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**BALANCING PROFIT, HERITAGE AND SUSTAINABILITY IN VIET
NAM'S SMOKELESS INDUSTRY: A GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK
FOR TOURISM-LED DEVELOPMENT**

Abstract: This article examines the development of Viet Nam's “smokeless industry” in the context of the country's transition toward quality-based, innovation-driven and identity-oriented growth. Using policy analysis, document review and an interdisciplinary systems approach, the study develops a Profit - Heritage - Sustainability (P-H-S) framework to explain why tourism growth cannot be governed only through visitor volume or short-term revenue. The evidence shows that Viet Nam's post-pandemic recovery has been strong, but the expansion of heritage tourism continues to generate tensions among commercialization, carrying capacity, authenticity and benefit sharing. The article therefore proposes a governance framework combining four core principles, three groups of policy tools, an evaluation indicator system and a multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism. The central argument is that

tourism-led development is sustainable only when profit is treated as a means to finance heritage preservation and community welfare rather than as an isolated end.

Keywords: smokeless industry; Viet Nam; sustainable tourism; heritage governance; P-H-S framework; carrying capacity; destination management.

1. Introduction

In the context of globalization and shifting growth paradigms, countries increasingly move away from growth models based mainly on resource extraction and cheap labor toward models emphasizing productivity, innovation, cultural identity and environmental sustainability. Viet Nam follows this trajectory. The national tourism development strategy to 2030 identifies tourism as a spearhead economic sector and stresses professionalism, quality, competitiveness, green growth and the protection of cultural and natural resources [1].

In this transition, tourism, often called the “smokeless industry,” has become an important pillar of national development. It attracts investment, creates employment, strengthens the country's image and supports linkages among transport, culture, agriculture, trade, diplomacy and local services. The recovery after the COVID-19 shock also confirms this role: in 2025 Viet Nam welcomed nearly 21.2 million international visitors, served about 137 million domestic trips and earned around VND 1 quadrillion in tourism revenue [2]. However, rapid recovery also makes visible the structural question of this article: growth in visitor numbers is not automatically equivalent to sustainable value creation.

The core policy problem is therefore not simply how to make tourism grow faster, but how to ensure that economic efficiency, heritage preservation and environmental-social sustainability reinforce one another. When tourism is governed only as a service business, heritage may be reduced to an input for

commercial consumption; when conservation is detached from local livelihoods, communities may lose incentives to protect heritage; and when sustainability is treated as an environmental slogan rather than a governance constraint, destinations may face congestion, pollution and declining experience quality.

From this reality, the article poses the following research question: how should Viet Nam conceptualize and govern the smokeless industry so that tourism creates economic value, preserves cultural heritage and remains within environmental and social limits? The article answers this question by constructing a three-dimensional P-H-S analytical framework and applying it to current policy issues and selected international experiences. The framework helps connect the theoretical debate on sustainable tourism with practical governance tools for Viet Nam.

Existing studies on Viet Nam's tourism development have analyzed sustainable tourism, community-based tourism, heritage economics, destination carrying capacity and digital transformation. These studies provide important insights but often treat profit, heritage and sustainability as separate themes. The academic gap lies in the lack of an integrated framework that explains the trade-offs among these three goals and translates them into implementable policy instruments. This article addresses that gap while keeping the analysis policy-oriented and applicable to national and provincial tourism governance.

2. Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Definition

Tourism is defined by World Tourism Organization as a social, cultural and economic phenomenon involving the movement of people to places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes [3]. This definition is important because it shows that tourism is not merely a set of travel services; it is an ecosystem of mobility, expenditure, experiences, institutions, cultural meanings and resource use. The phrase “smokeless industry” should therefore be understood not as an industry without impact, but as a service-

centered development complex whose impacts are less visible than those of heavy industry but may be significant for heritage sites, communities and ecosystems.

Sustainable development is commonly understood as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs [4]. In tourism, this principle requires intergenerational equity, efficient resource use, respect for host communities and the protection of the cultural and natural assets on which tourism depends. Sustainable tourism is thus not a separate niche, but a governance logic that must be embedded in all tourism planning, investment and destination management decisions.

