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Romoting the Soft Power of Vietnamese Culture through Intercultural Education in the Context of Integration

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Abstract

Culture is a fundamental pillar of social life, shaping individual character, strengthening community resilience, and driving national development. Sustainable progress depends on harnessing a nation's internal strengths, with its people and their creativity being the most vital assets. Enhancing the soft power of Vietnamese culture is both essential and strategic for achieving national aspirations. In today's globalized world, intercultural education is both a necessity and a key mechanism for strengthening Vietnamese cultural soft power, contributing to a prosperous and fulfilling Vietnam. The article "Intercultural Education and the Promotion of Vietnamese Cultural Soft Power in the Context of Integration" explores the role of intercultural education in enhancing Vietnamese cultural soft power amid global integration. It also proposes solutions to improve the effectiveness of intercultural education in this process.

Keywords: Intercultural Education, Soft Power, Vietnam, Integration, Present-Day

Introduction

In the current context of international integration and globalization, nations are increasingly experiencing “a significant intensification of interconnections, influences, and interactions across economic, political, and social domains” (Nghia, 2004, p.27). As international integration becomes more intertwined with scientific and technical revolutions, industrial revolutions, technological revolutions, and the digital revolution, many nations have recognized cultural “soft power” as a critical resource. This soft power is leveraged alongside a nation’s comprehensive strength including politics, economy, natural resources, human resources, science, technology, security, defense, and foreign relations to enhance national competitiveness and international standing.

However, international integration presents cultural identities with challenges, as shared cultural motifs increasingly gain global traction, risking the erosion of creativity and cultural diversity worldwide. This homogenization could lead to cultural impoverishment.

Vietnam, with its rich cultural heritage spanning thousands of years, possesses a unique system of values and identity that has resisted assimilation by any foreign invader. This system of values and identity forms the core of Vietnam’s cultural soft power. Amid globalization and deep international integration, while promoting comprehensive national strength, cultural resources are increasingly recognized by nations as an essential “soft power” for achieving rapid, sustainable development and enhancing their international role and status.

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Human history has shown that culture serves as a goal, a driving force, and a tool for the survival and development of nations. Experiences from socio-economic development across nations reveal that separating economic growth from cultural development leads to severe imbalances, weakening both economic and cultural foundations. In such cases, cultural traditions risk fading and deteriorating over time. Therefore, in today's era, alongside collaborative economic development efforts, nations worldwide are striving to integrate, exchange, and cooperate to find solutions for cultural development. This, in turn, serves as a driving force for the development of their economies, societies, and people. Intercultural education plays a vital role in building and developing cultural foundations while promoting the soft power of culture for national development.

The XIII National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam emphasized the need to “urgently develop the cultural and cultural service industries in a focused and prioritized manner, based on identifying and promoting the soft power of Vietnamese culture, effectively utilizing the values, quintessence, and new achievements of global culture, science, technology, and innovation” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, p.145). Accordingly, recognizing and evaluating the role of intercultural education in promoting cultural soft power, and providing orientations for enhancing Vietnamese cultural soft power through intercultural education in the current period, are issues of great significance.

Research Methods

Research on culture and the soft power of culture in the context of globalization has become an increasingly prominent focus among scientists today. Studies on this subject are conducted from various perspectives, primarily cultural studies, philosophy, political science, sociology, and economics. This article is based on a direct review of prior works and the current practices of promoting cultural soft power in Vietnam.

During the research process, the author applies the dialectical materialist methodology with a specific, comprehensive historical perspective and a systematic approach. At the same time, the author builds on the findings of previous studies to refine the theoretical foundation and evaluations. Additionally, interdisciplinary methods commonly used in social science research are employed, including analysis, synthesis, historical and logical methods, as well as statistical and comparative methods, to fulfill the research tasks and achieve the proposed objectives.

