

Identifying Minority Ethnic Cultures Through Documentary Films: An Experimental Study on Vietnamese Students in Ho Chi Minh City

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Abstract

The preservation of ethnic minority cultures in Vietnam faces significant challenges due to globalization, modernization, and declining intergenerational cultural transmission. As traditional education struggles to sustain engagement, documentary films have emerged as a potential tool for cultural education. This study investigates the effectiveness of documentary films in enhancing Vietnamese students' awareness of H'mong and Hà Nhi cultures. Employing a mixed-method approach—including experiments, surveys, and focus group discussions—the research evaluates changes in students' knowledge and perceptions before and after exposure to documentary content. Results indicate that while documentaries enhance students' understanding of both tangible and intangible cultural aspects, they are insufficient to promote active cultural preservation efforts. The study underscores the importance of integrating documentary films into higher education curricula alongside experiential learning and digital applications to foster deeper cultural engagement among young people.

Keywords: Cultural Education, Heritage Preservation, Media Influence, Student Perception, Visual Anthropology

INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization, technological advancements and cultural integration challenge the preservation of minority ethnic identities. According to Hoàng Đức Hậu, many traditional cultural heritages face risks of fading or distortion (Phuong Lan, 2016). Similarly, Trần Hữu Sơn highlights the loss of native languages, as seen in the case of the Bó Y people (Phuong Lan, 2016). Documentary films serve as a potential tool for preserving cultural heritage by visually conveying ethnic traditions. Films like *Children of the Mist* and *Elder Sister* provide deeper insights into ethnic customs, yet their effectiveness in shaping audience awareness, particularly among students, remains underexplored. While international scholars like Nichols (1991) and Grierson (1932) have emphasized the documentary's role in shaping perspectives, research on their cultural impact in Vietnam is still limited (Nguyễn Thanh, 2024; Kilborn & Izod, 1997).

This study examines how university students in Ho Chi Minh City perceive documentary films on minority cultures and explores the factors influencing their engagement. Given the city's dynamic cultural landscape, understanding students' reception of documentaries offers insights into broader cultural awareness trends. The research adopts Schramm's Encoding-Decoding Theory (1954) to analyze students' interpretations of documentary messages (Steinberg, 2007). Additionally, it applies the cultural classification framework of Đặng Nghiê m Vạn, Ngô Văn Lê, and Nguyễn Văn Tiệp (2000), distinguishing

between material culture (e.g., traditional crafts, clothing, architecture) and spiritual culture (e.g., customs, beliefs).

Ethnographic studies indicate that the H'mong and Hà Nhì communities, despite their cultural resilience, face challenges from modernization and migration (Nguyễn Đăng Văn, 2021). Government policies aim to promote ethnic equality, yet socio-economic disparities persist (Vietnam Encyclopedia, 1995).

This study contributes to understanding how documentaries can serve as an educational tool to enhance cultural awareness among students, supporting efforts to preserve Vietnam's ethnic diversity.

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This study is designed using a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative research and qualitative research to provide a comprehensive analysis.

The qualitative data collection methods used include:

Literature review method

This study employs a Systematic Review to analyze research on the reception of ethnic minority cultures through documentaries, ensuring scientific rigor and objectivity. Sources are selected based on relevance to ethnic cultures, documentary impact, and media-based cultural reception, prioritizing scholarly works. Screening involves title and abstract reviews, followed by full-text assessment. Selected studies are synthesized into key themes, including Vietnamese ethnic cultures, H'mong and Hà Nhì cultures, ethnographic documentaries, audience reception, and relevant methodologies.

Group interview method

After the survey and experiment, students participate in a 30–45-minute focus group to discuss their viewing experiences and cultural reception. Guided by a neutral moderator, open-ended questions explore their perceptions, emotional responses, and key cultural elements.

Discussions are analyzed using Thematic Analysis, comparing findings between groups and cross-referencing survey data for a comprehensive assessment.