Heritage, in turn, is both a cultural resource and a value system. UNESCO's cultural-policy approach emphasizes that culture and heritage carry identity, creativity and social meaning, not only exchange value [5]. In the context of tourism, heritage economics concerns the use of cultural, historical and natural assets to generate economic value, but that use must not undermine authenticity, integrity or community ownership. Heritage should therefore be treated as a strategic capital stock: it can generate flows of income only if its core value is maintained over time.

The measurement of sustainable tourism has moved toward multidimensional statistical systems. The Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism links economic, social and environmental dimensions and encourages indicators on visitor expenditure, employment, resources, emissions, waste, protected areas and host-community perspectives [6]. Therefore, tourism governance cannot rely on visitor volume alone; it needs a balanced dashboard that captures both benefits and costs.

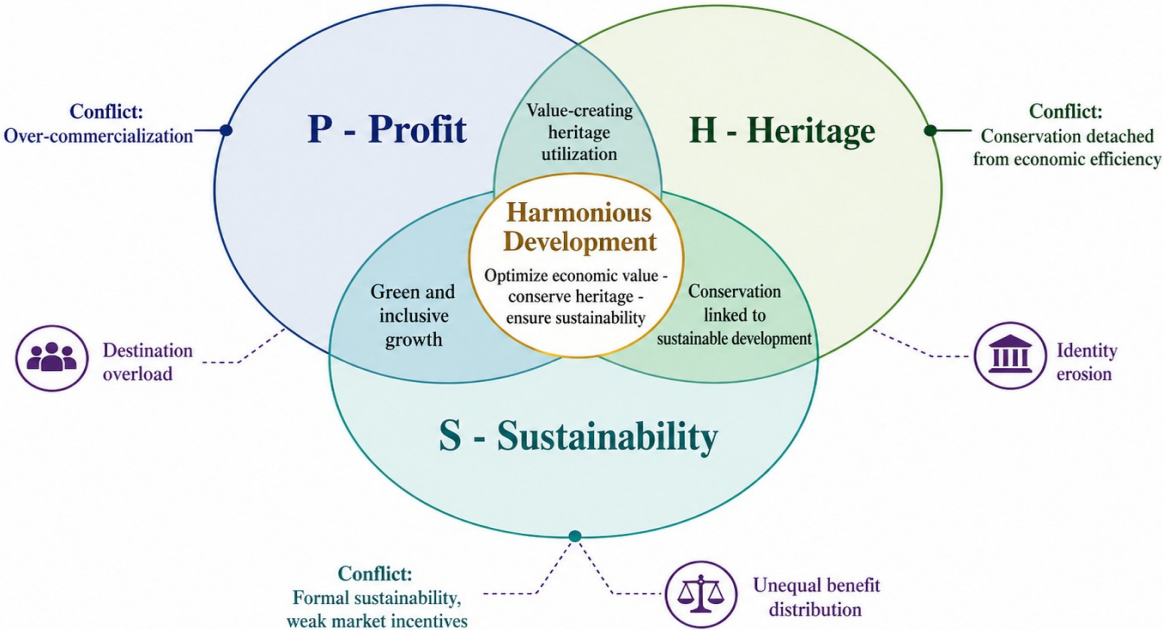
From this perspective, the smokeless industry should be conceptualized as an interdisciplinary tourism ecosystem. Interdisciplinary studies are suitable for

complex problems that cannot be solved within one discipline or administrative silo [7]. Applied to tourism, this means that destination governance must coordinate culture, environment, infrastructure, finance, technology, planning, public security, diplomacy, businesses and communities. The system boundary of tourism is therefore wider than the tourism administration itself.

3. The Profit - Heritage - Sustainability (P-H-S) Analytical Framework

In the context of Viet Nam's ambition to make tourism a spearhead economic sector, balancing profit, heritage and sustainability requires a systematic framework. The P-H-S framework is built as a three-axis model: the Profit axis measures economic value creation; the Heritage axis measures the preservation and productive use of cultural identity; and the Sustainability axis measures the capacity of destinations to maintain environmental quality, social acceptance and long-term resilience. The framework's “red thread” is that the three axes are not independent objectives but mutually constraining conditions (figure 1).

Figure 1. The P-H-S Model for Sustainable Tourism Development



Source: Proposed by the authors.

