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Exploring Visualization's Role in Public-Private Partnerships for Taiwan's Tourism and Cultural Transformation

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the relational model of public-private partnership (PPP) structures and their role in fostering social and economic benefits. The collaborative framework formed by the public and private sectors is built on the premise of multiple stakeholders working together to create collective value while considering their respective interests. This research applies the concept of visualization to the context of local cultural heritage, using Jiadao Township in Pingtung County, Taiwan, as a case study. The findings reveal that visualization mechanisms play a pivotal role in value creation within public-private collaborations. The study contributes not only to academic discourse by offering theoretical insights into how heterogeneous stakeholders co-create collective value but also provides practical implications for public and private sectors in the tourism and cultural industry.

Keywords: Tourism and Cultural Industry, Public-Private Partnerships, Visualization, Stakeholders

1. Introduction

With the advent of globalization, the cultural industry has emerged as a key driver of economic growth for many countries. Characterized by high levels of innovation, interdisciplinarity, and diversity, the cultural industry requires not only the integration of diverse resources but also the crossing of boundaries between various sectors and organizations[1]. Public-private collaboration, in particular, is often seen as a vital mechanism for fostering innovation and creating value in the cultural sector. These collaborative efforts typically involve multiple stakeholders, including governments, businesses, non-profit organizations, and communities. Thus, promoting effective cross-sector collaboration and achieving value co-creation has become a critical topic in tourism and cultural industry research[2, 3, 4].

In recent years, the concept of visualization has gained increasing importance due to its ability to facilitate communication and shared understanding among stakeholders from diverse backgrounds. Visualization enhances transparency and efficiency in collaborative processes, making it an indispensable tool for both intra- and inter-organizational relations [5]. By leveraging visualization, stakeholders from different sectors can better comprehend each other's needs and objectives, enabling more effective allocation of resources and planning in collaborative endeavors. However, limited research exists on how visualization specifically contributes to value co-creation within the tourism and cultural industry, particularly under the framework of public-private partnerships (PPPs).

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Although prior studies have explored the application of visualization in creative industries, design thinking, and technological innovation, most have focused on internal innovation processes within a single sector or organization. There has been little in-depth analysis of how visualization facilitates collaborative processes between sectors, especially between public and private entities. Furthermore, existing research on public-private partnerships often emphasizes institutional frameworks, governance structures, and policy analyses, overlooking the micro-level dynamics of interaction during the actual collaboration process and how different sectors balance their respective goals and needs.

This study integrates the concept of visualization to investigate how visual mechanisms influence inter-organizational coordination in cross-sector collaboration. In the context of public-private partnerships, tangible visual representations can simplify complex information, facilitating communication and coordination, while intangible meanings derived from visualization foster consensus on future directions. Consequently, visual mechanisms serve as a bridge among diverse stakeholders, enabling them to negotiate and adapt their strategies more effectively, thereby advancing innovative collaboration within the tourism and cultural industry.

Literature Review **Cultural Assets and Value**

"Culture," as an intangible asset or form of knowledge, requires both organizational or corporate efforts to drive its commercialization and interactive experiences with users or consumers to create value. Only through these interactions can intangible assets or knowledge generate limitless value for both organizations and users [6]. However, the value of intangible assets, although potentially boundless, is inherently more challenging to evaluate and manage compared to tangible assets like land or facilities. Key questions include: How do cross-sector partnerships impact local cultural entrepreneurs? Should cultural heritage, such as performing arts, rituals, or oral traditions, be presented from an organizational or user perspective? Do consumers resonate with such rituals, and can these evoke meaningful responses? What are the broader impacts on society and the nation as a whole?

These questions underscore the practical challenges faced by the tourism and cultural industries, highlighting the pressing need for further research.

The tourism and cultural industry is increasingly recognized as a "smokeless" industry that adds economic value. For cultural entrepreneurs, the focus is often on fostering dialogue around aesthetics and enhancing everyday life, rather than on the functional utility of goods or services. Compared to traditional manufacturing, cultural industries offer value in terms of imagination, creativity, taste, and cultural refinement. The integration of cultural creativity with economic objectives is what distinguishes the tourism and cultural industry.

Cultural industry outputs, including products and services, often possess characteristics of public goods, creating varying degrees of common benefits [7]. Moreover, the value creation in cultural industries frequently results from collaboration among participants with diverse goals and interests [8, 9, 10]

This highlights the distinct nature of cultural industries compared to traditional manufacturing or service industries. The production process in cultural industries is inherently contextual, emerging from the interactions between producers and consumers. It also requires the collective efforts of multiple stakeholders to generate meaningful outputs [11, 12].

