

Cultural human resource management on the development of innovative industries: Evidence from practice in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

In the context of the Vietnamese cultural industry facing the need to transform its operating model to adapt to the trend of creative economy and digital technology, organizational innovation has become an inevitable requirement. However, the ability to innovate depends largely on how the organization manages and develops creative human resources, a factor that is highly specific to the cultural sector. Based on the theoretical and practical gap in the relationship between human resource management and innovation capacity in the cultural industry, this study aims to determine the role of HRM practice groups (capacity building, motivation, creative expression empowerment) on the organization's innovation capacity, and at the same time clarify the mediating role of the organizational environment supporting creativity. Based on the AMO theoretical framework, the research model was tested using the PLS-SEM method with survey data from 305 cultural personnel nationwide. The results indicate that all HRM practice groups have a significant impact on innovation capacity, of which creating opportunities for innovation is the strongest factor. Creative environment is confirmed as an important mediating mechanism, effectively connecting HRM and innovation outcomes. From there, the study proposes some practical policy implications in recruiting, training, empowering, and building an innovation ecosystem for the cultural sector in Vietnam.

Keywords: Cultural human resources ; Innovation; AMO model; Human resource development ; Vietnam

INTRODUCTION:

In the context of an increasingly developing knowledge economy, innovation has become a core requirement for every organization to maintain competitiveness and adapt to environmental changes. Especially in the cultural field where intangible values and individual creativity play a central role, strategic human resource management to promote innovation is not only an inevitable trend but also a prerequisite for sustainable development (UNESCO, 2013; OECD, 2015).

According to Potts et al. (2008), in the cultural and creative industries, people are not only a productive force but also a "creative technology", where individual capabilities, inspiration and organizational environment combine to create new value. This requires cultural organizations to restructure their human resource management systems towards flexibility, creativity and encouraging experimentation. Within that framework, the AMO (Ability - Motivation - Opportunity) model is often used as a suitable theoretical foundation to analyze the impact of human resource policies on innovation efficiency (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Jiang et al., 2012).

However, in Vietnam, public cultural organizations still mainly operate according to the traditional administrative model, with a rigid organizational structure, a seniority-based evaluation system, and

limitations in creating an environment that supports innovation. Research by the British Council (2019) shows that most cultural units in Vietnam do not have a long-term human resource development strategy, lack a mechanism to encourage innovation, and have not yet taken advantage of the creative potential of the team. This raises an urgent need to review the way to organize, manage, and develop human resources in this field.

Internationally, many studies have shown a positive relationship between strategic human resource management (SHRM) practices and organizational innovation capability. Shipton et al. (2006) emphasized that innovation-oriented HR policies such as talent-based recruitment, cross-functional training, and flexible compensation have a significant impact on organizational innovation capability. Similarly, Laursen and Foss (2003) asserted that incorporating complementary HR practices especially in environments that require high levels of innovation can significantly enhance innovation performance.

However, most of the existing research still focuses on the private sector or high-tech industries, while the cultural sector, especially the public sector in developing countries, has not been systematically surveyed (Obendhain & Johnson, 2004; Borghini et al.,

2010). This is a significant gap in theory and practice. Therefore, this study was conducted with the aim of: (i) building a research model reflecting the relationship between cultural human resource management factors and organizational innovation capacity; (ii) model validation through empirical surveys at public cultural organizations in Vietnam; and (iii) propose policy implications to improve the human resource management system towards promoting innovation in the cultural sector.

The study is expected to contribute to filling the academic gap on human resource management in the cultural sector in transition economies, and at the same time provide empirical evidence to support institutional reform and human resource policies in this field in Vietnam.

2. THEORETICAL BASIS

Cultural human resource management in the context of innovation

Human resources in the cultural sector have special characteristics compared to conventional economic sectors, because cultural labor products are creative, unique, personalized and deeply influenced by social and historical contexts. Organizations, businesses and individuals operating in this sector often operate in complex environments, where economic values are intertwined with artistic values and community identity (Throsby, 2001; Potts et al., 2008). Therefore, cultural human resource management needs to be redefined in a way that encourages creative freedom, respects artistic personality, while still ensuring organizational effectiveness in an increasingly competitive market.