The center intersection is the "harmonious development", while the areas on the perimeter indicate potential conflicts when one pillar dominates.

3.1. Establishing the Three Core Evaluative Axes

The Profit axis reflects the economic growth pressure and development potential of the smokeless industry. It includes tourism's contribution to GDP and local GRDP, revenue growth, average expenditure per visitor, business productivity, employment and the share of profits reinvested in local tourism infrastructure and heritage conservation. In the P-H-S framework, profit is not rejected; rather, it is disciplined. Tourism must generate sufficient value to finance conservation, service quality, human resources and community livelihoods, but profit maximization becomes problematic when it pushes destinations beyond heritage and ecological thresholds.

The Heritage axis positions cultural and natural heritage as the identity foundation of long-term tourism competitiveness. Cultural tourism theory shows that tourism and heritage management must operate as a partnership rather than a one-way extraction of cultural resources [8]. This axis therefore evaluates authenticity, integrity, community participation, respect for intellectual property, the civilized commercialization of cultural products and the capacity to reinvest tourism benefits into conservation. Heritage is not only an attraction; it is the source of differentiation that prevents destinations from competing only on price or volume.

The Sustainability axis refers to the ability of destinations to remain within ecological, infrastructural and social carrying capacity. It covers water, waste, emissions, biodiversity, public space, traffic, resident satisfaction, decent work and the fairness of benefit distribution. In this article, sustainability is not limited to environmental protection; it also includes the resilience of local communities and the capacity of governance systems to anticipate congestion,

shocks and market changes. In short, sustainability defines the outer boundary within which profit can be pursued and heritage can be promoted.

3.2. Analysis of Conflicts and Contradictions in Governance

The first conflict lies between profit maximization and heritage conservation. Over-commercialization occurs when cultural symbols, rituals, landscapes or historical spaces are redesigned primarily to increase short-term spending while ignoring the long-term meaning and integrity of heritage. Bortolotto shows that commercialization is not automatically destructive, but it becomes a governance problem when market logic overwhelms heritage rationalities [9]. In Viet Nam, this risk appears in souvenir homogenization, aggressive selling, staged performances detached from cultural context and construction that visually dominates sensitive heritage areas.

The second conflict is destination overtourism. When visitor numbers exceed carrying capacity, revenue may increase in the short run while experience quality, resident satisfaction and environmental quality decline. Congestion, waste, water stress, price increases and pressure on public space are not side effects; they are signals that the tourism system is exceeding its thresholds. This conflict shows why visitor growth must be interpreted together with spatial capacity, seasonality and destination management capability.

The third conflict concerns the decline of authenticity. In heritage tourism, architecture, festivals, cuisine, craft villages and everyday practices may be simplified or modified to fit tourist expectations. If adaptation is community-led and culturally grounded, it can create new vitality; if it is externally imposed and purely commercial, it can produce cultural distortion. The case of Trang An illustrates that world-heritage destinations need strict coordination among conservation, spatial planning and tourism use to avoid pressure on landscapes and heritage values [10].

The fourth conflict relates to unequal benefit distribution. Tourism can create significant revenue while leaving local communities with low-paid jobs, unstable livelihoods or limited decision-making power. When benefits concentrate in a few enterprises, the Heritage and Sustainability axes are weakened because communities lose motivation to protect resources that do not generate fair returns for them. Thus, the distribution of tourism value is not only a social issue; it is a condition for heritage conservation and destination resilience.

4. Current Situation and Policy Issues in Viet Nam

Viet Nam's tourism policy framework has gradually shifted from growth recovery to sustainable and competitive development. Resolution 08-NQ/TW dated January 16, 2017 of the Politburo and subsequent government programs set the objective of developing tourism into a spearhead economic sector. Decision No. 147/QD-TTg further clarifies the direction to 2030, emphasizing quality, professionalism, green growth, cultural values and international competitiveness [1]. This policy foundation is consistent with the P-H-S logic because it recognizes both economic targets and sustainability requirements.

Empirically, the recovery of Viet Nam's tourism after the pandemic has been rapid (*table 1*). International arrivals fell sharply during 2020-2021, then recovered strongly in 2022-2025 (*table 2*). Domestic tourism provided an important buffer during the recovery period and continued to expand. The key policy implication is that Viet Nam has regained scale, but now needs to shift from recovery management to value, quality and carrying-capacity management.