Empirical research method

This study employs an experimental approach to assess the impact of documentary films on students' perceptions of minority ethnic cultures. A convenience sample of 60 university students, balanced by discipline and gender, was divided into two groups: one watched *Children of the Mist* (2021), and the other *Sister* (2016). Discussions were prohibited to maintain independent perceptions.

The experiment consisted of three phases. In the pre-experiment phase, students were unaware of the film content or research objectives to prevent bias, and participation was voluntary with informed consent obtained. During the experiment, films were screened in a controlled environment with optimal audiovisual conditions, and a supervisor ensured adherence to the rules. In the post-experiment phase, students completed a Likert-scale questionnaire to assess their perceptions, emotions, and attitudes. Additionally, three to five students from each group participated in focus group interviews, which were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Survey data were analyzed using SPSS, employing an independent T-test and ANOVA to compare impact levels. To ensure objectivity, the study standardized viewing conditions, restricted discussions, and collected responses immediately after screenings. This rigorous design enhances reliability in evaluating documentary films' effectiveness in shaping cultural awareness.

Methods, Techniques, and Data Processing Tools

The questionnaire is designed based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with statements evaluated according to the level of agreement to indicate recognition of the issues presented in the questionnaire: strongly disagree (1 point), disagree (2 points), neutral (3 points), agree (4 points), and strongly agree (5 points). The level value is calculated as: Level value = (Maximum value - Minimum value)/Number of levels. Thus, for each statement evaluation, the level value is:

$$(5-1)/5=0.8(5 - 1) / 5 = 0.8 (20-4)/5=3.2(20 - 4) / 5 = 3.2$$

The value range is then divided as follows:

- + [1.00; 1.80]: strongly disagree;
- + [1.81; 2.60]: disagree;
- + [2.61; 3.40]: neutral;
- + [3.41; 4.20]: agree;
- + [4.21; 5.00]: strongly agree.

Here, it can be understood that the higher the average score, the greater the students' awareness of the issues related to ethnicity surveyed by the research group, and vice versa.

Method of data processing using mathematical statistics

The literature review and interview data support the interpretation of quantitative findings. Survey data is processed using SPSS, applying both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses.

Descriptive analysis includes response frequency percentages, mean scores for each surveyed content, and standard deviation (SD) to measure response dispersion. Inferential analysis employs an independent sample t-test to compare student groups before and after the experiment, assessing changes in cultural awareness and the differing impacts of the documentaries.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' Awareness Level of Information on H'mong Cultural Elements

Table 1 presents the experimental results on students' awareness levels regarding eight distinctive cultural elements of the H'mong people, measured at two time points: before and after exposure to the documentary *Children of the Mist*.

Table 1. *Experimental Results on Students' Awareness Levels Regarding Information on the Material and Spiritual Cultural Elements of the H'mong People.*

No.	Content	Pre-experiment		Post-experiment		Significance value (p value)
		Mean score	SD	Mean score	SD	
1	Clothing	2.00	0.51	3.91	0.59	p<0.05
2	Wife-kidnapping custom	2.20	0.68	3.62	0.60	
3	Child marriage issue	4.21	0.62	4.24	0.46	p>0.05
4	Daily life and labor	2.55	0.78	4.25	0.42	p<0.05
5	Housing	2.08	0.78	4.25	0.42	
6	Livestock pen	3.13	0.68	4.23	0.43	
7	Hanging meat over the kitchen fire, a custom	1.72	0.57	4.06	0.56	
8	Festivals	1.83	0.57	4.43	0.47	

Source: Experimental data from the research team

The results indicate an overall increase in mean scores for all cultural elements after the experiment. In the pre-experiment phase, most topics had mean scores between 1.8 and 2.8, reflecting a low to moderate level of awareness. This suggests that while students had some familiarity with H'mong culture, their understanding was limited. However, after watching *Children of the Mist* or engaging in interactive activities, mean scores for most topics rose above 3.0, with some reaching 3.5 or 3.8. With a significance level of $p < 0.05$, these differences are statistically significant, indicating improved recognition and deeper insights into customs, traditional products, and unique rituals. Notably, the topic of the "Bride Kidnapping Custom" saw a substantial increase from 2.7 to 3.8, suggesting both heightened student interest and the documentary's strong impact. In contrast, "Child Marriage" showed minimal change, likely because students were already familiar with the issue before the experiment.

