



Policy Brief on Advancing Smart Tourism in Synergy with Creative Industries in the Mekong Countries

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This policy brief is a product of the project 'Sustainable and Smart Tourism Development in the Mekong Region' which implemented from 2020 to 2023. It focuses on the digitalization impact that has brought to tourism and cultural and creative industries (CCIs), and promoting the linkages between tourism and CCIs as a way to foster the role of the creative economy toward green transition and sustainable economic recovery in line with the ASEAN policy frameworks and strategies as well as promoting cultural tourism.



Digital Economy & Creative Economy in ASEAN

The global COVID-19 impact led to an economic downturn, prompting governments to accelerate digitalization for recovery. In ASEAN, 40 million new users joined online platforms in 2020, outpacing the four-year average. E-commerce is booming, projected to reach over US\$80 billion in ASEAN by 2024, benefiting small creative enterprises.

Digitalization is a key solution for economic recovery in various sectors, including tourism. Smart technologies, supportive policies, and public-private partnerships are crucial for resilience and sustainability. The following collaborative frameworks at ASEAN and GMS levels set milestones for countries to promote digital and creative economies:

- **Siem Reap Declaration on Promoting a Creative and Adaptive ASEAN Community to Support the Cultural and Creative Economy, 2022**
- **ASEAN Ministerial Statement on Cultural Property Protection, 2022**
- **ASEAN Digital Master Plan 2025**
- **Consolidated Strategy on the Fourth Industrial Revolution for ASEAN**
- **ASEAN Declaration on Digital Tourism, 2020**
- **ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework**
- **The GMS Tourism Sector Strategy 2016–2025**
- **The GMS Economic Cooperation Program Strategic Framework 2030 (GMS–2030)**
- **The GMS Digital Economy Cooperation Initiative**



Smart Tourism–Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) Linkages

Integrating tourism and cultural and creative industry (CCI) policies supports a robust recovery. CCIs and tourism share a symbiotic relationship, with CCIs serving as tourism magnets and relying on tourism revenue. In the digital age, this connection extends beyond traditional links. CCIs play a vital role in supporting smart tourism, internationally promoting places with creative content, and contributing to sustainable tourism destination diversification and management.



Recommendations for CLMTV Countries to Support of CCI Development

- Establish the ecosystem model for CCIs which is a framework for mapping the creative industries ecosystem in a particular country or region.
- Identifying key stakeholders, mapping the value chain, and analyzing the regulatory framework, and classifying cultural and creative products (taxonomy) to fit the specific needs of the CCI
- Mainstream the coordination and partnership between Government and CCI organizations
- Protect intellectual rights in e–business environment
- Improve digital and physical infrastructure
- Promote policies on eco–innovation for producing green products to catalyze Sustainable development
- Link traditional culture sectors with new creative arts
- Promote education and training in CCIs–related fields, including in complementary areas like entrepreneurship, management, marketing, etc.
- Enhance branding, market access, and export development
- Enhance regional dialogue and cooperation in promoting CCIs
- Identify and promote green investments in CCIs
- Enhance the connection between CCIs and the other sector, especially tourism to promote cultural tourism