Table 1. Tourist arrivals in Viet Nam, 2020-Q1/2026

Year	International arrivals (million)	Domestic trips (million)
2020	3.69	56.0
2021	0.004	40.0
2022	3.66	101.3
2023	12.60	108.2
2024	17.58	110.0

Year	International arrivals (million)	Domestic trips (million)
2025	21.17	137.0
Q1/2026	6.76	26.5

Source: Compiled from Viet Nam National Authority of Tourism and official statistics [2].

Table 2. Total tourism revenue and growth rate in Viet Nam, 2020-2025

Year	Total tourism revenue (VND trillion)	Growth rate (%)
2020	312.0	-57.0
2021	180.0	-42.3
2022	495.0	175.0
2023	678.3	37.0
2024	840.0	23.9
2025	1,000.0	19.0

Source: Compiled from Viet Nam National Authority of Tourism and official statistics [2].

The data show two important trends. First, the industry has largely recovered from the pandemic shock and has entered a new expansion cycle. Second, revenue growth has remained high, but the strategic challenge is to increase yield, product quality and local value added rather than relying mainly on volume. This is especially important in heritage destinations where the physical and symbolic carrying capacity is limited.

Policy issues remain visible. Many destinations still depend heavily on seasonal flows, natural landscapes and cultural heritage without sufficient value-added services. Destination management is fragmented across administrative units. Digital data on visitor density, waste, traffic, accommodation and resident attitudes are not yet fully integrated. In addition, local communities often participate as service providers but not as co-governors of heritage tourism. These weaknesses explain why the P-H-S framework is needed not only as a theory but also as a governance instrument.

From a sustainable development perspective, the main contradiction in Viet Nam is the difference in timing between profit and conservation. Profit can be measured monthly or annually, whereas heritage integrity and ecological quality are accumulated over decades. If a destination sacrifices authenticity or landscape quality for short-term revenue, it destroys the very asset on which

future tourism depends. Therefore, in the sustainability strategy, conservation must be the central axis, while tourism is only a controlled exploitation tool to preserve value for the future.

5. Selected International Experiences and Implications

Singapore and Thailand are selected because each case addresses a specific P-H-S tension that Viet Nam is currently facing. Singapore is relevant for the conflict between growth, limited space, and destination management as it has developed strong institutional coordination, high-quality standards, and digital tools to manage visitor experience in a dense urban environment. Thailand is relevant for the conflict between tourism commercialization, community benefit, and ecological-cultural limits since it has widely promoted community-based tourism and visitor-capacity management in sensitive destinations.

5.1. Singapore

Singapore provides a useful example of a compact destination that combines strict planning, high service standards and digital management. Because land and heritage space are limited, Singapore cannot rely on unlimited visitor expansion. Its governance approach emphasizes carrying capacity, urban design, public safety, environmental cleanliness and high-value experiences. Real-time information, geographic information systems and digital applications are used to manage visitor flows, reduce congestion and improve destination experience [12].

Singapore also illustrates how technology can promote heritage without excessive physical pressure on heritage sites. Augmented reality, virtual exhibitions, digital mapping and curated urban trails enable visitors to experience cultural layers while reducing the need for intrusive construction. In addition, the Singapore Tourism Board's programs support enterprises in product innovation, service quality and sustainability-oriented upgrading [13]. The

implication for Viet Nam is that digital transformation should not be limited to marketing; it should become an operating system for carrying-capacity management, heritage interpretation and service-quality control.

Another lesson is institutional coordination. Heritage conservation, urban redevelopment, environmental standards, public entertainment, transport and tourism promotion are not governed separately. This reduces policy fragmentation and helps align profit with spatial discipline and cultural identity. For Viet Nam, this suggests the need for stronger cross-ministerial and provincial coordination, especially in UNESCO sites, national tourism areas and rapidly urbanizing coastal destinations.