Results and Discussion

Soft Power and the Necessity of Promoting Vietnamese Cultural Soft Power in the Context of Integration

Culture is a multi-layered and multi-dimensional concept with broad connotations and rich implications. Each approach to culture helps clarify its various aspects. Based on systemic-structural research methods, functional approaches to culture, or perspectives examining culture diachronically as a criterion for assessing social progress, or synchronically as a standard for comparing (distinguishing) levels of national development, culture remains one of the most complex concepts.

The concept of culture can be approached at both theoretical and practical levels. At the theoretical level, culture encompasses all material and spiritual values created by humanity (individuals and communities) to sustain and advance society. The essence of culture lies in creativity, aspiring to truth, goodness, beauty, humanistic values, and human happiness. Culture

is a secondary social environment created by humans to serve humanity. At the practical level, culture manifests in all aspects of human life, from material production activities to spiritual endeavors, reflecting the creative choices of individuals and communities.

In Vietnamese, “culture” is commonly used to refer to education (cultural level), lifestyle (cultural norms), or the level of civilization in a particular era (e.g., Dong Son culture). The 1943 Outline on Vietnamese Culture by the Indochinese Communist Party placed culture alongside economy and politics, encompassing ideology, science (education), and art. Thus, culture is not only tied to nature and society but also to the development of individuals and the foundational institutions and modes of operation within social life.

For some, culture includes only masterpieces in the fields of thought and creativity. For others, it encompasses everything that distinguishes one nation from another, from sophisticated modern products to beliefs, customs, traditions, lifestyles, and labor practices. This understanding was also internationally accepted at the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies in 1970 in Venice.

In Vietnam, Professor Tran Ngoc Them stated:

“The concept of culture can be understood in two primary ways—narrowly and broadly. Definitions can also be descriptive or characteristic-based. Among the characteristic-based definitions, there are three tendencies: Viewing culture as specific results (products). Viewing culture as processes. Viewing culture as relationships or structures” (Them, 2000, p.19).

Cultural scholar Vu Khieu posited: “Culture represents the cultivated level of individuals and societies... Culture marks the state in which humans increasingly separate themselves from animals, eliminating animalistic traits to affirm human characteristics” (Khieu, 1987).

Author Phan Ngoc, from his unique perspective, defined culture as: “Culture is the relationship between the symbolic world in the mind of an individual or ethnic group and the real world, which has been shaped, to varying degrees, by that individual or group based on the model within their symbols. The clearest evidence of this relationship is culture manifested as distinctive choices made by an individual or ethnic group, differing from those of others”. (Ngoc, 2003, p.20).

Overall, each approach, understanding, and definition of culture contains a rational core, yet each definition clarifies only one or a few aspects of culture. From a comprehensive perspective, rooted in Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh’s thought while embracing the cultural essence of the era, the Communist Party of Vietnam asserts: “Culture is the spiritual foundation, the driving force, and the goal of socio-economic development. Culture is intrinsically linked to the revolutionary development process in Vietnam. It is a crucial link in the struggle for national independence and the building of socialism” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 1998).

Soft Power as a New “Power Resource” of Nations. Soft power has increasingly become a new “power resource” for nations, exerting a strong influence and impact on international relations. In the context of globalization and a world transitioning toward multipolarity, soft power is increasingly recognized as a critical pillar for enhancing national competitiveness and expanding influence. Consequently, countries, whether large or small, developed or developing, consider building, consolidating, harnessing, and promoting their soft power a strategic national task.

The concept of “soft power” was officially introduced in the early 1990s by American professor Joseph Nye, former Dean of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University posthumanism.co.uk

and former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense (Hoa, 2020). According to Nye, “soft power” refers to the ability to create attraction, persuasion, and voluntary cooperation, encouraging other nations to adjust their behavior and policies in line with one’s preferences without resorting to coercion through economic or military power.

Today, soft power is no longer just a theoretical concept but has become a development strategy for many nations worldwide. For nations, soft power is an essential tool in the implementation of foreign policy. Many forecasts suggest that in the 21st century, competition in soft power will become one of the most effective instruments in international relations, helping nations expand their influence, elevate their positions, and gain the support and cooperation of communities, countries, and international organizations.

