# Cultural Identity, Authenticity perception, Attitude Behavior Affecting Behavior Intention of the Cities applying for UNESCO Creative Cities Network in Thailand

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## Abstract

This paper aims to study the levels of cultural identity, authenticity perception, attitude and intention behavior variables among individuals within the community characterized as representatives of UNESCO Creative Cities in Thailand and examine the influence of cultural identity, authenticity perception, and attitude variables on the intention behavior variable among individuals within the community characterized as representatives of UNESCO Creative Cities in Thailand. This study utilized mixed methods. The population in this research consists of representatives of the general public who are members of various creative city communities affiliated with UNESCO in Thailand and conveniently sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires, with a total of 450 respondents. Analyzed with Descriptive statistics and a structural equation model.

The findings showed that: cultural identity, authenticity perception, attitude and intention behavior variables among individuals within the community characterized as representatives of UNESCO Creative Cities in Thailand were at high level in all aspects. And examine the influence of cultural identity, authenticity perception, and attitude variables on the intention behavior variable among individuals within the community characterized as representatives of UNESCO Creative Cities in Thailand, results are in accordance with the hypotheses.

**Keywords:** Cultural Identity, Authenticity Perception, Attitude, UNESCO

## Introduction

The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) was inaugurated in 2004, marking a pivotal initiative by UNESCO. This establishment was not just a response to a trend but a recognition of the integral role that culture and creativity play in the fabric of urban development. As cities around the world began to realize the potential of cultural industries in shaping their identities and driving economic growth, there was a clear need for a platform that could foster collaboration and exchange of ideas. The UCCN emerged as this platform, aiming to bring together cities that prioritize creativity as a cornerstone for sustainable urban growth (Smith & Richards, 2019).

The objectives and mission of the UCCN are multifaceted. At its core, the network seeks to champion creativity and cultural industries as vital components of urban development. This is not just about recognizing art or culture as standalone sectors but embedding them within the broader development strategies of cities. The UCCN promotes international cooperation among its member cities, ensuring that these sectors receive the acknowledgment and support they deserve at the local level. The overarching objective is clear: to make creativity and cultural industries integral to urban development and to facilitate active international collaboration through shared goals (Johnson & Stevenson, 2020).

Over the years, the global impact and significance of the UCCN have been profound. The network has witnessed significant growth, with cities from diverse regions becoming members. This isn't just about numbers but the quality of collaborations and projects that have emerged from these alliances. The UCCN has paved the way for the exchange of innovative practices, forging of strategic partnerships, and execution of collaborative projects that have a tangible impact on urban communities. The network's role in highlighting the immense potential of culture and creativity as catalysts for sustainable development, economic progression, and social cohesion cannot be understated. Cities within the UCCN are offered a unique platform to spotlight their cultural treasures, engage in mutual learning, and partake in global initiatives that profoundly influence urban living (Williams, 2021).

Thailand's relationship with the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) has been both dynamic and transformative. Historically, Thailand's interactions with the UCCN can be traced back to the early days of the network's inception. Several Thai cities have shown keen interest in joining this prestigious network, recognizing the potential it holds for urban development and cultural promotion. For instance, Chiang Mai's application to the UCCN in 2017 marked a

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significant milestone, highlighting the city's rich tapestry of crafts and folk art (Srivastava & Chansiri, 2019).

In the study related to this context, researchers reviewed literature and found that factors relevant to the context of being a UNESCO Creative City Network (UCCN) member community or city must have a distinct cultural identity and authentic cultural reality. This is essential for fostering the attitudes of community members and using them to develop policies that respond to UNESCO Creative City membership representation in Thailand.

In essence, the scope of this study, while defined by its geographical, temporal, and thematic boundaries, is expansive in its depth and implications. It seeks to offer Thai cities a roadmap to UCCN recognition, grounded in meticulous research, global best practices, and a deep understanding of the Thai urban and cultural landscape.

## Research objectives

1. To study the levels of cultural identity, authenticity perception, attitude, and intention behavior variables among individuals within the community characterized as representatives of UNESCO Creative Cities in Thailand.

2. To examine the influence of cultural identity, authenticity perception, and attitude variables on the intention behavior variable among individuals within the community characterized as representatives of UNESCO Creative Cities in Thailand.

3. To develop a factor model of cultural identity, authenticity perception, attitude, and behavior that affects the intention behavior of individuals within the community characterized as representatives of UNESCO Creative Cities in Thailand.