Student 307 stated: "At first, I had only heard of the H'mong people, but after watching the film, I gained a deeper understanding of their spiritual life and the intersection between modernity and tradition in their daily lives." (Excerpt from in-depth interview transcript No. 307).

However, during the focus group interviews, some students stated that watching the documentary *Children of the Mist* mainly helped them "know" more but was not sufficient for them to "do" or "truly experience" the culture.

Student 106 stated: "*Watching the film helped me expand my knowledge, but it feels like reading a book—it only stops at the level of understanding. Without field trips or real-life interactions, what I learn remains just theoretical.*" (Excerpt from in-depth interview No. 106)

Student 302 stated: "*I find documentary films very useful, but sometimes they are not stimulating enough to make me want to explore further. After watching a film about the H'mong people, I only stop at gaining more knowledge about their culture, without feeling motivated to directly experience or research more.*" (Excerpt from in-depth interview No. 302)

Nevertheless, the statistical results with $p < 0.05$ indicate that the difference before and after the experiment is significant and not due to random factors.

In summary, Table 1 confirms the importance of providing vivid and visual information to enhance students' awareness of H'mong culture. This serves as a foundation for further educational activities, practical exchanges, and encouraging students to explore H'mong culture more comprehensively.

The effectiveness of visual and dynamic educational methods in enhancing students' awareness of traditional culture, particularly H'mong culture, has been well-documented. Nguyen Thu Quynh et al. (2022), in their study "Educating the Values of Traditional Culture of Ethnic Minorities for Students of the Faculty of Literature (Thai Nguyen University of Education – Thai Nguyen University) through Integrated Cultural Experience-Based Learning Projects" published in the TNU Journal of Science and Technology, implemented an integrated cultural experience-based learning project to educate students about ethnic minority cultural values. The findings indicated that this approach not only facilitated knowledge acquisition but also developed students' skills and fostered a positive attitude toward cultural preservation. These studies highlight the importance of combining theory with practice in visual education methods to enhance students' cultural awareness. Specifically, practical experience activities, such as participating in festivals and learning through projects, not only deepen students' understanding of H'mong culture but also inspire greater interest and responsibility in preserving and promoting these cultural values.

To achieve greater effectiveness, educational institutions should actively implement integrated education programs that allow students to engage in practical activities.

Additionally, collaboration with local communities and folk artisans is a key factor in providing students with direct access to and learning from a living cultural heritage.

Experimental Results on Students’ Awareness of the Material and Spiritual Cultural Aspects of the Ha Nhi People

Table 2 presents the experimental results on the awareness levels of 30 students regarding four key cultural elements of the Ha Nhi ethnic group: (1) Weaving and bamboo crafting, (2) Housing, (3) Traditional clothing, and (4) The New Clothes Wearing Ceremony. Each element was measured at two points: “Pre-experiment” and “Post-experiment.”