Visualization Mechanisms

In recent years, the concept of visualization has gained increasing prominence in organizational research and has been widely applied across various fields, such as strategy, entrepreneurship, and organizational management [13]. This body of research not only provides new perspectives for organizational studies but also enhances the visibility of organizational actions.

For example, Quattrone et al. (2021)[13] emphasized the role of visual elements in organizational research, arguing that visualization is more than just a tool for conveying messages. It also possesses materiality and performativity, guiding actions and organizational behavior. Similarly, Zanin, Lusiani, and Bagnoli (2020)[14] highlighted the multifaceted role of visualization tools in the strategy-making process. These tools facilitate communication and collaboration while providing a structured way of thinking. Their study further demonstrated that visualization not only simplifies complex information but also dynamically influences decision-making processes and internal organizational power dynamics.

Visualization tools play different functions at various stages, such as inspiring creativity, coordinating actions, and fostering consensus, thereby driving more effective strategic planning. Barberá-Tomás, Castelló, De Bakker, and Zietsma (2019)[15] explored how social entrepreneurs use visual symbols and emotional labor to drive social change. Their research showed that social entrepreneurs employ visual imagery to elicit emotional responses, mobilize support, disseminate social ideas, and strengthen collective action. These visual elements not only communicate information but also evoke resonance and emotional engagement among audiences, further advancing social innovation. Moreover, their study underscored the significant role of visual symbols in promoting social transformation and the close interplay between emotions and visualization. This highlights the potential of visualization mechanisms to act as catalysts for innovation, collaboration, and collective impact across diverse organizational contexts.

2. Materials and Methods

This study adopts a qualitative inquiry approach to facilitate this collaborative research between academia, industry, and government. Specifically, an interpretive case study method will be employed[16].

Since 2015, Taiwan's Ministry of Science and Technology has initiated the "University-Local Government Collaborative Governance Program," which encourages universities to collaborate with local governments to identify distinctive communities within their jurisdiction. These partnerships aim to promote cultural and creative development, community building, and other related activities to achieve the policy goals of universities as planners, local governments as executors, and the realization of local development.

This research focuses on the collaborative project between a university in southern Taiwan and the Pingtung County Government, selecting Jiadao Township in Pingtung County as a case study. Jiadao Township is rich in Hakka cultural narratives and community stories, making it an ideal setting for this research. The interpretive case study approach emphasizes using rich narratives and appropriate theoretical perspectives to uncover the underlying mechanisms behind phenomena, offering new insights and deeper understandings.

Through the analysis of relationships among various elements, interpretive case studies construct a foundation for logical reasoning. This method seeks to explain phenomena by examining the meanings revealed in events, ultimately developing compelling narratives that provide readers with profound inspiration and new perspectives. By leveraging this methodology, the study aims to uncover not only the observable outcomes but also the deeper, often unseen dynamics that drive collaborative efforts and cultural innovation within this specific context.

Case Background

Jiadao Township is located in the southwestern region of the Pingtung Plain. It borders Fangliao Township to the east, Linbian and Xinpi Townships to the northwest, and the coastline to the west. Jiadao is part of the "Zuodui" division of the Six Hakka Settlements and administratively belongs to Pingtung County. The township is divided into 12 villages, with its population evenly split between Minnan and Hakka communities.

Traditionally, Jiadao Township has been an agrarian community, characterized by its simplicity and strong agricultural roots. However, during Taiwan's transition from an agricultural society to an industrial one in the 1960s, many rural residents migrated to urban areas. Despite this population outflow, Jiadao's residents have historically valued education and their cultural heritage. Even those who left to pursue academic and career opportunities often maintained strong ties to their ancestral roots.

This deep connection to heritage has resulted in the preservation of many traditional lifestyles, ancestral homes, and clan temples, earning Jiadao the reputation of "The Heritage Township" in Pingtung County. These traditional buildings and communal spaces not only reflect Jiadao's cultural and social customs but also possess significant architectural value. The diverse styles of Hakka traditional architecture preserved within this single community are rare in Taiwan.

According to data provided by the Pingtung County Government, Jiadao Township—particularly its Hakka settlements—still boasts over 30 well-preserved or restored historical buildings (see Figure 1). These structures offer a rich foundation for cultural research and present an invaluable opportunity for cultural rooting studies. The township's unique blend of Hakka and Minnan cultures, combined with its rich agricultural heritage and architectural diversity, makes it an exceptional case for exploring the interplay between cultural preservation and community development.