Vietnam’s Potential for Soft Power. With its favorable geographical position, including a long coastline of 3,200 km along the East Sea, its location at the crossroads of international maritime routes, and its position between two major civilizations India and China Vietnam is uniquely advantaged to leverage its soft power. Notably, Vietnam possesses a rich cultural heritage and a long-standing historical tradition, along with a large population of 99 million, primarily composed of a dynamic, diligent, and creative young workforce. These factors provide significant potential for the development of Vietnam’s “soft power”.

The term “soft power” and the idea of “promoting the soft power of Vietnamese culture” first appeared in the documents of the 13th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam. The 13th Congress affirmed that the tangible and intangible cultural heritage values of the Vietnamese nation, the unique cultural identity of Vietnam, and the strength of the Vietnamese people have become the roots of cultural soft power. This soft power represents intrinsic strength and serves as a significant resource and driver for sustainable development and international integration.

The 13th Congress emphasized: “Building and promoting cultural factors to serve as a true breakthrough for socio-economic development and international integration” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, p.134). Vietnamese cultural soft power is regarded as one of the nation’s special intrinsic strengths. The Congress explicitly highlighted the need to: “Focus on researching, identifying, and implementing the construction of a national value system, a cultural value system, and human norms associated with preserving and developing the values of the Vietnamese family in the new era” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, p.143). It also emphasized the importance of: “Enhancing ideological and artistic values while ensuring freedom and democracy in literary and artistic creation; encouraging innovative explorations that enrich Vietnamese cultural identity; and minimizing distortions and tendencies toward pandering to trivial tastes” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, p.145).

Strategic Directions for Vietnamese Culture and Soft Power. General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong, in his speech at the National Cultural Conference (November 24, 2021), underscored: “Amid new opportunities and challenges, the objective requirements of our revolutionary cause demand that we continue to build, preserve, and develop an advanced Vietnamese culture rich in national identity. Culture must truly serve as the “spiritual foundation” the “driving force of development” and the “beacon guiding the nation”. We must promote the values of Vietnamese culture and the strength of the Vietnamese people, ignite aspirations for national prosperity, and harness the collective strength of the entire nation to seize opportunities, overcome challenges, and successfully achieve the goal of transforming Vietnam into a developed, socialist-oriented nation by the mid-21st century” (Trong, 2021). Vietnam, with thousands of years of history and

a legacy shaped by natural and human-induced changes, has accumulated, created, and promoted many unique cultural values and identities, forming the soul of the nation. At the same time, Vietnam has absorbed and contributed to the shared cultural heritage of humanity.

Promoting Vietnam's Cultural Soft Power in the Context of Integration

Promoting the “soft power” of culture involves awakening the traditions of patriotism, love for peace, solidarity, and cultural tolerance of the Vietnamese people. The Italian author Claude Falazzoli, in his book *Vietnam Between Two Myths*, highlights seven values of the Vietnamese people: A sense of “preserving dignity, refusing to lose it under any circumstances”; “Diligence that could move mountains”; “Courtesy and refinement... creating a non-hostile and harmonious atmosphere”; “A deliberate subtlety, splitting hairs with precision”; “Prudence, prolonging deliberation, judgment, and decision-making”; “Pragmatism and the ability to adapt skillfully and wisely to every situation”; “Particularly romantic and deeply sentimental” (Claude, 1981).

In his work, *The Spiritual Values of the Vietnamese Nation*, Professor Tran Van Giau provides an in-depth analysis of the traditional spiritual values of the Vietnamese people. From the perspectives of history and ethics, he argues that Vietnam's traditional spiritual values have evolved throughout various historical periods while maintaining their distinctive identity. These values include: Patriotism, Diligence, Heroism, Creativity, Optimism, Compassion, and Commitment to justice. Among these, patriotism is considered the core traditional value of the Vietnamese nation (Giau, 1980).