## Literature Review

Cultural identity is of great importance for various societies and communities. It helps individuals and groups understand themselves and their uniqueness, fostering understanding and acceptance of differences in diverse societies. Maintaining cultural identity contributes to building relationships and cohesion among community members, enhancing understanding and appreciation of each other's cultures. It also helps establish resilient and sustainable social systems, fostering solidarity and strong bonds among community members, regardless of the passage of time (Zhang et al., 2020; Tian et al., 2020; Ko et al., 2013).

Therefore, identifying the identity of a community or social group is of paramount importance. Zhang and colleagues (2020) explained the relationship between community or

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local behavior and collective behavior intention. Additionally, Tian et al. (2020) found that the level of cultural identity directly influences authenticity perception. Furthermore, Jelinčič´'s literature in 2021 revealed that cultural identity also affects the attitudes of community members. Based on these findings, the researcher can formulate the following hypotheses:

Research Hypothesis 1: Cultural Identity has a direct positive influence on the authenticity perception of individuals within the community of cities characterized as representatives of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in Thailand.

Research Hypothesis 2: Cultural Identity has a direct positive influence on the attitude of individuals within the community of cities characterized as representatives of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in Thailand.

Research Hypothesis 3: Cultural Identity has a direct positive influence on the behavior intention of individuals within the community of cities characterized as representatives of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in Thailand.

Authenticity is utilized across multiple dimensions in philosophical, sociological, and psychological studies. Philosophically, "authenticity" may refer to self-fulfillment, while sociologically and psychologically, it often relates to personal experiences, knowledge, processes of understanding, and behavior. Individuals with high levels of authenticity tend to be more internally driven and less influenced by external pressures or influences (Tian et al., 2018). Further studies by Ko and colleagues in 2013 revealed that utilizing cultural resources for commercial purposes or other benefits often involves cultural commodification, which may lead to distortions or deviations from the original cultural identity. Stepchenkova and Belyaeva's literature in 2021 showed that the level of authenticity influences the behavior of cultural owners or members of communities, as Wang et al. (2020) also explained that authenticity affects modification and use as initial resources in cultural creation. Thus, the researcher can formulate additional hypotheses as follows:

Research Hypothesis 4: Authenticity perception has a direct positive influence on the attitude of individuals within the society of cities that represent the creative city membership of UNESCO in Thailand.

Research Hypothesis 5: Authenticity perception has a direct positive influence on the behavior intention of individuals within the society of cities that represent the creative city membership of UNESCO in Thailand.

Research Hypothesis 6: Attitude has a direct positive influence on the behavior intention of individuals within the society of cities that represent the creative city membership of UNESCO in Thailand.

Based on an analysis of the aforementioned literature to formulate a study hypothesis, the investigator established connections that manifested as a structural conceptual framework, as demonstrated.
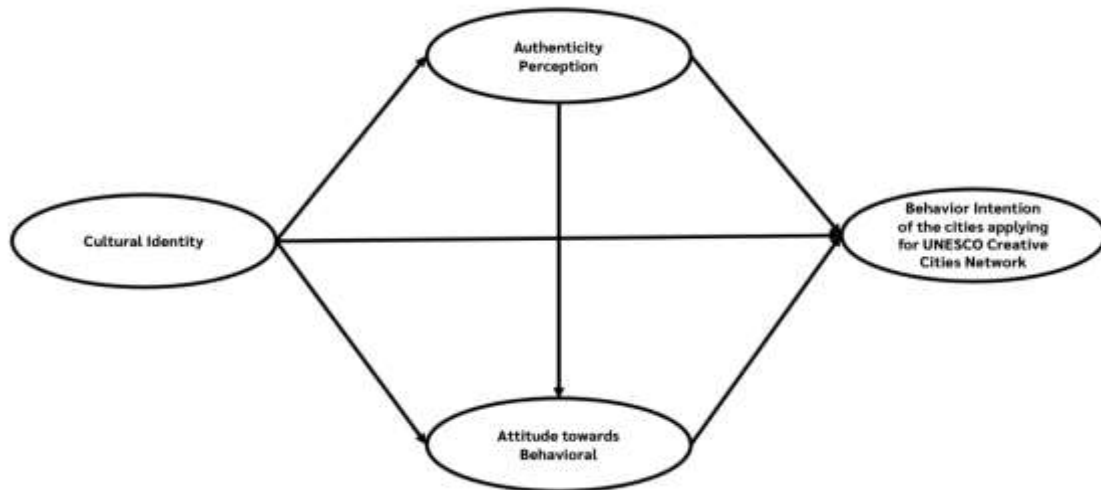


