful connection to Vietnamese cultural heritage.

Commercial appeal was operationalized as a higher-order construct reflecting audience behavioral intentions and perceived economic value of the event. It was developed by integrating widely used behavioral intention constructs in festival and event literature, including attendance intention, purchase intention, revisit intention, word-of-mouth intention, and willingness to pay (Cole & Chancellor, 2009; Andersson et al., 2017; Tanford & Jung, 2017). The construct was measured using 5 items capturing these dimensions of market-oriented behavioral response.

Finally, cultural identity was measured based on the conceptual foundation of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the widely used ethnic/cultural identity measurement framework developed by Phinney (1992) in the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM). Drawing on these established identity-based consumption and cultural affiliation scales, the construct was adapted to the Vietnamese cultural context and operationalized using 5 items. These items capture respondents' emotional attachment to Vietnamese culture, sense of pride in national cultural heritage, self-identification with Vietnamese cultural values, perceived importance of preserving Vietnamese cultural traditions, and personal relevance of cultural heritage in self-concept formation..

3.2 Sample population and data collection

The study targeted attendees of live music events in Vietnam that integrate modern music with traditional cultural elements. To ensure contextual relevance and enhance the generalizability of the findings, five representative music events were selected as research sites. These events were chosen based on their consistent incorporation of Vietnamese traditional cultural elements such as folk instruments, traditional melodies, cultural symbolism, ethnic costumes, and heritage-inspired stage design combined with contemporary musical genres including pop, R&B, hip-hop, and electronic music. The selected events included *Call Me by Fire Vietnam*, *Anh Trai Say Hi*, *Vietnamese Idol Concert Series*, *Monsoon Music Festival*, and *HOZO International Music Festival*. These events represent a combination of televised music programs and large-scale music festivals where cultural fusion is frequently embedded in performance design and artistic expression. A purposive sampling approach was applied to ensure that all respondents had direct experience with at least one of the

selected events. Data were collected from audience members through structured questionnaires distributed both on-site and online shortly after event participation. This approach helped minimize recall bias and ensured that responses reflected actual consumption experiences of culturally integrated music performances. A total of approximately 232 questionnaires were distributed, of which 220 valid responses were retained after excluding incomplete or inconsistent responses. The final sample size of 220 is considered adequate for partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM).

3.3 Data analysis

This study employed the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) approach to test the proposed hypotheses. PLS-SEM was selected due to its suitability for complex models involving direct, mediating, and moderating effects, as well as its robustness with relatively small to medium sample sizes. Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS software. The analysis followed a two-step procedure. First, the measurement model was assessed in terms of reliability and validity, including internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Second, the structural model was evaluated using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples to test the significance of path coefficients, indirect effects, and interaction effects.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive statistics result

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 220 respondents who participated in this study. Female respondents constituted the largest proportion of the sample (55.9%), followed by males (41.8%), while a small percentage (2.3%) identified as other or preferred not to disclose their gender. This relatively balanced gender distribution suggests that the sample adequately represents audiences attending contemporary music events in Vietnam. Regarding age, the respondents were predominantly young adults. Participants aged between 18 and 24 years accounted for the largest segment (46.8%), followed by those aged 25–34 years (35.9%). Together, these two groups represented more than four-fifths of the sample (82.7%), indicating that contemporary music events integrating traditional cultural elements primarily attract younger audiences. This demographic profile is consistent with the rapid growth of Vietnam's live music market, where younger consumers constitute the primary target audience for concerts and music festivals.

Table 1: Demographics of respondents (n = 220)

<i>Characteristics</i>		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Gender	Male	92	41.8
	Female	123	55.9
	Other / Prefer not to say	5	2.3
Age	Under 18	8	3.6
	18–24	103	46.8
	25–34	79	35.9
	35 and above	24	10.9

	45 and above	6	2.8
Educational level	High school or below	32	14.5
	Diploma/College	38	17.3
	Bachelor's degree	121	55.0
	Postgraduate	29	13.2
Occupation	Student	81	36.8
	Office employee	77	35.0
	Self-employed	27	12.3
	Public sector	15	6.8
	Other	20	9.1
Music event attendance (past 12 months)	1–2 events	69	31.4
	3–5 events	96	43.6
	6–10 events	39	17.7
	More than 10 events	16	7.3

Source: Authors' analysis

In terms of educational attainment, more than two-thirds of the respondents possessed at least a bachelor's degree. Specifically, 55.0% held a bachelor's degree and 13.2% had completed postgraduate education. This relatively high educational profile suggests that respondents were likely capable of evaluating both the artistic and cultural dimensions of music performances, thereby providing reliable assessments of cultural fusion and perceived authenticity. With respect to occupation, students (36.8%) and office employees (35.0%) comprised the two largest groups, followed by self-employed respondents (12.3%). This distribution reflects the principal consumer segments of Vietnam's contemporary music market, where university students and young professionals frequently participate in concerts and music festivals.