In 2002, researchers Phạm Minh Hạc and Nguyễn Khoa Điềm emphasized: “The enduring characteristics of Vietnamese lifestyles, ethics, and traditional values are reflected in traits such as deep patriotism, a strong sense of national resilience, community spirit, compassion, tolerance, respect for morality and relationships, practicality, diligence, and creativity in labor...” (Hac & Diem, 2023, p. 262).

History has demonstrated the Vietnamese people's spirit of peace and their prioritization of humanity. For instance, during times of national peril, such as the Tran dynasty's response to foreign invaders, leaders and elders convened the Dien Hong Conference, uniting the nation under the motto “one heart, the entire populace fights the enemy”. Their philosophy of “rooting actions in humanity and basing strategies on wisdom and courage” was exemplified in principles like “defeating cruelty with righteousness”, “replacing violence with compassion”, and “using clever tactics to outmaneuver prolonged warfare”. When their enemies surrendered, the Vietnamese showed leniency by providing ships and horses for their safe return, aiming to “extinguish war forever and establish eternal peace”.

In the Ho Chi Minh era, principles such as “the people are the masters”, “rely on the people, take the people as the root”, and “with the people, we have everything” became central. Ho Chi Minh emphasized: “Whatever benefits the people, we must do our utmost to achieve; whatever harms the people, we must do our utmost to avoid”. These principles embody the vibrant spirit of tolerance, humanity, respect for relationships, and dedication to the people.

Moreover, the Vietnamese are open to adopting the cultural essence of humanity while preserving and enhancing their national cultural identity. These are timeless aspects of soft power that must not be eroded. To win the hearts of the people and international friends, Vietnam must inherit and promote these traditions, leveraging soft power to protect the nation and achieve successful integration and development.

The cultural values of the nation are also highlighted in the writings and documents of President Ho Chi Minh, as well as in the Resolution of the 5th Plenum of the 8th Central Committee on building and developing an advanced culture deeply imbued with national identity. The resolution states:

“National identity encompasses enduring values, the quintessence of the Vietnamese ethnic communities, fostered over thousands of years of building and defending the nation. These include profound patriotism, the spirit of self-reliance, solidarity, and community consciousness...” (Communist Party of Vietnam, 1998).

In Today’s Era, Human Factors Play a Crucial Role in Determining a Nation’s Success or Failure. Promoting cultural soft power also entails prioritizing the education of individuals. Therefore, greater attention, investment, and development in culture and education are more critical than ever. Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, in his book *From Third World to First*, attributed Singapore’s success to the principle: “Winning the race in education is the key to winning the race in the economy”. This lesson serves as a valuable suggestion for Vietnam to leverage its resources in education and cultivate generations of citizens with qualities such as competence, professionalism, resilience, and fluency in foreign languages. These individuals will form the primary workforce to build and develop the nation in the context of deep international integration.

To maximize the potential of human resources, Vietnam needs mechanisms and policies to reward and utilize talent. Collective movements must be fostered to call for the strength of national solidarity, helping each individual become more aware of their obligations and responsibilities to the nation.

Focusing on cultural and educational development is about improving the quality of human resources during socio-economic development. The quality of human resources is reflected in various factors, including health, educational attainment, professional skills, intellect, ethical standards, aesthetics, and more. Among these, intellectual capacity encompassing knowledge, cognitive abilities, and creative thinking to adapt to society is the most significant. It is demonstrated through education levels, professional expertise, work attitude, and the ability to apply material and spiritual resources in practical activities to achieve high efficiency.

Intellectual development strongly influences societal progress. American futurist Alvin Toffler emphasized that while natural resources can be exhausted, human intellect is inexhaustible, as “knowledge is a resource that never depletes” (Toffler, 1991, p. 41). Intellectual capacity is a crucial criterion for assessing human resource quality. High-quality human resources are characterized by intellectual capacity, professional skills, and strong moral values nurtured through advanced education systems linked to modern science and technology.

Education serves as the foundation for human resource quality. Educational attainment not only underpins professional skill development but also shapes individual character and lifestyle. In different periods, regions, and fields, the criteria for human resources vary. Developing well-rounded individuals through education is key to enhancing cultural soft power.