5.2. Thailand

Thailand is a leading tourism destination in Southeast Asia and offers important lessons on carrying capacity and community-based tourism. The country has used visitor limits, zoning, temporary closures and ticketing controls in environmentally sensitive destinations. These tools show that limiting access is not necessarily anti-growth; when properly designed, it protects the destination brand, improves visitor experience and sustains revenue over time.

Thailand's community-based tourism model is especially relevant for Viet Nam. In this approach, local communities are not merely labor suppliers but actors in product design, visitor reception, resource management and benefit sharing. UNDP's analysis of Thai community-based tourism highlights the role of local champions, skills, organizational capacity and market connections in making tourism more inclusive [14]. The implication is that Viet Nam should formalize community participation through cooperatives, community tourism boards, local conservation funds and benefit-sharing rules rather than relying only on ad hoc consultation.

Both Singapore and Thailand indicate that sustainable tourism is achieved through rules, incentives and data, not only through slogans. Singapore

emphasizes digital and institutional discipline; Thailand emphasizes carrying capacity and community empowerment. For Viet Nam, the relevant lesson is not to copy a model mechanically, but to combine hard infrastructure, soft regulation, community ownership and digital governance in line with the P-H-S framework.

6. Proposed Policy Framework for Viet Nam

6.1. Core Principles of the Governance Framework

6.1.1. Principle of Three-Dimensional Harmony: Profit - Heritage - Sustainability

The first principle is that tourism development must be assessed simultaneously through the Profit, Heritage and Sustainability axes. A project should not be considered successful only because it increases arrivals or revenue. It must also preserve heritage authenticity, respect the destination's carrying capacity and contribute fairly to local welfare. This principle turns the P-H-S framework into an approval and monitoring criterion for tourism planning, investment and destination management.

In practical terms, large heritage destinations such as Ha Long, Hoi An, Sa Pa, Trang An and Hue should determine carrying-capacity thresholds for sensitive areas and introduce visitor-flow management tools when thresholds are approached. Environmental fees, heritage conservation fees and earmarked reinvestment mechanisms can help ensure that tourism revenue finances waste treatment, restoration, interpretation and community services. Carrying-capacity studies in Viet Nam emphasize that thresholds must be based on infrastructure, environment, social acceptance and experience quality, not only on physical space [15].

6.1.2. Principle of Interdisciplinary and Systems Approach

The second principle is that tourism must be governed as an interdisciplinary system. The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism cannot by itself solve issues involving transport, land use, construction, immigration, digital data, public security, trade promotion, environmental protection and local livelihoods. A systems approach requires permanent coordination among ministries and provinces, with clear responsibilities, shared data and joint evaluation indicators.

This principle is consistent with the national strategy but needs stronger operationalization. Each major heritage-tourism project should undergo an interdisciplinary P-H-S impact assessment before approval. Such assessment should cover expected revenue, employment, spatial pressure, heritage risks, environmental costs, community benefits, digital monitoring capacity and exit or mitigation measures. The purpose is to prevent policy fragmentation before it creates irreversible damage.

6.1.3. Principle of Participation and Fair Benefit-Sharing

The third principle is meaningful participation and fair benefit-sharing. Local communities should be involved in planning, product design, management, monitoring and evaluation, not only in low-value service provision. Community participation strengthens social legitimacy, reduces conflict and creates incentives for heritage protection. Benefit-sharing can be implemented through local employment quotas, community development funds, co-management boards, micro-credit for tourism households and transparent revenue-sharing rules.

Businesses should be encouraged and required to internalize social responsibility. They benefit from public heritage and destination reputation; therefore, they should contribute to conservation, training, local sourcing and environmental management. The state's role is not only to license projects but

also to mediate interests, set standards and ensure that tourism value circulates within local economies. Fair distribution is thus a governance tool for sustainability, not merely a moral appeal.

6.1.4. Principle of Governance Based on Digitalization

The fourth principle is data-driven digital governance. Viet Nam should move from fragmented reporting to integrated destination data systems. A National Sustainable Tourism Data Platform can combine information on visitor flows, accommodation occupancy, traffic, waste, water use, ticketing, protected areas, resident satisfaction and tourist feedback. Such data would allow authorities to manage carrying capacity dynamically instead of reacting only after congestion or degradation occurs.