Finally, respondents generally exhibited substantial experience with live music events. Approximately 68.6% reported attending at least three music events during the previous twelve months, with 25.0% attending six or more events. This finding indicates that the majority of participants were familiar with contemporary music performances and therefore possessed sufficient experience to evaluate the integration of traditional cultural elements within modern music events. Consequently, the sample can be considered appropriate for examining the proposed relationships among cultural fusion, perceived authenticity, cultural identity, and commercial appeal.

4.2 Scale reliability and validity assessment

The reliability and validity of the measurement model were assessed following the recommended procedures for PLS-SEM, including the evaluation of internal consistency reliability, convergent

validity, and discriminant validity. Moderating Effect 1 represents for the impact of CI on the relationship between CF and PA.

As shown in Table 2, all constructs demonstrated excellent internal consistency reliability. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.886 to 0.980, substantially exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2022). Similarly, rho_A values varied between 0.890 and 0.981, indicating a high level of construct reliability. Composite reliability (CR), which is considered a more appropriate reliability indicator in PLS-SEM, ranged from 0.918 to 0.984, well above the recommended minimum value of 0.70 and below the critical value of 0.95 for most constructs. Although the composite reliability of perceived authenticity (0.984) slightly exceeded 0.95, this can be attributed to the strong conceptual similarity among the measurement items rather than indicating serious redundancy, given that the construct represents a narrowly defined psychological perception.

Convergent validity was subsequently evaluated using the average variance extracted (AVE). As presented in Table 2, the AVE values ranged from 0.692 to 0.926, considerably exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50. These findings indicate that each construct explained more than 50% of the variance of its respective indicators, thereby confirming satisfactory convergent validity. Overall, the reliability and convergent validity results suggest that the measurement scales are both internally consistent and capable of adequately capturing their intended latent constructs.

Table 2: Construct reliability and convergent validity

	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>rho_A</i>	<i>Composite Reliability</i>	<i>Average Variance Extracted (AVE)</i>
CF	0.925	0.939	0.944	0.771
PA	0.980	0.981	0.984	0.926
CA	0.944	0.946	0.957	0.817
CI	0.886	0.890	0.918	0.692
Moderating Effect 1	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

Source: Data analysis by SmartPLS3

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, with the results reported in Table 3. According to this criterion, the square root of each construct's AVE should exceed its correlations with all other constructs. The diagonal elements, representing the square roots of the AVEs, ranged from 0.832 to 1.000 and were consistently greater than the corresponding inter-construct correlations. For example, the square root of the AVE for commercial appeal (0.904) exceeded its highest correlation with cultural fusion (0.512), while perceived authenticity exhibited a square root of AVE of 0.962, substantially higher than its strongest correlation with cultural identity (0.610). These results confirm that each construct shares more variance with its own indicators than with other constructs in the model, thereby supporting adequate discriminant validity.

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	CA	CF	CI	Moderating Effect 1	PA
CA	0.904				
CF	0.512	0.878			
CI	0.018	0.038	0.832		
Moderating Effect 1	-0.017	0.107	-0.031	1.000	
PA	0.327	0.316	0.610	0.211	0.962

Source: Data analysis by SmartPLS3

To further verify discriminant validity, the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) was examined. As shown in Table 4, all HTMT values ranged from 0.029 to 0.654, which are well below the conservative threshold of 0.85 and substantially below the more liberal criterion of 0.90 proposed by Henseler et al. (2015). The highest HTMT value (0.654) was observed between cultural identity and perceived authenticity, remaining comfortably within the acceptable range. These findings provide additional evidence that the latent constructs are empirically distinct and measure different conceptual phenomena.