Table 2. *Experimental Results on Students’ Awareness of the Cultural Aspects of the Ha Nhi People*

No.	Content	Pre-experiment		Post-experiment		Significance value (p value)
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	Weaving and bamboo crafting	2.22	0.69	4.07	0.44	p < 0.05
2	Housing	2.49	0.81	3.79	0.68	
3	Traditional clothing	1.97	0.48	3.94	0.45	
4	New-Clothes-Wearing Ceremony	1.93	0.73	4.19	0.51	

Source: *Experimental data from the research team*

Before the experiment, the results showed that all four factors had mean scores (M) ranging from low to moderate levels. Specifically, before the experiment, “Weaving and bamboo crafting” had a mean score of 2.22 (SD = 0.69), “Housing” was 2.49 (SD = 0.81), “Traditional clothing” was 1.97 (SD = 0.48), and “The New Clothes Wearing Ceremony” was at 1.93 (SD = 0.73). These figures indicate that students’ awareness of Ha Nhi culture was only at a “low to moderate” level, especially regarding “Traditional clothing” and “The New Clothes Wearing Ceremony,” as their mean scores did not exceed 2.0. On the other hand, although “Housing” reached 2.49—the highest among the four factors before the experiment—it still reflected a lack of clear information regarding the architecture, construction methods, or significance of rammed-earth houses and earthen houses.

After the experiment, there was a statistically significant difference with a p-value < 0.05. The mean scores for all four factors increased significantly, surpassing the 3.0 threshold, which indicates a shift to a “high awareness” level. “Weaving and bamboo crafting” increased from 2.22 to 4.07 (SD = 0.44), demonstrating that students gained a better understanding of the tools and cultural significance of this craft. The “Housing” factor also rose from 2.49 to 3.79 (SD = 0.68), reflecting how watching the documentary *Elder Sister* helped students understand more about the structure, living space, and the crucial role of traditional houses in Ha Nhi life. “Traditional clothing” jumped from 1.97 to 3.94 (SD = 0.45), indicating a significant shift in students’ awareness of the patterns, colors, materials, and distinctive tailoring methods of this ethnic group. Most notably, “The New Clothes Wearing Ceremony” increased from 1.93 to 4.19 (SD = 0.51)—the largest increase, making it the highest-rated factor among the four. This reflects the ceremony’s appeal or uniqueness when presented in a comprehensive and visually engaging manner.

The fact that all factors reached a high mean score after the experiment demonstrates the importance of an educational approach incorporating documentaries and vivid materials. Instead of merely “hearing” or “reading” information, students were able to “see” specific

images, sounds, and cultural practices, allowing them to retain knowledge and gain a deeper understanding of the core values of ethnic heritage. These results suggest that educational and cultural exchange programs should integrate visual media to spark interest, helping younger generations not only learn about but also appreciate, understand, and actively preserve national heritage.

Luong Thị Phương Diệp and Đoàn Thị Hồng Ngọc (2024) highlight that using 3D technology, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and social media enhances public engagement with cultural heritage, aiding both its preservation and promotion. This approach attracts young audiences and broadens community interest. Similarly, Kim Minh Châu (2024) emphasizes the role of modern films and music in promoting ethnic culture, where artists integrate folk elements to preserve traditions while fostering creativity. Integrating visual and creative media into education and cultural promotion enhances young people's appreciation of heritage and supports the preservation of traditional values in a contemporary context.

The Influence of Documentaries on Students' Perspectives on the H'mong People

Table 3 presents the extent to which the documentary *Children of the Mist* influenced students' perspectives on the H'mong ethnic group, based on various criteria. The dataset includes 10 evaluation criteria, with higher average scores indicating a stronger positive influence of the documentary.

Overall, most of the criteria in the table have relatively high mean scores, indicating that *Children of the Mist* had a significant impact on students' awareness and attitudes toward H'mong culture. The criteria with the highest average scores are "The documentary helped me better understand the culture of the H'mong people" ($M = 4.33$) and "The documentary improved my knowledge of the H'mong ethnic group" ($M = 4.33$). This demonstrates that *Children of the Mist* plays a crucial role in providing information and deepening students' understanding of the culture and traditions of the H'mong people.

The criterion "The documentary contributed to raising my awareness of the preservation of H'mong culture" had a mean score of 4.17, indicating that *Children of the Mist* not only provided information but also enhanced students' awareness of cultural preservation. However, the criterion "The documentary sparked my interest in H'mong culture" had a lower mean score ($M = 3.57$) and a high standardized deviation ($SD = 1.14$), suggesting that students' interest levels after watching the documentary were not entirely consistent.