Figure 1. Distribution map of Hakka cultural heritage in Jiadong village and Liugen village, Jiadong Township

Source: Jiadong Historical and Cultural Association, Pingtung County

Data Collection and Analysis

This study employed interviews and secondary data collection to deeply understand and analyze how the stakeholders in this case collaborated to co-create local value. The interviewee represented the university team responsible for the project and is also one of the authors of this study. They have actively interacted with relevant stakeholders, including government officials and local residents, at least three times per month for nearly six years. Sample questions included: How does the university project team establish collaborative relationships with stakeholders? What cultural regeneration activities are involved in the collaboration? How are these activities implemented? What challenges were encountered, and how were they resolved? What visualization methods were used for communication and coordination during the collaboration? What were the effects of these visualization-based communications?

Based on the interviews, this study summarized the collaborative processes among the stakeholders.

In terms of theoretical interpretation, one of the authors, as a representative of the university team responsible for the project, has directly interacted, communicated, and

coordinated activities with the stakeholders. This provides a high level of credibility in interpreting the stakeholders' perspectives.

Furthermore, as this study focuses on the theme of visualization, secondary data, including hundreds of photographs, conceptual diagrams, and composite images, were collected, organized, and interpreted. These materials were used to explore the role and importance of visual imagery in the context of public-private partnerships.

3. Results

The university team, after conducting multiple activities in Jiadong, has become a vital intermediary between the county government and local communities, reflecting the local conditions and challenges back to policymakers. Leveraging the university team's neutral position, they established an effective value co-creation platform model. This involved gathering opinions from community leaders through numerous meetings, incorporating active community groups into the platform, and systematically summarizing the current state and needs of local development. Subsequently, the team collaborated with the Hakka Affairs Office to discuss solutions and set strategic directions.

The participants in the value co-creation platform are illustrated in the accompanying diagram. On this platform, every unit has a leading role, enabling them to voice their needs. The university team then coordinates and drafts initial solutions, inviting the county government to align relevant governance priorities with the platform's proposals. This collaborative process helps formulate plans that meet the collective needs of most community groups.

For example, when a shared consensus emerged around promoting Jiadong's industries in a way that benefits all residents, the university team proposed leveraging certified local guides trained by the county government. These guides would lead visitors along the Jiadong Poets' Trail, where they could also purchase unique local products.

The Poets' Trail in Jiadong, renowned for its "three steps, one view" collection of historic Huofang buildings, encapsulates the daily life of Jiadong's Hakka villagers. Integrating tourism with commerce, local residents could sell specialty products directly from these historic buildings. This arrangement allows villagers to contribute their expertise—whether guiding or selling products—creating a cultural and commercial corridor. With guides providing insightful narratives, residents selling confidently, and visitors shopping with peace of mind, this initiative enhances tourism's value and creates shared economic benefits.

The Hakka Affairs Office endorsed this development strategy, emphasizing the transition from simple tourism to a model that includes consumer activities. By establishing infrastructure and governance systems, Jiadong could achieve sustainable operations. Proposed steps include developing permanent market facilities, assisting in forming an Old Street Self-Governance Committee, and fostering regular market operations to ensure long-term self-sufficiency.

Coincidentally, this initiative aligned with the Hakka Affairs Council's preparations for the "Liudui 300-Year Anniversary" events, where Jiadong, as part of the Left Liudui region, became a key venue. The Dadi Project team formulated an activity plan centered around these development goals. With funding from the Hakka Affairs Office and support from the Hakka Affairs Council, they organized the "Historic Corridor—Jiadong Old Street Huofang Market" to establish a commercial framework for Jiadong's historic old street. This event aimed to integrate cultural preservation with economic development, laying the foundation for a sustainable local economy (figure 2).



Figure 2. The visualization of old street markets

4. Discussion

Visualization design demonstrates its ability to coordinate resources and promote both cultural and economic development in value-creation activities. By translating intangible cultural elements into visual representations, it enables the integration of diverse resources and encourages broad participation. For example: Historical and cultural associations can provide guided tours; local residents can offer Huofang spaces for events; local vendors can sell unique regional products. Through these collaborative efforts, visualization serves as a pivotal mechanism to achieve the dual goals of cultural enrichment and economic benefit, effectively bridging various stakeholders in the collaborative process.

5. Conclusion

This study explores the role of visualization mechanisms in value creation for the cultural industry during the process of public-private collaboration. Using the partnership between a university and local government in the cultural development of Jiadong Hakka villages as a case study, the research demonstrates how visualization facilitates the concretization of abstract and intangible cultural assets and creative ideas within a multi-stakeholder framework.

This concretization fosters deeper cross-disciplinary collaboration and enhances the effectiveness of public-private partnerships. The findings provide a strong argument for academia, highlighting the critical role of visualization in inter-organizational coordination. Specifically, in highly heterogeneous collaboration models like public-private partnerships, visualization serves as a powerful tool to drive innovation and development in the tourism and cultural industry.

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