Promoting Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage. Efforts to preserve, promote, and widely introduce Vietnam’s tangible and intangible cultural heritage to international audiences are crucial for attracting tourists and creating revenue through the “smokeless industry”. This enhances Vietnam’s image as a nation of hidden beauty, with friendly and hospitable people.

Blessed with natural wonders, Vietnam boasts many UNESCO - recognized sites, such as Ha

Long Bay, Phong Nha-Ke Bang, and Sapa's ancient stone fields. The country also features stunning beaches like Non Nước, Lang Co, and Nha Trang, as well as unique ecological and river-based tourism in the Mekong Delta. Additionally, Vietnam inherits a rich, multi-ethnic cultural legacy, including tangible and intangible world heritage such as the architecture of Hue's Imperial City, Cham Towers, My Son Sanctuary, traditional music forms like Nhã nhạc, Gong Culture, water puppetry, and Quan họ folk singing. These invaluable cultural treasures must be preserved, promoted, and introduced globally, enhancing international understanding and appreciation of Vietnamese culture.

The Role of Vietnamese Cuisine. Vietnam takes pride in its unique cuisine, which captivates tourists with its tropical agricultural products, nutritious yet elegant dishes, and distinctive flavors and colors. Dishes such as pho, crab spring rolls, bun thang, banh cuon, and Hue-style pancakes have long been familiar to foreign visitors. This culinary heritage is a significant asset for Vietnam's tourism industry, which should be further developed and promoted.

Public and Cultural Diplomacy. Another key aspect of cultural soft power in socio-economic development is the significant role of public and cultural diplomacy. Through effective media communication, domestic audiences can stay informed about global events and respond proactively. Simultaneously, international friends can better understand and appreciate Vietnam through diverse media channels. Public diplomacy connects communities through timely, effective communication, creating momentum to overcome challenges.

Public and cultural diplomacy is also implemented through activities such as non-governmental organizations, economic corporations, academic conferences, training programs, cultural exchanges, cultural art events, cultural weeks, and festivals.

Vietnam's Active Global Engagement. In recent years, Vietnam has actively participated in international forums and conferences, becoming a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, a member of the Human Rights Council, and the Secretary-General of ASEAN. Vietnam pursues a peaceful and cooperative foreign policy based on mutual respect for independence, sovereignty, and equality. Moreover, the nation continuously supports neighboring countries with financial and human resources.

These actions contribute to Vietnam's positive global image, leaving a lasting impression of a country and people who value friendship, cooperation, and progress.

Promoting the Soft Power of Vietnamese Culture through Intercultural Education in the Context of International Integration

In the context of integration, culture adapts, selects, and assimilates values and norms that align with the specific characteristics of communities and nations. Essentially, cultural integration is a multidimensional interweaving process (including cultural exchange and acculturation), driven by endogenous (societal structures) and exogenous factors. Among these dimensions, cultural exchange is a form of cultural interaction based on principles of equality and mutual benefit, aimed at enhancing understanding and addressing conflicts or needs arising during the development of individuals, communities, or nations.

Cultural transformation occurs through exchanges within cultural systems, resulting in increased similarities between different cultural systems. In this bidirectional process, cultural integration enriches and strengthens the cultural values of communities and nations, thereby enhancing cultural prestige while simultaneously threatening the creativity and development of cultural

values within those communities and nations. This is a clear consequence of cultural globalization, as “The pervasive presence of major industrial media and entertainment brands today establishes new societal norms across Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas. These cultural onslaughts not only threaten cultural diversity but also pose the risk of eroding national cultural identities” (Ha, 2000, p. 5). Additionally, the dominance of cultures from large, wealthy nations with the capability to develop globally influential cultural industries widely disseminated through mass media and social networks presents a risk of disrupting the traditional and modern cultural continuity of developing nations. Languages, folklore, traditional tales, and cultural products of smaller, less dominant ethnic groups may become relegated to mere communal practices.