The criterion "The documentary created an emotional connection between me and H'mong culture" had a mean score of 4.10, showing that the documentary had a positive emotional impact on students. Meanwhile, the criterion "I have a greater appreciation for H'mong culture after watching the documentary" had a lower mean score ($M = 3.23$) and a relatively high standardized deviation ($SD = 1.17$), indicating that not all students experienced a significant change in attitude after viewing the film.

The criterion "The documentary changed my perception of H'mong culture" had a mean score of 4.20, demonstrating its influence on students' personal perspectives. Additionally, the criterion "The documentary encouraged me to discuss H'mong ethnic issues with others" ($M = 4.23$) and "The documentary encouraged me to visit the filming location for a firsthand experience" ($M = 3.60$) reflect the extent of the documentary's impact on students' behavior and their desire for real-world exploration. Lastly, the criterion "The documentary helped me change my perspective on the interaction between traditional and modern culture" had a mean score of 3.50, indicating the documentary's influence in helping

students better understand the adaptation and transformation of H'mong culture in contemporary society.

Table 3. *The Influence of the Documentary on Students' Perspectives on the H'mong Ethnic Group*

No.	Content for Opinion Collection	Mean	SD
1	The documentary helped me understand H'mong culture better.	4.33	0.55
2	The documentary sparked my interest in H'mong culture.	3.57	1.14
3	The documentary created an emotional connection between me and H'mong culture.	4.10	0.71
4	The documentary contributed to raising my awareness of the need to preserve H'mong culture.	4.17	0.75
5	The documentary improved my understanding of the H'mong people.	4.33	0.71
6	The documentary changed the way I think about H'mong culture.	4.20	0.55
7	I appreciate H'mong culture more after watching the documentary.	3.23	1.17
8	The documentary encouraged me to talk to others about H'mong issues.	4.23	0.90
9	The documentary inspired me to visit the filming location to experience it firsthand.	3.60	1.00
10	The documentary helped me see the intersection between traditional and modern culture in H'mong life.	3.50	1,04
Overall		1.80	3.93

Source: *Experimental data from the research team*

The analysis results indicate that the documentary had a positive impact on students' awareness, emotions, and attitudes toward the H'mong ethnic group, particularly in providing information and raising awareness of cultural preservation. However, some criteria, such as the level of interest stimulation (3.57) and the desire to visit in person (3.60), had lower average scores. This suggests that additional supporting methods are needed to further enhance students' engagement and real-life interaction with H'mong culture. Overall, documentaries serve as a valuable tool in cultural education and can be utilized to strengthen students' understanding and appreciation of ethnic minority groups like the H'mong. Similarly, according to C  m Anh, producing films about ethnic minority communities requires deep cultural understanding and respect for indigenous traditions. It is essential to avoid misrepresenting or reinforcing stereotypes about these ethnic groups, as this could lead to misconceptions and negatively impact cultural preservation (C  m Anh, 2024).

Table 4 presents students' opinions on the documentary's influence on the H'mong community through three aspects: its impact on the H'mong people's social standing, the necessity of addressing the issues raised in the film, and the role of documentaries in cultural preservation.

Table 4. *Students' Opinions on the Influence of the Documentary on the H'mong Community*

No.	Content for Opinion Collection	Mean	SD
1	I believe that the documentary has a positive impact on the status of the H'mong people.	3.27	1.05
2	I think that the issues mentioned in the documentary need to be addressed.	4.37	0.76