Digitalization also supports the Heritage axis. Three-dimensional scanning, digital archives, virtual reality, augmented reality and multilingual digital interpretation can expand access to heritage without increasing physical pressure on fragile sites. The strategic objective is to transform digital tools from promotional instruments into governance infrastructure.

6.2. Proposed Policy Tools

6.2.1. Economic and Financial Tools

Economic and financial tools should redirect profit toward long-term value creation. Viet Nam can expand green credit, preferential loans, green bonds and local tourism conservation funds for projects that meet sustainability and heritage criteria. Capital access should be linked to environmental management systems, energy efficiency, waste treatment, local employment, community benefit-sharing and transparent sustainability reporting. This creates incentives for enterprises to move from short-term exploitation to responsible investment.

Destination-level financial tools are equally important. Environmental fees, differentiated ticket prices, congestion charges during peak periods and earmarked conservation contributions can be applied in sensitive destinations. These tools should be transparent and accompanied by public reporting on how funds are used. When tourists and businesses see that fees are reinvested in conservation and service quality, pricing tools become more acceptable and effective.

6.2.2. Planning and Legal Tools

Planning and legal tools should clarify spatial limits, heritage protection zones and the responsibilities of businesses and local authorities. Tourism planning should be integrated with land-use planning, transport planning, environmental protection and cultural heritage management. In core heritage zones, construction density, architectural style, advertising, traffic, waste and visitor flows must be controlled more strictly than in ordinary commercial areas.

Legal tools should also define procedures for community consultation, public disclosure and impact assessment. For large projects, approval should depend on a P-H-S assessment and a binding conservation-management plan. Sanctions for pollution, illegal construction, heritage encroachment and misleading commercialization should be strong enough to change behavior. In this sense, law is not only a compliance mechanism but also a device for aligning time horizons between investors and heritage conservation.

6.2.3. Digital Governance and Information Tools

Digital governance tools include e-ticketing, reservation systems, smart tourism cards, real-time visitor-flow dashboards, environmental sensors, GIS mapping and online feedback platforms. These tools allow authorities to forecast congestion, distribute visitors across routes and time slots, and provide early warnings when environmental or social thresholds are reached. They also

improve transparency because residents, enterprises and authorities can rely on shared data rather than fragmented impressions.

For heritage management, digital tools should support inventory, monitoring, interpretation and education. Digitized heritage records can help experts monitor deterioration, guide restoration and provide educational content for tourists. Mobile applications can explain cultural norms, respectful behavior and local history, thereby reducing inappropriate conduct at sensitive sites. Digital governance should therefore connect three functions: management control, visitor experience and cultural education.

6.3. Evaluation Criteria System

The evaluation criteria system is built directly on the P-H-S framework. It does not aim to replace existing national statistical systems, but to provide a concise dashboard for destination governance. The indicators below (*table 3–5*) can be adjusted by destination type, but the principle is that no pillar should be ignored. A destination that performs well economically while degrading heritage or exceeding carrying capacity should not be classified as sustainable.

Table 3. Indicators for evaluating the Profit axis

Pillar	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Description/ Measurement Formula	Significance	Reference Threshold
	Contribution of the sector to total national GDP	$(\text{Total tourism revenue} / \text{National GDP}) \times 100$	Measures the economic strength of the tourism industry within the macroeconomy	> 10% (Based on the Strategy for Vietnam's Tourism Development to 2030)
	Contribution of tourism value-added to local GRDP	$(\text{Local tourism value-added} / \text{Gross Regional Domestic Product}) \times 100$	Reflects the efficiency level of tourism at the destination	15 - 25% at key heritage tourism centers
	Revenue growth rate	$[(\text{Revenue in year } t - \text{Revenue in year } t-1) / \text{Revenue in year } t-1] \times 100$	Evaluates business performance and the capacity for market expansion of the destination	Maintain 12 - 15%/year (Stable growth, avoiding shocks)