In the era of creative economy and digital transformation, the relationship between human resource management and innovation in the cultural sector becomes increasingly close. Research by Giauque et al. (2013) emphasizes that the effectiveness of human resource management in the creative sector depends on the ability to create a flexible, open working environment and truly empower employees. Thus, understanding and building an effective human resource management model cannot be separated from the context of innovation, which is the endogenous nature of the cultural sector.

AMO theoretical framework and innovation-oriented human resource management

The AMO theoretical framework developed by Appelbaum et al. (2000) is one of the popular models in the study of the relationship between human resource management and organizational performance. According to this model, employees can only maximize their creative capacity when they: (1) possess the appropriate capabilities (Ability), (2) have strong motivation to innovate (Motivation), and (3) have real opportunities to express themselves (Opportunity). Well-designed human resource management practices will simultaneously impact all three of these factors, thereby promoting innovation at the individual and organizational levels.

In the cultural sector, the components of AMO can be specified as follows: recruiting based on creative and multidisciplinary capabilities (A), building a system of artistic value recognition (M), and facilitating new artistic experimentation through creative empowerment or funding mechanisms (O). The application of the AMO model in the cultural environment has been demonstrated in studies in Europe and North America, especially in creative hubs and independent cultural enterprises (Jiang et al., 2012; Borghini et al., 2010).

Human resource management strategy associated with innovation in the cultural industry

In creative industries, human resource management plays a dual role: it maintains efficient operations and it supports continuous creativity and innovation. Research by Shipton et al. (2006) shows that human resource management strategies such as flexible recruitment, cross-disciplinary training, knowledge sharing mechanisms, and environments that encourage experimentation can significantly promote innovation. At the same time, Laursen & Foss (2003) suggest that it is the interaction of human resource practices rather than any single element that creates real innovation power.

In the context of Vietnam, the cultural industry is transforming with the strong development of creative spaces, startups in the fields of content, contemporary performing arts, digital design, cultural communication... Therefore, the application of appropriate human resource strategies not only in the public sector but also expanding to the private and independent sectors - becomes an urgent requirement, especially in the context of competition for creative human resources with the international market.

The characteristics of innovation in a creative cultural environment

Innovation in the cultural sector is not simply about adopting new technologies or product innovations, but also includes changes in expressive content, forms of public engagement, event organization methods, and even improvements in financial structures and cultural business models (UNESCO, 2013; Mulgan, 2006). This requires a highly supportive organizational environment where creativity is not constrained by rigid control mechanisms, but is fueled by autonomy, community connection, and interdisciplinary learning. In Vietnam, although many new cultural organizational models have been formed, such as independent art centers, social enterprises, and creative alliances, the legal framework and human resource management models have not yet adapted in time. Many organizations still lack mechanisms to encourage innovation, experimental spaces, or evaluation systems based on creative outcomes. This shows the need to develop an integrated cultural human resource management model that can enable sustainable innovation.

Research gaps and directions

While international studies have begun to explore the relationship between HRM and innovation in the cultural sector, most of them have focused on the public sector or creative enterprises in developed countries (Laursen & Foss, 2003 ; Giauque et al., 2013). Very few studies have comprehensively examined the interaction between AMO HRM practices and innovation capabilities in a developing context such as Vietnam where the cultural sector operates simultaneously in three sectors: public, private and independent. This is the theoretical and practical gap that this study aims to fill.

Therefore, the study proposes an integrated conceptual model based on the AMO framework, applicable to the cultural industry in Vietnam. The model does not distinguish between the organizational ownership sector but focuses on the relationship between human resource organization and organizational innovation capacity. On that basis, the study conducts an empirical survey to test the model, providing academic and practical evidence to guide the improvement of human resource policies in the cultural industry towards creativity and adaptation.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