3	I believe that the documentary has contributed to the preservation of H'mong culture.	4.40	0.72
Overall		4.01	0.84

Source: *Experimental data from the research team*

The results show that students highly appreciate the positive impact of the documentary, with an overall mean score of 4.01 and a standardized deviation of 0.84, reflecting relatively high consensus among opinions. Among the criteria, "I think that the documentary has contributed to the preservation of H'mong culture" received the highest mean score (Mean = 4.40), indicating that students highly value the documentary's role in preserving H'mong culture. The criterion "I believe that the issues mentioned in the documentary need to be addressed" also received strong agreement, with a mean score of 4.37, showing that students clearly recognize the importance of addressing the social issues presented in the film. However, the criterion "I believe that the documentary has a positive impact on the status of the H'mong people" had a lower mean score (Mean = 3.27) and the highest standardized deviation (SD = 1.05), indicating differences in students' perceptions regarding the film's impact on the social status of the H'mong community. Overall, these findings indicate that documentaries have a significant influence on raising awareness of H'mong culture and social issues. However, to enhance their effectiveness, future documentaries may need to better clarify their role in improving the social status of this ethnic group. National Assembly delegate Phạm Trọng Nghĩa emphasized that ethnic minority and mountainous communities should be both participants and beneficiaries of filmmaking to ensure authentic cultural representation and elevate their social status (HỒ Hương & Phạm Thắng, 2022). To maximize the impact of documentaries in raising awareness and improving the status of the H'mong people, it is essential to ensure accurate representation, cultural respect, and the avoidance of stereotypes. Additionally, increasing film production with active community involvement will contribute to preserving cultural values and enhancing their social standing.

The Influence of Documentaries on Students' Perceptions of the Hà Nhì People

Table 5 presents the extent to which the documentary *Elder Sister* has influenced students' perceptions of the Hà Nhì people across ten evaluation criteria. The results indicate that *Elder Sister* had a positive impact on students' awareness and attitudes toward Hà Nhì culture, with an overall mean score of 4.02 and a standardized deviation of 0.51, reflecting a high level of agreement among students.

The criteria with the highest mean scores include: "The documentary sparked my interest in Hà Nhì culture" (M = 4.60, SD = 0.50), "The documentary helped me see the intersection between traditional and modern culture in Hà Nhì life" (M = 4.40, SD = 0.81), and "The documentary encouraged me to visit the filming location to experience it firsthand" (M = 4.30, SD = 0.65). These results suggest that the documentary *Elder Sister* not only enhances students' understanding but also stimulates curiosity and a desire for real-life exploration of Hà Nhì culture.

However, some criteria received lower mean scores, such as "The documentary changed the way I think about Hà Nhì culture" (M = 3.37, SD = 0.96) and "The documentary created an emotional connection between me and Hà Nhì culture" (M = 3.47, SD = 1.04). These figures indicate that while *Elder Sister* effectively increases interest and encourages real-world engagement, its ability to deeply transform perceptions and establish a strong emotional connection with Hà Nhì culture remains limited.

Table 5. *The Influence of the Documentary on Students' Perceptions of the Hà Nhì People*

No.	Content for Opinion Collection	Mean	SD
1	The documentary helped me understand Hà Nhì culture better.	4.23	0.97
2	The documentary sparked my interest in Hà Nhì culture.	4.60	0.50
3	The documentary created an emotional connection between me and Hà Nhì culture.	3.47	1.04
4	The documentary contributed to raising my awareness of the need to preserve Hà Nhì culture.	4.20	0.81
5	The documentary improved my understanding of the Hà Nhì people.	3.83	0.83
6	The documentary changed the way I think about Hà Nhì culture.	3.37	0.96
7	I appreciate Hà Nhì culture more after watching the documentary.	3.63	1.19
8	The documentary encouraged me to talk to others about Hà Nhì issues.	4.20	0.81
9	The documentary inspired me to visit the filming location to experience it firsthand.	4,30	0.65
10	The documentary helped me see the intersection between traditional and modern culture in Hà Nhì life.	4.40	0.81
Overall		4.02	0.51

Source: *Experimental data from the research team*

Among the evaluation criteria, “The documentary sparked my interest in Hà Nhì culture” received the highest mean score ($M = 4.60$), indicating that *Elder Sister* is highly effective in capturing students’ attention toward Hà Nhì culture. Similarly, the criterion “The documentary helped me see the intersection between traditional and modern culture in Hà Nhì life” also received a high score ($M = 4.40$), demonstrating that *Elder Sister* enables viewers to understand the evolution and transformation of Hà Nhì culture in a modern context.