Figure 1 Show the Research Conceptual Framework

**Methodology**

The population in this research consists of representatives of the general public who are members of various creative city communities affiliated with UNESCO in Thailand. The researchers utilized a mixed-method sampling approach and quota sampling method, defining characteristics of the business patterns in each company. Subsequently, participants were conveniently sampled from each local district of the respective cities, ensuring representation from all districts of each region. Data were collected using questionnaires, with a total of 400 respondents initially targeted. An additional 50 respondents were collected as a buffer against potential data incompleteness or loss, resulting in a total of 450 respondents. The sample size for this study was set at 400 respondents to align with Hair et al.'s (2010) recommendation of a suitable sample size ranging from 200 to 400 for structural equation modeling analyses in various research works utilizing such methodological approaches.

This research is a quantitative study conducted by collecting data from various sources, including literature reviews, concepts, theories, documents, and related research works.

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Additionally, primary data was gathered through questionnaire surveys. Subsequently, the data were analyzed using statistical methods, utilizing specialized statistical software for social science research. Statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics were employed to characterize the data, along with inferential statistics, including Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), to analyze the confirmatory factor structure of all variables within the framework of this research. Furthermore, Path Analysis was utilized to test hypotheses and explain the direct and indirect effects of variables.

The tool used in the research is a questionnaire, which is employed for data collection. It was developed based on textbook research and literature reviews related to the research topic. The questionnaire consists of closed-ended questions divided into two parts;

Part 1: General information about the respondents in the questionnaire is collected to gather demographic data of the participants involved in this research.

Part 2: the questionnaire measures the levels of the variables: Cultural Identity, Authenticity Perception, Attitude, and Intention Behavior of individuals within the communities of creative cities affiliated with UNESCO in Thailand who possess the characteristics of representative members.

The instrument used has undergone reliability testing by examining the content validity and reliability using Cronbach's alpha method. The test results indicate that the average value of each observed variable exceeds a coefficient alpha of 0.70, with values as follows: 0.879 for Cultural Identity, 0.802 for Authenticity Perception, 0.766 for Attitude, and 0.877 for Intention Behavior. All these values are considered high according to the reliability criteria and are suitable for collecting actual data (Pallant, 2007).

**Results**

The sample group, totaling 298 individuals, consists of males, accounting for 74.5%. Additionally, 263 individuals, or 65.75%, fall within the age range of 31 to 50 years old, and 233 individuals, or 58.25%, are married.

The measurement model was tested using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to examine the validity and reliability of the measures. The results of the CFA analysis included an examination of the relationships between variables, which were initially explored before considering the observed variables' factor loadings in each measurement model, as depicted in Figure 2.
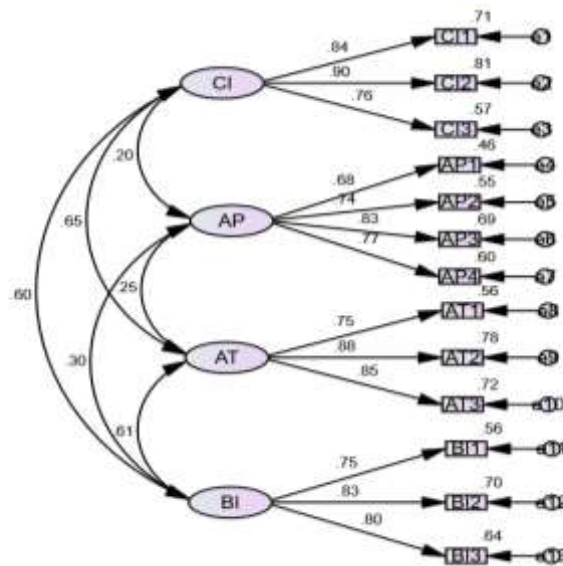
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Figure 2 The analysis of the Measurement Model preliminary analysis

From the analysis of the Measurement Model, it was found that the relationships within the observed variables in each model have factor loadings higher than the relationships among latent variables used in this research study.