Profit	Reinvestment of profit into the local tourism industry	Percentage (%) of profit allocated to Heritage Conservation Funds or Sustainable Tourism Development Funds	Evaluates the level of long-term investment and commitment to benefit-sharing	Reinvestment rate for heritage and environment reaches at least 5 - 10% of net profit
	Average expenditure per tourist	Total tourism revenue / Total visitor arrivals	Reflects customer quality and the ability to capture value-added at the destination	Positive annual growth; aiming for international tourist expenditure above 120 - 150 USD/day
	Tourist satisfaction level	CSAT (Customer Satisfaction Score) collected via periodic surveys	Reflects tourist satisfaction with the quality of tourism products and services	Satisfaction index > 80%; Return rate > 20%
	Tourist arrival growth rate	$[(\text{Visitors in year } t - \text{Visitors in year } t-1) / \text{Visitors in year } t-1] \times 100$	Reflects market attractiveness	Controlled at 6 - 8% to avoid exceeding carrying capacity

Source: Proposed by the author based on the P-H-S framework and tourism indicators [6; 11].

Table 4. Indicators for evaluating the Heritage axis

Pillar	Key Performance	Description/ Measurement Formula	Significance	Reference Threshold
Heritage	Level of conservation of heritage authenticity	Qualitative assessment from an expert council on the degree of heritage alteration (architecture, function)	Represents reliability and truthfulness in reflecting the cultural and historical values of heritage	Maintain at > 85% (No alteration to the core structure)
	Community participation in heritage management	Percentage (%) of community representatives involved in destination management	Reflects the rights of people in heritage conservation	At least 40 - 50% of local residents actively participating
	Diversity of heritage tourism products	Number of cultural experience tours, craft villages, and traditional art performances commercialized in a civilized manner	Reflects the ability to exploit heritage to meet tourist needs while preserving and promoting the local economy	New product growth reaching 10 - 15%/year
	Heritage digitization	Percentage (%) of tangible and intangible heritage	Evaluates the capacity for long-term	Strive for 100% for special

	index	items documented in digital data formats (3D, VR/AR, Big Data)	conservation, expansion of internet accessibility, and promotion of cultural industries	national heritage and UNESCO sites
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Source: Proposed by the author based on heritage-tourism governance literature [8; 10].

Table 5. Indicators for evaluating the Sustainability axis

Pillar	Key Performance	Description/ Measurement Formula	Significance	Reference Threshold
Sustainability	Tourism waste and wastewater treatment rate	(% of waste categorized and treated by standard) and (% of wastewater from accommodations treated before discharge)	Reflects the level of environmental protection and efficiency of sustainable tourism management	100% for wastewater and > 90% for solid waste
	Tourism carrying capacity index	(Actual number of visitors at peak time / Maximum allowable carrying capacity of the destination)	Reflects the maximum number of tourists a destination can receive without harming environment, resources, culture, and experience quality	Always maintain < 100% (Warning at 80% threshold)
	Resident satisfaction level with tourism activities	Using the Likert scale (1-5) via periodic surveys	Reflects the level of acceptance and benefits received by local residents from tourism activities	Satisfaction index > 80%
	Number of direct and indirect jobs in the sector	Total labor in accommodation and travel (direct) + labor in agriculture supply chains and handicrafts (indirect)	Measures the scale of the industry's impact on the labor market	Growth proportional to revenue. Reaching 6.3 - 10.5 million jobs in the 2025-2030 period

Source: Proposed by the author based on SF-MST and carrying-capacity studies [6; 15].

The proposed criteria are deliberately concise to support implementation. For national-level monitoring, the set can be expanded with standardized statistical indicators. For destination-level governance, the priority is to make the indicators operational: measured regularly, linked to decision-making and publicly reported. Indicators have value only when they trigger management

responses, such as visitor caps, route diversification, fee adjustment, restoration investment or community support.

6.4. Multi-Stakeholder Coordination Mechanism

A P-H-S governance framework requires a multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism. At the national level, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism should coordinate with ministries responsible for planning and investment, finance, transport, foreign affairs, public security, agriculture and environment, science and technology, and industry and trade. The objective is to align tourism promotion with infrastructure, visa policy, environmental protection, digital systems, cultural diplomacy and market development.

At the provincial level, local People's Committees should establish destination governance boards for major tourism areas and heritage sites. These boards should include representatives of local authorities, heritage managers, tourism enterprises, community organizations, experts and relevant mass organizations. Their tasks should include monitoring P-H-S indicators, reviewing investment proposals, coordinating peak-season management, overseeing conservation funds and resolving conflicts among stakeholders.