Additionally, the criterion “The documentary helped me understand Hà Nhì culture better” scored 4.23, while “The documentary contributed to raising my awareness of the need to preserve Hà Nhì culture” scored 4.20. These results suggest that *Elder Sister* not only provides information but also raises awareness about cultural heritage preservation. The criterion “The documentary encouraged me to talk to others about Hà Nhì issues” also received a score of 4.20, reflecting that *Elder Sister* positively influences discussions and information exchange about this ethnic group.

However, some criteria received lower mean scores, such as “The documentary created an emotional connection between me and Hà Nhì culture” ($M = 3.47$) and “The documentary changed the way I think about Hà Nhì culture” ($M = 3.37$). This suggests that while *Elder Sister* is effective in delivering information and raising awareness, it does not significantly impact students’ emotions or deeply transform their perceptions of Hà Nhì culture. Furthermore, the criterion “I appreciate Hà Nhì culture more after watching the documentary” received a mean score of 3.63 with the highest standardized deviation ($SD = 1.19$), indicating that students had diverse opinions regarding their level of appreciation for Hà Nhì culture after watching *Elder Sister*.

Overall, the documentary *Elder Sister* has a positive influence on students’ perspectives on Hà Nhì culture, particularly in sparking interest and encouraging discussions. However, its impact on emotions and cognitive shifts remains relatively weak, suggesting the need for new approaches—such as incorporating more visually engaging elements, deeper personal

narratives, or immersive experiences—to foster a stronger connection between viewers and Hà Nhì culture. To maximize its impact, future documentaries could focus more on emotional depth and real-life stories, allowing students not only to understand but also to deeply experience and connect with the culture and daily life of the Hà Nhì people.

Hồng Minh (2021) notes that while few films focus on ethnic minorities and mountainous regions, those produced leave a lasting impression. However, this scarcity may limit their effectiveness in raising awareness and improving ethnic groups' social status. To enhance documentaries' impact on groups like the Hà Nhì, it is crucial to ensure accurate representation, cultural respect, and the avoidance of bias. Increasing film production with active community participation will further support cultural preservation and promote social inclusion.

Table 6 summarizes students' perceptions of the documentary's impact on the Hà Nhì community based on three evaluation criteria. Overall, agreement levels were relatively high, with a mean score of 3.71 and a standardized deviation (SD) of 0.41. The criterion "I believe the documentary has contributed to the preservation of Hà Nhì culture" received the highest agreement (Mean = 4.43), reflecting a strong perception of its cultural preservation role. Likewise, "I believe that the documentary has a positive impact on the status of the Hà Nhì people" was rated highly (Mean = 4.17). In contrast, "I think the issues mentioned in the documentary need to be addressed" had the lowest mean score (2.53), suggesting that students viewed the film as focusing more on cultural preservation than on addressing social issues. Additionally, students rated the documentary's impact on the Hà Nhì community lower (Mean = 3.71) compared to its impact on the H'mong community (Mean = 4.01), indicating a relatively weaker perceived influence.

Table 6. *Students' Opinions on the Impact of the Documentary Film on the Hà Nhì Community*

No.	Content for Opinion Collection	Mean	SD
1	I believe that the documentary has a positive impact on the status of the Hà Nhì people.	4.17	0.70
2	I think the issues mentioned in the documentary need to be addressed.	2.53	0.90
3	I believe the documentary has contributed to the preservation of Hà Nhì culture.	4.43	0.50
Overall		3.71	0.41

Source: *Experimental data from the research team.*

From the analysis of Table 6, it can be concluded that students perceive documentary films as having a positive impact on the Hà Nhì community, particularly in enhancing their status and preserving their cultural heritage. However, documentary films are not highly rated in addressing and promoting solutions to the social issues faced by this community. This suggests that in the future, documentaries may need to focus more on reflecting and addressing the real-life challenges of the Hà Nhì people, in addition to their role in cultural preservation.