Table 4: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	CA	CF	CI	Moderating Effect 1	PA
CA					
CF	0.535				
CI	0.081	0.072			
Moderating Effect 1	0.029	0.138	0.057		
PA	0.339	0.329	0.654	0.213	

Source: Data analysis by SmartPLS3

4.3 Model assessment and discussions

The structural model was evaluated using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. Table 5 presents the path coefficients, significance levels, and hypothesis testing results, while Table 6 reports the effect sizes (f^2). Overall, the proposed model demonstrates satisfactory explanatory power, with adjusted R^2 values of 0.491 for perceived authenticity and 0.286 for commercial appeal. According to Hair et al. (2022), these values indicate moderate explanatory capability, suggesting that the proposed antecedents account for approximately 49.1% of the variance in perceived authenticity and 28.6% of the variance in commercial appeal.

The results indicate that cultural fusion exerts a positive and significant influence on perceived authenticity ($\beta = 0.271$, $t = 3.959$, $p < 0.001$), thereby supporting H1. The corresponding effect size ($f^2 = 0.144$) suggests a small-to-moderate contribution of cultural fusion to explaining perceived authenticity. This finding is consistent with Authenticity Theory (Wang, 1999; Rickly, 2022), which argues that authenticity is not determined solely by historical preservation but is socially constructed through audiences' interpretations of cultural experiences. Rather than perceiving the integration of traditional and contemporary elements as contradictory, audiences appear to regard thoughtfully designed cultural fusion as evidence that cultural heritage remains relevant and

meaningful in modern society. The result also supports the arguments of Bhabha (1994) and Pieterse (2009) that cultural hybridity creates new cultural meanings without necessarily diminishing the value of traditional heritage. Furthermore, the finding corroborates the discussion of He et al. (2023) and Rickly et al. (2023), who argue that authenticity can be strengthened when cultural innovation preserves coherent cultural narratives instead of presenting heritage as fragmented or purely commercialized. Within the Vietnamese context, this result is particularly meaningful. Recent music programs such as Call Me by Fire Vietnam, Anh Trai Say Hi, and performances at the HOZO International Music Festival have increasingly incorporated traditional musical instruments, folk melodies, áo dài, ethnic costumes, and historical visual symbolism into contemporary pop and electronic performances. Rather than interpreting these elements as outdated, audiences increasingly perceive them as innovative expressions of Vietnamese culture. The findings therefore suggest that when traditional cultural elements are integrated in a respectful and coherent manner, they reinforce rather than undermine perceptions of authenticity among contemporary audiences.

Besides, the analysis further demonstrates that perceived authenticity positively influences commercial appeal ($\beta = 0.184$, $t = 2.828$, $p = 0.005$), providing support for H2. Although the effect size is relatively small ($f^2 = 0.043$), the relationship remains statistically significant, indicating that authenticity constitutes an important psychological determinant of audiences' market-oriented behavioral intentions. This finding supports the propositions of Experience Economy Theory (Pine & Gilmore, 1999), which suggests that memorable experiences derive not only from entertainment value but also from meaningful and emotionally engaging experiences. It also aligns with previous studies demonstrating that authentic cultural experiences enhance visitors' satisfaction, loyalty, willingness to recommend, and willingness to pay (Andersson et al., 2017; Getz & Page, 2016; Rickly, 2022). The result therefore confirms that authenticity contributes to commercial success by increasing the perceived value of music events beyond purely artistic performance. From a practical perspective, Vietnamese audiences appear to increasingly appreciate concerts that communicate cultural identity alongside entertainment. As Vietnam's live music industry becomes increasingly competitive, authenticity functions as a differentiating attribute that encourages attendance intentions, positive word-of-mouth, and willingness to support future performances. Event organizers should therefore view cultural authenticity not merely as a heritage preservation objective but also as a strategic marketing resource capable of strengthening long-term commercial performance.