Vietnamese culture represents the crystallization of the labor and creativity of its ethnic groups throughout the history of nation-building and defense, showcasing the level of development and art of adapting to nature, society, and the currents of human civilization. Vietnamese culture shares similarities with other Southeast Asian cultures, characterized by a relatively open social structure that allows communal democracy to thrive. This attribute makes the Vietnamese highly adaptable and integrative. Throughout cultural exchanges and acculturation, Vietnam has been significantly influenced by the great civilizations of China and India.

Under the influence of Chinese civilization, many new cultural elements were introduced to Vietnam, with Confucianism leaving the most prominent mark. The Confucian standards, blended and adjusted with Vietnam’s inherent values, gave rise to several traditions, including the emphasis on learning and respect for education. Among the highly regarded virtues, filial piety remains paramount for the Vietnamese. Additionally, the Chinese influence fostered a tradition of valuing ranks and positions, with holding office seen as a benchmark of personal advancement.

From Indian civilization, the most notable influence on Vietnam was Buddhism. However, Vietnamese Buddhism diverged significantly from its Indian counterpart. The widespread dissemination of Buddhist philosophy, coupled with the traits of the local inhabitants, cultivated traditions of compassion, altruism, and generosity among the Vietnamese people.

In the modern and contemporary periods, amidst a turbulent historical context, Vietnam has had the opportunity to interact with Western European and American cultures. Consequently, the already rich Vietnamese culture has incorporated new values, further enhancing its diversity. Vietnam stands as one of the most culturally diverse nations globally, a significant advantage in harnessing its cultural soft power during this era of integration.

From these foundational “raw materials”, the Vietnamese have created countless material and spiritual values, leaving behind a wealth of tangible and intangible heritage for future generations. Distinct characteristics that reflect Vietnam’s cultural identity include flexibility in maintaining an open attitude toward external cultural influences, combined with strong community cohesion that preserves the foundational agrarian cultural layer. The national cultural identity evolves to fit the era while remaining deeply connected to its roots, linked to the historical context that gave rise to its cultural origins. Together with the Champa, Oc Eo, and Funan cultures in history, as well as other indigenous groups of the Mon-Khmer linguistic family in central Vietnam, the Indian cultural current has left a significant mark on Vietnam’s cultural history.

In the current context of international integration, the growth of capitalism and the ambitions of large cultural industries for global dominance present challenges. To ensure effective and

sustainable cultural integration in the future, it is necessary to maintain and promote the ability to preserve national cultural identity while strengthening the country's genuine economic and political independence. This ensures adherence to the principle of integration without assimilation, as consistently upheld by the Communist Party and the State of Vietnam through successive terms.

First, the Party's viewpoints must be institutionalized into specific policies and action plans. Throughout its leadership of the Vietnamese revolution, the Party has consistently emphasized the importance of culture. Party documents have reaffirmed the position and role of culture in development, highlighting that culture serves as the spiritual foundation, the goal, the driving force, and a vital endogenous strength for national development. Culture is considered a nation's soft power. The current challenge is to translate these scientifically sound and accurate viewpoints into practical implementation, embedding them into education and training. To achieve this, the perspective of "enhancing the soft power of Vietnamese culture" must be integrated into cultural strategies, extending to intercultural education content in schools and intercultural training programs.

Second, it is essential to identify the resources that can be transformed into the soft power of Vietnamese culture, enabling intercultural education to effectively convey these elements to everyone through intercultural communication and educational programs. Natural heritage, tangible and intangible cultural heritage, artisans, and cultural products are the cultural resources capable of building national cultural soft power. Emphasizing the preservation and promotion of the values of cultural heritage is crucial, as this forms the roots of national cultural soft power. "Cultural heritage is an invaluable asset that binds communities, embodies national identity, serves as the foundation for creating new values, and facilitates cultural exchange. It is vital to preserve, inherit, and promote traditional cultural values (both scholarly and folk), revolutionary culture, and both tangible and intangible culture. Thoroughly study and broadly educate the virtuous national ethics left by our ancestors" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2008, p. 63). Based on this, education and training should integrate relevant knowledge units to help Vietnamese culture harmonize with others, creating a vibrant Vietnamese stream within the global cultural flow.