From analyzing the factor loadings, it was discovered that the factor loadings of the observed variables were below the acceptable threshold. Therefore, the researcher decided to remove these variables and conduct a re-analysis. This led to an updated version of the measurement model, depicted in Figure 3.
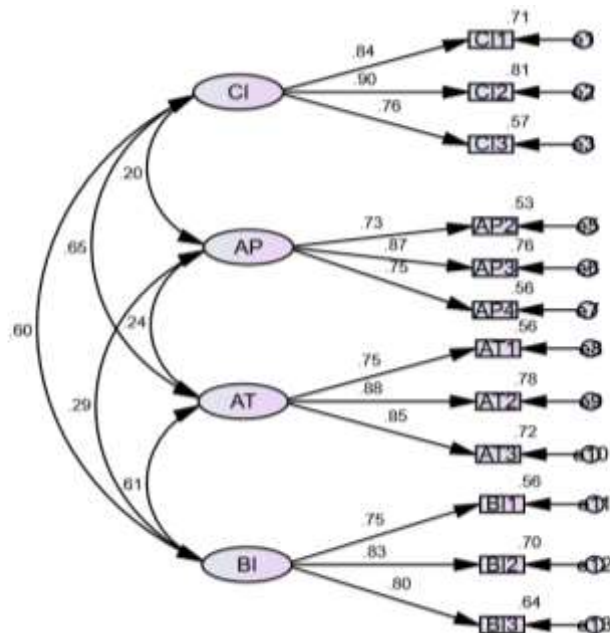


Figure 3 The analysis of the Measurement Model revised

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After analyzing the revised measurement model, it was found that all observed variables have factor loadings greater than 0.7. Moreover, upon assessing the model fit, it was determined that the model is congruent with the empirical data and exhibits a perfect fit without the need to consider further relationships using the Modification Index (MI). The goodness-of-fit indices obtained include CMIN/df = 3.039, GFI = 0.943, NFI = 0.944, RFI = 0.923, IFI = 0.962, TLI = 0.947, CFI = 0.962, and RMSEA = 0.071. It was observed that these values exceed the criteria set by Hair et al. (2010), indicating a good fit.

The researcher further tested the validity and reliability of the modified core measurement model by removing observed variables with factor loadings below the threshold. Structural validity testing, measurement invariance testing, discriminant validity testing, and empirical data congruence testing were conducted.

In evaluating the construct reliability, the researcher relied on the composite reliability (CR) coefficient based on Fornell and Larker's (1981) literature. The remaining observed variables from the measurement model testing amounted to 12 variables, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1 shows the values for the structural reliability testing, composite reliability coefficient, and the extracted variance explained

| Latent Variables | Number of Observed Variables | Construct Reliability | AVE |
|---|---|---|---|
| CI | 3 | 0.873 | 0.698 |
| AP | 3 | 0.828 | 0.617 |
| AT | 3 | 0.867 | 0.686 |
| BI | 3 | 0.836 | 0.630 |

It shows that the construct reliability coefficient of each latent variable exceeds 0.60, indicating that each latent variable can adequately explain the measurement set of observed variables according to the measurement model developed by the researcher (Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2000: 90-91 and Saarani and Shahadan, 2012).

The researcher further examined convergent validity using the analysis of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). From the table provided, it can be seen that the AVE of each latent variable exceeds 0.50, indicating sufficient accuracy in measuring the variables (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity testing results of Fornell and Larcher (1981)

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found that. The square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each variable is greater than the pairwise latent variable correlation coefficients in the model. Therefore, it can be considered that the model exhibits sufficient discriminant validity (Hair *et al.*, 2014) The lowest square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) among the variables is 0.785, which indicates adequate discriminant validity. In terms of the goodness-of-fit indices: CMIN/df has a value of 3.3039, which is less than 5 (Loo and Thorpe, 200), GFI has a value of 0.943, which is greater than 0.80., NFI has a value of 0.944, which is greater than or equal to 0.9 (Bentler, 1999), IFI has a value of 0.962, which is greater than or equal to 0.9 (Bentler, 1999), TLI has a value of 0.947, which is greater than or equal to 0.9 (Bentler, 1999), CFI has a value of 0.962, which is greater than or equal to 0.9 (Bentler, 1999), RMSEA has a value of 0.071, which is less than or equal to 0.08 (Hair et al., 1998).
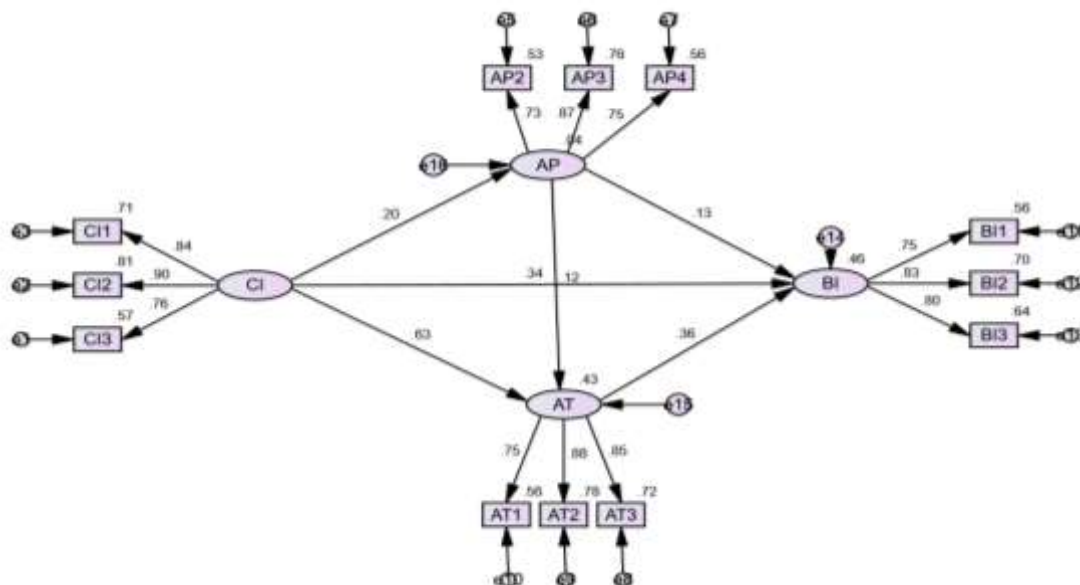