The results also reveal that cultural fusion has a strong and significant direct effect on commercial appeal ($\beta = 0.453$, $t = 7.211$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3. Among all hypothesized relationships, this path exhibits the largest standardized coefficient and a moderate effect size ($f^2 = 0.262$), indicating that cultural fusion is one of the principal drivers of commercial appeal. This finding strongly supports Experience Economy Theory, which argues that consumers increasingly seek memorable, novel, and immersive experiences rather than standardized entertainment (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). The result is also consistent with previous event management literature suggesting that innovative programming and culturally distinctive event designs enhance attendance intention, perceived value, and behavioral loyalty (Kim et al., 2012; Getz & Page, 2016). By integrating traditional cultural resources into contemporary performances, music events become more distinctive and

emotionally engaging, thereby increasing their attractiveness within highly competitive entertainment markets. The Vietnamese entertainment industry provides compelling evidence supporting this relationship. In recent years, performances incorporating đàn tranh, đàn bầu, traditional folk songs, imperial imagery, and ethnic visual aesthetics have frequently generated extensive public discussion across digital media and attracted strong audience engagement. Such performances differentiate themselves from conventional concerts by offering experiences that combine contemporary musical trends with national cultural identity. Consequently, cultural fusion appears to create additional experiential value that translates directly into stronger commercial appeal, even before audiences consciously evaluate authenticity.

Table 5: Structural equation modelling results estimates and hypothesis conclusion

<i>Paths</i>	<i>Original Sample (O)</i>	<i>Sample Mean (M)</i>	<i>Standard Deviation (STDEV)</i>	<i>T Statistics (O/STDEV)</i>	<i>P Values</i>	<i>Decision</i>
H1: CF -> PA	0,271	0,273	0,068	3,959	0,000	Supported
H2: PA -> CA	0,184	0,175	0,065	2,828	0,005	Supported
H3: CF -> CA	0,453	0,461	0,063	7,211	0,000	Supported
H4: CF -> PA -> CA	0,050	0,049	0,024	2,110	0,035	Supported
H5: Moderating Effect 1 -> PA	0,202	0,195	0,079	2,563	0,011	Supported
CI -> PA	0,606	0,609	0,051	11,843	0,000	N/A
CI -> PA -> CA	0,112	0,106	0,038	2,907	0,004	N/A
Moderating Effect 1 -> PA -> CA	0,037	0,034	0,020	1,900	0,058	N/A
Adjusted R ² : PA= 0.491; CA= 0.286						

Source: Data analysis by SmartPLS3

Accordingly, the indirect effect of cultural fusion on commercial appeal through perceived authenticity is statistically significant ($\beta = 0.050$, $t = 2.110$, $p = 0.035$), supporting H4. Because both the direct effect (H3) and indirect effect remain significant, the results indicate partial mediation. This finding confirms the theoretical proposition advanced in Authenticity Theory that cultural innovation enhances commercial outcomes only after audiences cognitively recognize such innovation as culturally meaningful and credible (Rickly, 2022). The result also supports the stimulus-organism-response logic discussed in the hypothesis development. Cultural fusion functions as the external stimulus, perceived authenticity represents the internal psychological evaluation, and commercial appeal reflects the resulting behavioral response. The significant mediation further supports the arguments of He et al. (2023) and Rickly et al. (2023) that authenticity serves as a crucial psychological mechanism linking innovative cultural experiences to favorable consumer behavior. For Vietnamese event organizers, this finding highlights that simply incorporating traditional cultural symbols is insufficient. Commercial benefits arise when audiences genuinely perceive these cultural elements as authentic rather than superficial decorative features.

Therefore, successful cultural fusion requires careful artistic design, meaningful storytelling, and faithful representation of Vietnamese cultural heritage instead of merely using traditional motifs for visual appeal.

Table 6: Effect sizes between variables

	PA	CA
CF	0.144	0.262
PA		0.043
CI	0.730	
Moderating Effect 1	0.079	

Source: Data analysis by SmartPLS3

The interaction effect between cultural fusion and cultural identity significantly influences perceived authenticity ($\beta = 0.202$, $t = 2.563$, $p = 0.011$), thereby supporting H5. The corresponding effect size ($f^2 = 0.079$) indicates a small but meaningful moderating effect. This finding is broadly consistent with the theoretical arguments derived from Social Identity Theory and previous authenticity research. Individuals with stronger attachment to Vietnamese cultural identity appear to evaluate culturally integrated music performances differently from those with weaker cultural identification. Rather than responding solely to musical innovation, these audiences attach greater importance to the cultural meanings embedded within performances. Consequently, when cultural fusion is implemented appropriately, individuals possessing stronger cultural identity perceive higher levels of authenticity. Interestingly, the moderating effect observed in this study suggests that cultural identity amplifies, rather than weakens, the positive influence of cultural fusion on authenticity. This finding provides an important contribution to the literature because previous conceptual discussions have proposed that individuals with strong cultural attachment might react negatively toward modifications of traditional heritage if they perceive them as inappropriate. However, within the Vietnamese context, respondents appear to welcome innovative reinterpretations of traditional culture, provided that these reinterpretations preserve cultural integrity and demonstrate respect for heritage. This pattern may reflect the contemporary cultural environment in Vietnam, where younger audiences increasingly seek to reconnect with traditional culture through modern artistic expressions instead of viewing tradition and modernity as mutually exclusive.