For businesses, the mechanism should combine incentives and obligations. Enterprises that invest in green infrastructure, local employment, heritage interpretation and community partnerships should receive priority access to finance, promotion programs and destination branding. Conversely, enterprises that violate environmental or heritage regulations should face transparent sanctions. For communities, the mechanism should guarantee participation rights, benefit-sharing channels and capacity-building programs so that residents become co-creators of tourism value.

The coordination mechanism should operate as a feedback loop: data reveal pressure; institutions interpret the pressure; policy tools respond; and the results are evaluated through the P-H-S indicators. This loop is the operational

expression of the article's central logic. Tourism can grow, but growth must be continuously corrected by heritage and sustainability constraints.

6.5. Implementation Roadmap

In the first stage, Viet Nam should select a limited number of pilot destinations representing different tourism types: a world natural heritage site, a historical-cultural city, a mountain community destination and a coastal resort area. Each pilot should establish a baseline P-H-S dashboard, identify carrying-capacity thresholds and publicly disclose a destination management plan. This stage should not aim at creating another administrative report; it should test whether data, incentives and institutional responsibilities can be connected in daily management.

In the second stage, the pilot results should be standardized into national guidelines for sustainable heritage-tourism governance. The guidelines should specify minimum indicators, data-sharing protocols, consultation procedures, digital ticketing standards and rules for conservation-fund management. Provincial authorities can then adapt the national template to local conditions, while the central level maintains comparability and policy discipline. This approach avoids two common risks: excessive centralization that ignores local specificities and excessive decentralization that produces fragmented standards.

In the third stage, the P-H-S framework should be integrated into investment approval, destination ranking, tourism promotion and budget allocation. Projects that demonstrate high local value added, strong conservation commitments and credible environmental management should receive preferential access to credit, land-use support and promotion programs. Projects that increase revenue but create high heritage or environmental risks should be redesigned before approval. In this way, the framework becomes a governance filter rather than a descriptive model.

For implementation to be credible, the roadmap should be accompanied by a simple reporting rule: every pilot destination should publish an annual P-H-S brief of no more than ten pages. The brief should explain what changed in visitor pressure, revenue, conservation status, environmental quality and resident perception, and it should identify the management response adopted for the following year. This format is short enough for public use but structured enough to make local authorities accountable.

Finally, the framework should be linked to human-resource development. Sustainable heritage tourism requires guides, destination managers, conservation specialists, data analysts and community entrepreneurs who understand both tourism markets and heritage values. Training programs should therefore combine service quality, digital skills, environmental management and cultural interpretation. Without this human-capital component, even well-designed indicators and digital systems may remain underused.

7. Conclusion

This article has systematized the theoretical basis, analyzed policy issues and proposed a governance framework for developing Viet Nam's smokeless industry in a way that harmonizes profit, heritage and sustainability. The P-H-S framework clarifies that tourism-led development is a multi-objective governance problem: profit supplies the financial engine, heritage supplies the identity foundation and sustainability supplies the long-term boundary.

The theoretical contribution of the article lies in integrating three strands of analysis that are often separated in tourism studies. Instead of treating heritage as a supplementary tourism resource or sustainability as an external constraint, the P-H-S framework places all three pillars in a single analytical structure. This helps explain why over-commercialization, overtourism, identity decline and unequal benefit-sharing are not isolated problems but manifestations of imbalance among the three axes.

The practical contribution lies in translating the framework into principles, tools, indicators and coordination mechanisms. For policymakers, the framework provides a basis for evaluating projects and destinations beyond visitor volume. For businesses, it clarifies that long-term competitiveness depends on reinvestment, service quality, responsible commercialization and community trust. For local communities, it emphasizes participation and fair benefit-sharing as conditions for conservation.

The study also has limitations. It relies mainly on policy analysis and secondary data; future research should test the P-H-S indicators through field surveys at specific destinations such as Ha Long, Hoi An, Hue, Sa Pa and Trang An. Further studies can also quantify the relationship between digital governance, carrying capacity and tourist expenditure. Despite these limitations, the P-H-S framework offers a coherent logic for moving Viet Nam's smokeless industry from scale recovery toward quality, identity and resilience.

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