Third, it is necessary to diversify forms of promotion and introduce comprehensive, consistent, and systematic content regarding the thoughts, ethics, and style of Ho Chi Minh, along with other prominent Vietnamese cultural figures, to the Party, the people, and the international community. This will ensure that Ho Chi Minh's ideology, ethics, and style deeply and enduringly penetrate the spiritual life of society, including Vietnamese communities abroad and international friends. More efforts should be made to honor President Ho Chi Minh globally, including selecting, translating, and publishing his exemplary works in foreign languages. Continued efforts to introduce the biographies, contributions, and works of Vietnam's notable historical, cultural, and military figures will help spread and solidify Vietnamese cultural values worldwide. Moreover, cultural diplomacy and international cultural exchange activities should be promoted to popularize and project Vietnam's image, culture, history, and people. These efforts aim to enhance global understanding, admiration, and cooperation with Vietnam, foster support for the Party and State's policies, and attract international investment, business, and tourism.

Fourth, focus on comprehensive and synchronous development across cultural fields, fostering a diverse, modern, civilized, and healthy cultural environment. This contributes to the continued expansion of Vietnam's cultural soft power base and its global influence. Investing in the

development of cultural industries and expanding markets for cultural services and products domestically and internationally is key. National cultural products exported abroad are not merely cultural commodities but also symbols, representations, and brands of the nation, reflecting the soft power of its culture. Therefore, strategic and focused plans are required to develop cultural industries, emphasizing the integration of Vietnamese cultural values, identity, and soft power into the design, appearance, and content of products. Additionally, effectively adopting and applying the world's cultural, scientific, technological, and artistic achievements can further enhance Vietnam's cultural industries and spread its cultural soft power.

Fifth, emphasize the development of cultural tourism. Tourism is a strategic approach that many nations choose to harness cultural soft power effectively. Cultural tourism provides vivid experiences for visitors, showcasing the distinctive cultural features of a community, region, or nation. Beyond generating revenue for localities and service providers, cultural tourism contributes to job creation, livelihood transformation, and social welfare, while reinvesting in cultural heritage preservation. Importantly, it helps build trust and affection among tourists, particularly international ones. Consequently, it is vital to enhance the quality of tourism workforce training to maximize the cultural content embedded in tourism products. Investments should also focus on diversifying tourism offerings and improving the quality of tourism services. Furthermore, tourism promotion should be enhanced, with communication strategies emphasizing Vietnam as a friendly, attractive, and safe destination. Developing cultural tourism strengthens the link between culture and economic development, as stated: "Link cultural development with tourism development, aiming to make tourism a key economic sector while preserving and safeguarding cultural resources for future generations" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 2021, pp. 145-146). Tourism, particularly cultural tourism, is an effective way to enhance cultural soft power, promote national cultural values, attract international visitors, and boost local and national income through tourism, leisure, and investment activities.

Conclusion

As we enter the 21st century, the world has undergone significant changes, with globalization, technological advancements, and cultural trends strongly impacting cultures and societies. However, Vietnam has consistently maintained its independence and self-reliance, demonstrating its resilience in stabilizing society and preserving and promoting traditional cultural values as an endogenous strength of the nation. In reality, the traditional cultural values of the Vietnamese people are vital resources that contribute to the socio-economic development of the country. The resolution of the fifth conference of the Central Committee (the VIII term) on building and developing an advanced Vietnamese culture imbued with national identity emphasizes: "It is essential to prioritize the preservation, inheritance, and promotion of traditional cultural values, revolutionary culture, including both tangible and intangible culture; at the same time, it is necessary to research and widely educate the noble ethnic morals inherited from our ancestors" (Communist Party of Vietnam, 1998). Enhancing the soft power of Vietnamese culture through intercultural education themes is an important solution. When Vietnamese culture is represented across all themes of intercultural education, the integration of the beautiful cultural values of Vietnam will undoubtedly contribute significantly to the realization of the aspiration to build the nation in the current era.

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