Research design

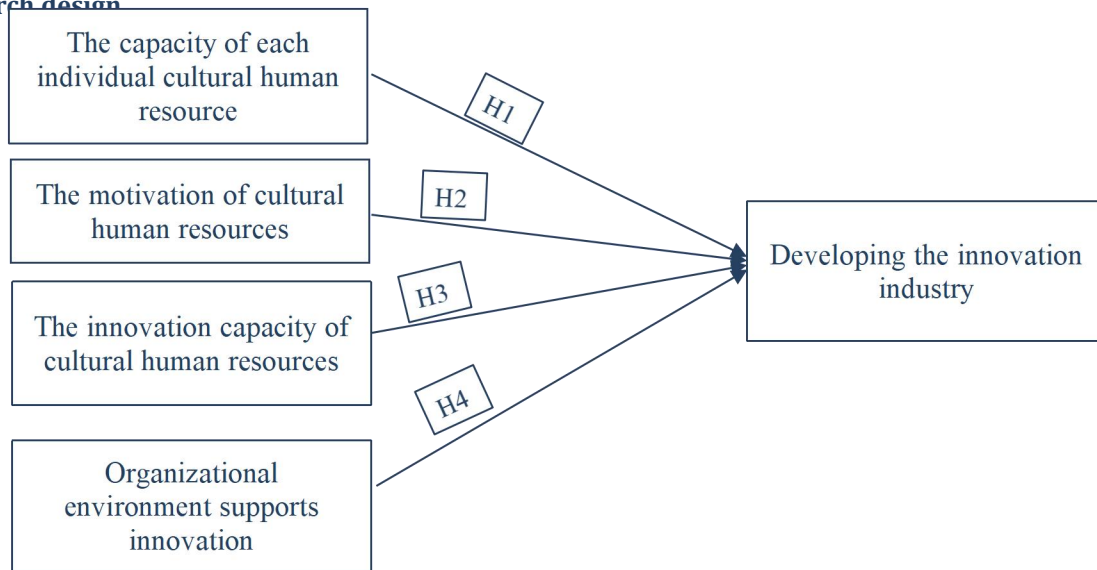


Figure 1. Author's proposed research model

proposed research hypotheses:

- *H1: The individual capacity of cultural human resources has a positive influence on the development of innovative industries.*
- *H2: Motivation of cultural human resources have a positive impact on the development of innovative industries.*
- *H3: Innovation ability of cultural human resources have a positive impact on the development of innovative industries.*
- *H4: An organizational environment that supports innovation has a positive impact on the development of innovative industries.*

Building a scale

The variables in the model are measured through a system of quantitative indicators, inherited and calibrated from international studies such as Jiang et al. (2012), Laursen & Foss (2003), and Borghini et al. (2010). Specifically:

Table 1. Scale system of research variables on cultural human resource management and innovation capacity

The study was designed using a quantitative approach to examine the relationship between cultural human resource management practices and innovation capacity in cultural organizations in Vietnam. This approach allows quantifying the impact of HRM components on innovation capacity, while exploring the mediating role of the organizational environment supporting innovation. To achieve the research objective, a linear structural equation model (PLS-SEM) was chosen due to its ability to handle complex models, small and medium samples, and its suitability for exploring the causal relationship between factors in an empirical context (Hair et al., 2019).

Research model and hypothesis

Based on the AMO theoretical framework (Appelbaum et al., 2000) combined with empirical research in the creative industry (Potts et al., 2008; Laursen & Foss, 2003; Shipton et al., 2006), the study proposes a theoretical model consisting of three groups of human resource management practices (competence, motivation, opportunity) affecting the innovation capacity of cultural organizations. The organizational climate supporting creativity is considered as a mediating factor in the model.

Independent variable	Encryption	Observation variable	References
The capacity of each individual cultural human resource	AB	AB1 - Organizations that prioritize recruiting candidates with creative abilities	Jiang et al. (2012); Boxall & Purcell (2016)
		AB2 - Has a training program to develop skills in art and digital technology	
		AB3 - Encourage interdisciplinary learning and self-directed learning	
The motivation of cultural human resources	MO	MO1 - Clearly implemented innovation reward mechanism	Amabile (1996); Shipton et al. (2006)
		MO2 - Employees feel that their work has a clear social meaning	
		MO3 - Feeling recognized for suggesting new ideas	
The innovation capacity of cultural human resources	OP	OP1 - Employees have high autonomy in implementing ideas	Laursen & Foss (2003); Giauque et al. (2013)
		OP2 - Organizations that encourage experimentation and creative risk taking	
		OP3 - Employees are allowed to participate in creative collaboration projects outside the unit	
Organizational environment supports innovation	CE	CE1 - Open working environment and supportive exchange of ideas	Borghini et al. (2010)
		CE2 - Leaders who encourage diversity and innovation in thinking	
		CE3 - Have facilities, space, and technology platforms to support creativity	
Developing the innovation industry	PRINT	IN1 - Organization continuously introduces new cultural products/services	Mulgan (2006); Potts et al. (2008)
		IN2 - Ability to improve organizational processes and reach out to the community more effectively	
		IN3 - Creating added value through innovation in cultural content or expression	