Figure 4 Showing The structural equation model analyzed in the research study

The results of hypothesis testing indicate that: Hypothesis 1: Cultural Identity has a positive direct influence on Authenticity Perception among individuals within the community characterized as representatives of UNESCO Creative Cities in Thailand. The statistical analysis confirms this hypothesis at a significance level of 0.01, with a p-value lower than 0.001. The factor weight for this hypothesis is 0.20. Hypothesis 2: Cultural Identity has a positive direct influence on Attitude among individuals within the community characterized as representatives of UNESCO Creative Cities in Thailand. The statistical analysis also supports this hypothesis at a significance level of 0.01, with a p-value lower than 0.001. The factor

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weight for this hypothesis is 0.63. Hypothesis 3: Cultural Identity has a positive direct influence on Behavior Intention among individuals within the community characterized as representatives of UNESCO Creative Cities in Thailand. The statistical analysis supports this hypothesis at a significance level of 0.01, with a p-value lower than 0.001. The factor weight for this hypothesis is 0.34. Hypothesis 4: Authenticity Perception has a positive direct influence on Attitude among individuals within the community characterized as representatives of UNESCO Creative Cities in Thailand. The statistical analysis also confirms this hypothesis at a significance level of 0.05, with a p-value lower than 0.018. The factor weight for this hypothesis is 0.12. Hypothesis 5: Authenticity Perception has a positive direct influence on Behavior Intention among individuals within the community characterized as representatives of UNESCO Creative Cities in Thailand. The statistical analysis supports this hypothesis at a significance level of 0.01, with a p-value lower than 0.008. The factor weight for this hypothesis is 0.13. Hypothesis 6: Attitude has a positive direct influence on Behavior Intention among individuals within the community characterized as representatives of UNESCO Creative Cities in Thailand. The statistical analysis confirms this hypothesis at a significance level of 0.01, with a p-value lower than 0.001. The factor weight for this hypothesis is 0.36.

The researcher conducted an analysis of the paths of influence by examining the weight of influence of each factor, analyzing them separately into direct effects, indirect effects, and total effects. Additionally, the researcher presented the coefficients of determination (R-square) of each independent variable to explain the variability of the dependent variables. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 shows the analysis of the paths of influence between variables in the structural equation model (Path Analysis)

| Path Analysis | Direct Effect | Indirect Effect | Total Effect |
|---|---|---|---|
| CI -> AP | 0.199 | - | 0.199 |
| CI -> AT | 0.626 | 0.023 | 0.649 |
| AP -> AT | 0.116 | - | 0.116 |
| AP -> BI | 0.134 | 0.042 | 0.175 |
| AT -> BI | 0.359 | - | 0.359 |
| CI -> BI | 0.338 | 0.260 | 0.598 |

