

SCHOOL OF HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM, HUE UNIVERSITY

MULTI-AUTHORED

**CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
VIETNAMESE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT:
INNOVATION, DIGITAL AND GREEN
TRANSFORMATION**

HUE UNIVERSITY PUBLISHING HOUSE
Hue, 2026

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ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AUGMENTED REALITY (AR) IN CULTURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION

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ABSTRACT

Augmented Reality (AR) is an emerging technology that enhances the physical environment by overlaying digital information onto the real world. Although widely applied across various fields, AR has shown considerable potential for cultural heritage conservation and management. Using a narrative review approach combined with document analysis of academic publications and selected international case studies, this study examines the role and application of AR in cultural heritage conservation. The findings highlight five key aspects: (1) AR as a digital infrastructure for heritage preservation; (2) its contribution to preventive conservation through enhanced visitor experience; (3) its ability to reconstruct historical contexts and create layered memory spaces; (4) its role in moving beyond Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD) by encouraging more inclusive forms of heritage interpretation and community participation; and (5) its support for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage by integrating living practices and skills into physical heritage environments through interactive digital content. The study also discusses several challenges, including issues of authenticity, technological dependence, and the risk of spectacularization. It concludes that the effective use of AR in cultural heritage conservation depends not only on technological innovation but also on appropriate ethical principles and long-term governance strategies.

Keywords: *Augmented Reality (AR), digital conservation, cultural heritage conservation, heritage interpretation, digital heritage.*

1. Introduction

In recent decades, the rapid advancement of digital technologies has fundamentally reshaped how cultural heritage is documented, interpreted, and conserved. Within this transformation, Augmented Reality (AR) has emerged as a promising technology because of its ability to overlay digital information onto physical environments in real time. Unlike Virtual Reality (VR), which replaces the real world, AR enhances existing environments while preserving the authenticity of heritage sites and enriching their interpretive and experiential value (Azuma, 1997; Bekele et al., 2018).

The growing adoption of AR reflects a broader shift in heritage conservation, moving from an object-centered approach toward one that emphasizes interpretation, participation, and knowledge sharing. While conventional conservation methods primarily focus on protecting the physical integrity of heritage assets (ICCROM, 2018), they often face challenges in balancing preservation with public access. AR offers an alternative by enabling visitors to engage with digital content without increasing physical pressure on vulnerable heritage resources.

NHÀ XUẤT BẢN ĐẠI HỌC HUẾ

07 Hà Nội, Thành phố Huế - Điện thoại: 0234.3834486

Website: <http://huph.hueuni.edu.vn>

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Đối tác liên kết xuất bản

Trường Du lịch, Đại học Huế

Số 22 Lâm Hoàng, phường Võ Dạ, thành phố Huế

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
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Số xác nhận đăng ký xuất bản: 1546-2026/CXBIPH/1-21/ĐHH, cấp ngày 22/4/2026.
Quyết định xuất bản số: 226/QĐ-NXB cấp ngày 25/08/2026. Nộp lưu chiểu năm 2026.

ISBN: 978-632-627-438-7