Author's synthesis, 2025

All indicators use a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Objects and methods of data collection

The survey subjects included managers, human resources professionals, artists, and creative staff working at cultural organizations in Vietnam. Including: Businesses operating in the fields of performing arts, publishing, multimedia, design, music; NGOs and independent creative hubs; Creatively oriented public cultural units; Cultural and artistic educational institution or creative start-up in the content field.

The sampling method is a combination of targeted sampling and snowball sampling, suitable for the dispersed and informal network characteristics of the creative community in Vietnam (British Council, 2019). A total of 305 valid questionnaires were collected from March to May 2025. The survey sample covered 6 major cities with strong cultural activities (Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Hue, Da Nang, Can Tho, Da Lat).

4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics of observed variables

Before analyzing the measurement model and the structural model, the study examined the data distribution characteristics of the observed variables to preliminarily assess the response level of survey participants to each aspect in the research model.

The table below presents basic descriptive statistics - including means and standard deviations - for 15 observed variables. These variables are divided into five main groups, corresponding to five latent variables: competence-enhancing practices (AB), motivation-enhancing practices (MO), opportunity-creating practices (OP), innovation climate (CE), and organizational innovation capability (IN). Each variable is measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 - strongly disagree; 5 - strongly agree).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of observed variables

Variable code	Measurement content	Medium	Standard deviation
AB1	Recruiting staff based on creative ability criteria	3.72	0.66
AB2	There is a training program for artistic skills and innovative thinking.	3.70	0.68

AB3	Encourage interdisciplinary learning, enhance creativity	3.75	0.70
MO1	There is a dedicated reward system for creative contributions.	3.90	0.71
MO2	Employees feel their work has social meaning	3.95	0.69
MO3	Get recognized for suggesting innovative ideas or products	4.00	0.72
OP1	Have autonomy in organizing and implementing creative ideas	3.60	0.76
OP2	Organizations that encourage experimentation and creative risk taking	3.55	0.79
OP3	Employees are involved in cross-disciplinary creative collaboration projects	3.60	0.74
CE1	A work environment that supports the exchange of creative ideas	3.40	0.81
CE2	Leaders encourage diversity of thought and expression	3.45	0.80
CE3	Have workspaces or facilities that support innovation	3.50	0.82
IN1	The organization regularly releases new cultural products.	3.60	0.69
IN2	There is a marked improvement in organizational processes or public outreach	3.62	0.68
IN3	Creating new cultural values through creative forms of expression	3.61	0.70

The results of descriptive statistics show that the observed variables all have mean values ranging from 3.40 to 4.00, reflecting a relatively high level of consensus from the respondents on human resource management activities and innovation capacity in cultural organizations in Vietnam. This shows that the system of innovative human resource practices in the cultural industry has been formed but has not developed evenly.

Specifically, the capacity building (AB) practice group showed a fairly consistent rating with an average of 3.72-3.75, reflecting a positive perception of innovative recruitment and multidisciplinary training, but also indicating the need for more in-depth and continuous training policies.

The motivation group (MO) achieved the highest mean value, especially with the variable MO3 (recognition for creativity) reaching 4.00, showing that the role of recognition in the cultural industry is extremely important. The perception of social meaning of work (MO2) also reached a high level (3.95), consistent with the professional characteristics that tend to be idealistic, personal expression and community responsibility.

In contrast, the opportunity creation (OP) and creative environment (CE) groups have lower averages (around 3.4-3.6), reflecting practical barriers in terms of creative space, experimentation rights, and resource connections. These are two factors that can act as “bottlenecks” that limit innovation effectiveness in the industry.

Finally, the organizational innovation capability (IN) group shows that the organization has shown signs of improvement (average ~3.6), but still needs more specific support mechanisms and favorable organizational conditions to turn creative ideas into practical cultural products.