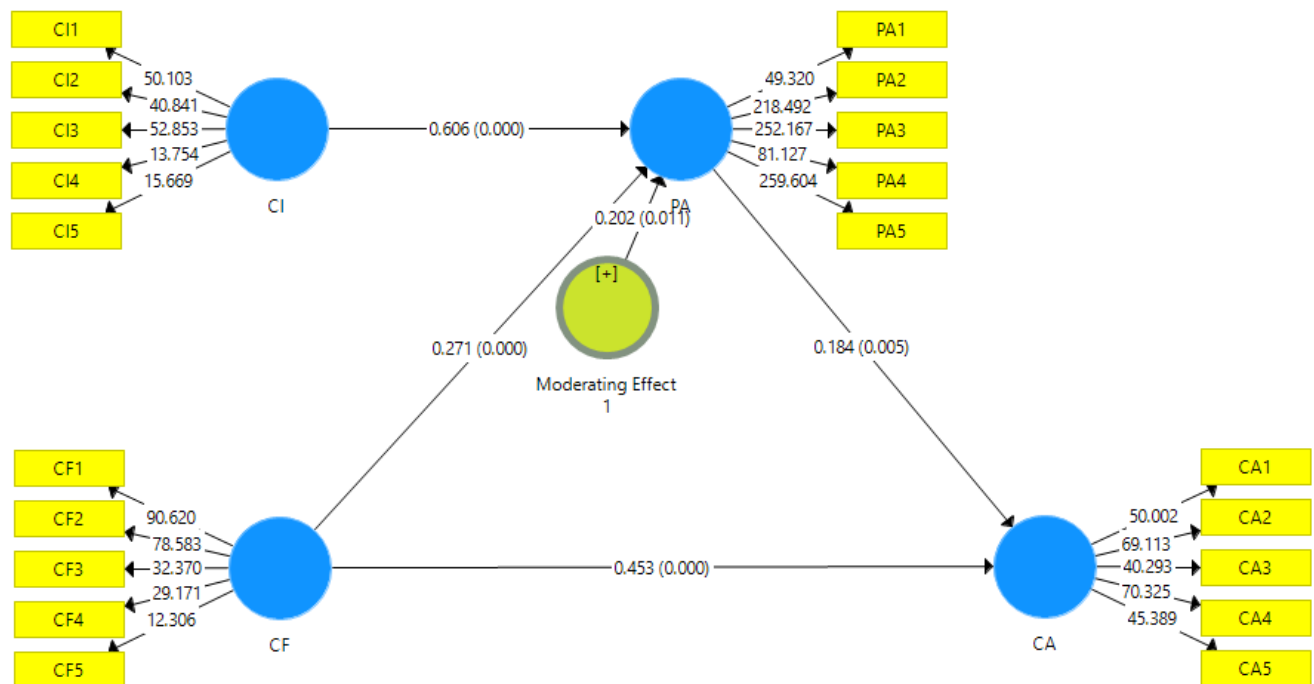


Figure 2: PLS bootstrapping model

Source: Data analysis by SmartPLS3

Finally, cultural identity itself exerts a substantial positive effect on perceived authenticity ($\beta = 0.606$, $p < 0.001$), with a large effect size ($f^2 = 0.730$), indicating that audiences' personal identification with Vietnamese culture remains one of the strongest determinants of authenticity perceptions. This finding further reinforces the importance of considering individual cultural orientation when designing culturally integrated music events.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study makes several important theoretical contributions to the literature on event management, cultural tourism, and creative industries. First, it extends the event management literature by conceptualizing cultural fusion as a strategic experiential attribute that enhances the commercial appeal of contemporary music events. While previous studies have predominantly focused on traditional antecedents of commercial success, such as event quality, service quality, artist attractiveness, emotional experience, and perceived value (Cole & Chancellor, 2009; Andersson et al., 2017; Tanford & Jung, 2017), this study demonstrates that the integration of traditional cultural elements into modern music performances represents an additional source of competitive advantage capable of stimulating favorable market-oriented behavioral intentions. Second, this research enriches the theoretical understanding of consumer behavior by integrating Experience Economy Theory and Authenticity Theory into a unified explanatory framework. Specifically, the findings reveal that cultural fusion not only directly enhances commercial appeal by creating memorable and distinctive experiences but also exerts an indirect influence through perceived authenticity, thereby clarifying the psychological mechanism underlying audiences' responses to culturally integrated music events. This integrated perspective bridges two research streams that have largely developed independently within the event and tourism literature. Third, the study contributes to authenticity research by identifying cultural identity as an important boundary condition shaping audiences'

evaluations of cultural fusion. The significant moderating effect suggests that perceptions of authenticity are contingent upon individuals' attachment to their cultural heritage, highlighting the importance of considering audience heterogeneity when examining authenticity in cultural consumption contexts. Finally, by providing empirical evidence from Vietnam, an emerging creative economy with a rich cultural heritage, this study broadens the geographical scope of existing research, which has been dominated by Western tourism destinations and well-established cultural industries. The findings therefore contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural heritage can be strategically integrated into contemporary creative products to simultaneously promote cultural preservation, experiential value, and commercial sustainability.