The Difference in the Impact of Documentary Films on Students' Perspectives on the H'mong and Hà Nhì Ethnic Groups

Table 7 compares the impact of documentaries on students' perspectives regarding the H'mong and Hà Nhì ethnic groups. The results indicate that the average score (Mean) for students' assessment of the impact of documentaries about the Hà Nhì people (Mean = 4.02) is higher than that for the H'mong people (Mean = 3.93). However, this difference is not significant.

Table 7. *Differences in the Impact of Documentaries on Students' Perspectives on the H'mong and Hà Nhì Ethnic Groups*

No.	Content	Mean	SD	Significance value (p-value)
1	The impact of the documentary on students' perspectives on the H'mong people.	3.93	0.52	p > 0.05
2	The impact of the documentary on students' perspectives on the Hà Nhì people.	4.02	0.51	

Source: *Experimental data from the research team.*

A p-value greater than 0.05 indicates that the difference between the two groups is not statistically significant, meaning that the documentaries have a comparable level of impact on students' perspectives regarding both ethnic groups.

Differences in Students' Opinions on the Impact of Documentaries on the H'mong and Hà Nhì Communities

Table 8 examines the differences in students' opinions regarding the impact of documentaries on the H'mong and Hà Nhì communities.

Table 8. *Differences in Students' Opinions on the Impact of Documentaries on the H'mong and Hà Nhì Communities*

No.	Content	Mean	SD	Significance value (p-value)
1	Students' opinions on the impact of the documentary on the H'mong community.	4.01	0.60	p > 0.05
2	Students' opinions on the impact of the documentary on the Hà Nhì community.	3.71	0.41	

Source: *Experimental data from the research team.*

The results indicate that students rated the documentary as having a greater impact on the H'mong community (Mean = 4.01) compared to the Hà Nhì community (Mean = 3.71). However, a p-value greater than 0.05 suggests that this difference is not statistically significant.

From the two tables above, it can be concluded that the documentaries have a comparable level of influence on students' perspectives regarding both the H'mong and Hà Nhì ethnic groups, as well as their impact on these communities. Although there is a slight difference in mean scores, the p-value > 0.05 in both tables indicates that these differences are not statistically significant. This suggests that documentaries play an important role in raising awareness of both ethnic groups, but there is no substantial disparity in how students perceive their impact.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the role of documentary films in enhancing university students' awareness of H'Mông and Hà Nhì cultures in Ho Chi Minh City. The experimental findings reveal a significant improvement in students' understanding of both tangible and intangible cultural elements, particularly the intersection between tradition and modernity. Documentary films effectively provide cultural knowledge, yet they primarily enable students to "know" and "understand" rather than fostering active participation in cultural preservation efforts.

The findings highlight the importance of incorporating documentary films into ethnic cultural education, supported by experiential learning, community engagement, and digital

technologies to enhance interactivity. By integrating these approaches, universities can create more immersive and impactful learning experiences that go beyond passive consumption.

While the study provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of documentary films, its limitations include the short duration of the experiment and the focus on a specific student population in Ho Chi Minh City, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should consider longitudinal studies to assess the long-term effects of documentary films on cultural engagement. Additionally, exploring the impact of interactive media—such as virtual reality (VR) documentaries, participatory filmmaking, or digital storytelling—could offer deeper insights into how modern technologies can further enhance cultural understanding and preservation. Comparative studies across different ethnic groups and educational contexts would also provide a broader perspective on the role of media in sustaining and promoting minority cultures.

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