All standard deviations are below 1, in the range of 0.66-0.82, indicating a reasonable level of data dispersion, not too skewed or uniform, ensuring distribution conditions for subsequent analyses.

Assessing the reliability of the scale

Table 3. Scale reliability assessment (Cronbach's Alpha)

Latent variable group	Cronbach's Alpha
AB (capacity building)	0.979
MO (motivation)	0.981
OP (opportunity to innovate)	0.978
CE (creative environment)	0.978
IN (innovation capacity)	0.978

All scale groups in the model achieved Cronbach's Alpha > 0.9, far exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2019), indicating a very high level of internal consistency between observed variables in each group. This allows to confirm that the indicators in each latent variable are capable of measuring the same theoretical concept in a stable and reliable manner.

The particularly high reliability in the MO (motivation) and AB (competence) groups reflects that in reality, policies for recognizing, acknowledging and training creative personnel in the cultural industry are consistently structured and relatively clearly implemented. This also strengthens the basis for further use of observed variables in confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural modelling (PLS-SEM) in the next steps.

Table 4. Composite reliability and convergent validity assessments (CR) and (AVE)

Latent variable group	CR	AVE
AB (capacity building)	0.986	0.960
MO (motivation)	0.987	0.964

OP (opportunity to innovate)	0.985	0.958
CE (creative environment)	0.985	0.958
IN (innovation capacity)	0.985	0.958

All Composite Reliability (CR) exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2019), even reaching above 0.98, indicating that the composite reliability of the scale is very high. This reflects the level of homogeneity between indicators within the same latent construct.

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are all above 0.5, much higher than the recommended threshold of 0.5, demonstrating that the observed variables explain a larger proportion of their own variance than the noise, ensuring that the convergent validity in the measurement model is satisfied.

The above pair of CR and AVE values also reinforces the theoretical basis that groups of human resource management practices (such as training, motivation, empowerment, etc.) and creative environments in the cultural industry are not only consistently implemented but also relatively clearly perceived and evaluated by employees.

Total Effects Analysis

In addition to the direct and indirect effects, the total effect analysis allows for a comprehensive assessment of the final impact of human resource management practices on the organization's innovation capability. The total effect is calculated as the sum of the direct effect coefficient and the indirect coefficient through the mediating variable creative environment (CE).

Table 5. Total effects analysis

Total relationship	Total coefficient
AB → IN (capacity)	0.289
MO → IN (motivation)	0.245
OP → IN (opportunity)	0.332

Opportunity-creating practices (OP) have the largest overall impact on organizational innovation capability ($\beta = 0.332$), including both direct and mediated effects through the creative environment. This highlights the importance of designing experimental spaces that truly empower and encourage creative collaboration, especially in cultural environments where artistic freedom and subversion are key drivers of innovation.

Capacity building (AB) practices have a total effect of 0.289, reflecting that investing in creative skills development, interdisciplinary learning, and appropriate recruitment are essential to ensuring long-term innovation capabilities.

Motivation (MO) has the lowest total impact of the three main groups (0.245), but is still significant. Recognizing achievements, creating social meaning for work, and applying innovative reward mechanisms are clearly necessary but not sufficient conditions if not coupled with implementation opportunities and a supportive environment.

Overall, all three sets of HRM practices have a significant impact on organizational innovation capacity, but the highest effectiveness is achieved when they are accompanied by a genuinely creative environment.

Hypothesis testing analysis

Table 5. Results of structural model testing

Relationship	β	p-value	f^2	Conclude
AB → CE	0.281	0.000	0.083	Statistically significant
MO → CE	0.199	0.000	0.056	Statistically significant
OP → CE	0.214	0.000	0.061	Statistically significant
CE → IN	0.303	0.000	0.118	Strong statistical significance
AB → IN	0.204	0.000	0.063	Statistically significant
MO → IN	0.185	0.000	0.048	Statistically significant
OP → IN	0.267	0.000	0.089	Strong statistical significance

All hypotheses were supported with high reliability ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the theoretical model constructed is consistent with the actual survey data.