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for multiple stakeholders involved in the development of Vietnam's live music industry and cultural creative sector. For event organizers, the results demonstrate that cultural fusion can serve as an effective differentiation strategy in an increasingly competitive entertainment market. Rather than relying solely on celebrity performers or advanced stage technologies, organizers should design music events that meaningfully integrate Vietnamese traditional cultural elements including folk musical instruments, traditional melodies, historical narratives, ethnic costumes, and indigenous visual aesthetics into contemporary performances. Such integration not only enhances audiences' perceptions of authenticity but also strengthens commercial appeal by increasing attendance intention, willingness to pay, revisit intention, and positive word-of-mouth. However, the significant mediating role of perceived authenticity indicates that cultural integration should move beyond superficial decoration or symbolic representation. Organizers should therefore collaborate closely with cultural experts, historians, traditional artists, and local communities to ensure that traditional cultural elements are represented accurately, respectfully, and coherently throughout the event experience.

For artists, performers, and creative producers, the findings suggest that cultural fusion represents an important source of artistic innovation and competitive advantage. Contemporary audiences increasingly appreciate performances that successfully combine global musical trends with local cultural identity. Musicians, composers, choreographers, and stage designers should therefore explore creative ways to reinterpret Vietnamese cultural heritage through modern musical arrangements while preserving the symbolic meanings embedded in traditional cultural expressions. Such artistic approaches can strengthen audience engagement, expand market appeal, and contribute to developing distinctive artistic identities in both domestic and international markets. The moderating effect of cultural identity further implies that artists should carefully balance innovation with cultural integrity, particularly when targeting audiences who possess strong attachment to Vietnamese cultural heritage.

For policymakers and cultural management authorities, the results provide empirical evidence that cultural preservation and commercial development should not be viewed as competing objectives. Instead, appropriately designed cultural fusion can simultaneously promote cultural sustainability and economic value. Government agencies responsible for culture, tourism, and creative industries may therefore consider supporting collaborative projects between contemporary musicians and traditional artists, providing financial incentives for heritage-inspired creative productions, and developing policies that encourage the innovative use of intangible cultural heritage in modern

entertainment. Such initiatives would contribute to preserving Vietnamese cultural traditions while strengthening the competitiveness of the national creative economy and supporting the international promotion of Vietnamese cultural identity.

And finally, for tourism destination managers and destination marketing organizations, the study highlights the potential of culturally integrated music events as attractive tourism products capable of enhancing destination competitiveness. Live music events incorporating authentic Vietnamese cultural elements can be positioned as unique cultural experiences that differentiate Vietnam from other regional destinations. Integrating these events into destination branding campaigns, cultural tourism itineraries, and international promotional activities may attract both domestic and international visitors seeking meaningful and memorable cultural experiences. Such strategies would not only increase tourism demand but also reinforce Vietnam's image as a destination that successfully combines cultural heritage with contemporary creativity.

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