Cultural human resource management practices such as empowerment (AB), motivation (MO), and opportunity creation (OP) all have significant direct impacts on creative climate (CE) and innovation capability (IN).

Notably, creative environment (CE) not only plays the role of an intermediary variable but also has a strong direct impact on innovation capacity (IN) with coefficients $\beta = 0.303$ and $f^2 = 0.118$ (the threshold of "moderate to strong" according to Cohen, 1988).

In the three main HRM elements:

- OP (creating opportunities for innovation) has the largest direct impact on IN ($\beta = 0.267$; $f^2 = 0.089$), reflecting that

the cultural environment requires openness, freedom to practice innovation and experimentation rather than simply encouraging policies.

- AB and MO have similar direct effects, but still contribute to the overall effect through CE.

Analysis of hypothesis testing results

H1: Cultural human resource capacity has a positive impact on the development of innovative industries.

The analysis shows that activities such as recruiting for innovation, training in multidisciplinary skills, and encouraging continuous learning are key factors in improving innovation capacity. When innovation capacity is systematically nurtured, organizations will possess highly adaptable and creative human resources, thereby increasing innovation efficiency in products, processes, and organizational models.

H2: Motivation of cultural human resources have a positive impact on the development of innovative industries.

Recognizing, acknowledging, and encouraging employees' creative contributions not only boosts morale, but also fosters a culture of innovation within the organization. When employees feel valued and intrinsically motivated, they will proactively engage in creative activities, thereby contributing to the organization's sustainable innovation capabilities.

H3: Innovation ability of cultural human resources have a positive impact on the development of innovative industries.

Unlike the previous two hypotheses, this hypothesis emphasizes the role of autonomy, creative space and risk taking in organizations. When employees are allowed to experiment and are encouraged to collaborate creatively, the organization's innovation capacity is unleashed and thrives. This is especially true in the cultural area - where individual expression, disruptive thinking and breaking the mold are the main sources of new value creation.

H4: An organizational environment that supports innovation has a positive impact on the development of innovative industries.

The structural model analysis shows that the innovative climate is not only an independent factor, but also plays an essential mediating role in transforming HRM practices into real innovation outcomes. Organizations with a good supportive environment such as space for exchanging ideas, policies that encourage diversity of thinking and open leadership will enhance the effectiveness of HRM policies, thereby enhancing innovation capacity indirectly but strongly and sustainably.

5. CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The research results confirmed the positive and significant relationship between human resource management (HRM) practices and innovation capacity in the cultural sector in Vietnam. Specifically, three groups of practices including capacity building, promoting creative motivation and creating opportunities for creative expression all contributed significantly to increasing the organization's innovation capacity. In particular, creating creative opportunities for employees through empowerment, encouraging

experimentation, and supporting collaboration were shown to be the factors with the strongest direct influence. In addition, the study also clarified the mediating role of the organizational environment supporting innovation, showing that an open workspace, respect for differences and risk-taking are necessary conditions for effectively transforming HRM policies into substantive innovation results.

From these findings, some practical policy implications can be drawn to improve the effectiveness of human resource management associated with innovation in the cultural sector. First, cultural organizations need to reorient their recruitment and training policies towards a focus on creativity. This includes establishing flexible recruitment criteria, interdisciplinary thinking and adaptability, and integrating training content on critical thinking, creative collaboration and technological competence in human resource development programs. In parallel, motivational mechanisms need to be comprehensively designed, combining material rewards with non-financial forms of recognition such as honoring initiatives, challenging tasks, or positive feedback. However, HRM policies can only be most effective when placed in an organizational environment that supports innovation, where a culture of active criticism, space for expressing ideas, and leadership that encourages diversity are nurtured. In particular, the shift from a control-management model to a creative empowerment model is a trend that needs to be promoted, in order to stimulate employees' autonomy and creative responsibility. Finally, cultural organizations need to proactively connect with local innovation ecosystems, through cooperation with universities, research institutes, creative enterprises and digital platforms, to expand resources, knowledge and opportunities to experiment with new ideas.

In summary, the study not only contributes to the theoretical basis of the relationship between HRM and innovation in the cultural industry - which is still modest in developing countries - but also proposes specific policy directions to help cultural organizations improve their competitiveness and adapt to the rapid changes in the global creative environment.

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