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Based on the statistical analysis conducted to test the hypotheses outlined in the research framework developed by the researchers, the structural equation model (SEM) for this study was derived as follows in figure 5
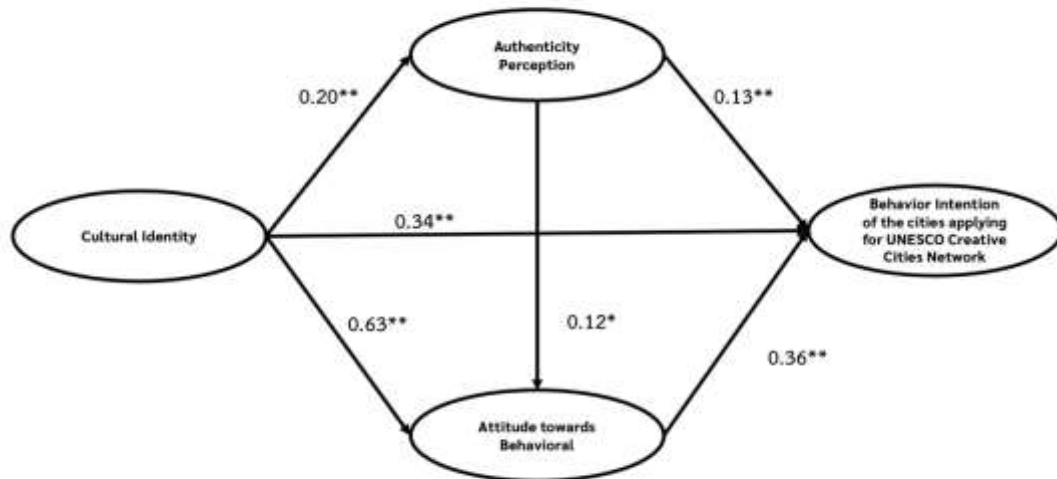


Figure 5 Structural Equation Model of Cultural Identity, Automatically Perception, Attitude Behavior affecting Behavior Intention of the cities applying for UNESCO Creative Cities Network in Thailand

## Discussion

The research findings indicate that cultural identity directly influences the authenticity perception of individuals within the community of cities characterized as representatives of the UNESCO Creative City Network in Thailand. Maintaining and promoting the unique cultural identity of the community leads people to have a higher perception of the community's cultural heritage and awareness of the genuine cultural essence and presentation of culture in that area effectively and simultaneously. Trust in the authenticity of this distinctive cultural heritage fosters pride and confidence within the community. This study aligns with the literature by Tian et al. in 2020. Based on these discussion points, it can be concluded that stakeholders or individuals involved can significantly enhance the clarity of the community's or social group's identity, resulting in a greater perception of the true cultural essence among society members.

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The research also findings indicates that cultural identity has a direct positive influence on the attitude of individuals within the community of cities characterized as representatives of the UNESCO Creative City Network in Thailand. This finding is consistent with the literature by Zhang et al. in 2020, which studied and found that when individuals are aware of the importance of their cultural identity and are interested in understanding and experiencing the unique cultural heritage of a place, cultural identity plays a significant role in building relationships within the community or even with tourists visiting the area. Identity affects tourists' perceptions and satisfaction with tourist destinations and also impacts the pride of local stakeholders in the community, leading to cultural development behaviors and fostering positive attitudes. It enhances trust in local pride and supports sustainable tourism development in the long run. Increasing the level of cultural identity is crucial for promoting sustainable attitudes for future generations, as it can be passed down through generations. Based on these discussions, it is evident that increasing the clarity of cultural identity within a community can significantly enhance positive attitudes among community members in urban areas.

The next research findings have revealed that all three factors, namely cultural identity, authenticity perception, and attitude, directly and indirectly, influence positive behaviors among members of the community or social groups within urban areas characterized as representatives of the UNESCO Creative City Network in Thailand. These findings are consistent with the literature review. (Zhang et al., 2020; Stepchenkova & Belyaeva, 2021)

**Suggestions**

1. Stakeholders from both the public and private sectors involved can utilize this structural equation model to develop strategies aimed at fostering positive behavioral changes and cooperation among community members in cities with the characteristics of UNESCO Creative City Network representatives in Thailand. This approach can lead to improved levels of positive behavior within the community and foster collaboration, as well as promote innovation and cultural advancement, considering its appropriateness to their context.

2. Employees or members of social groups within communities in cities with the characteristics of UNESCO Creative City Network representatives in Thailand, or in other cities, can apply this model to enhance opportunities for sustainable economic growth.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

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1. Should examine by dividing the investigation into the regional level and expanding it to the municipal level, including potentially incorporating guiding variables.

2. Further investigation should be conducted on additional factors that may influence the collective behavioral intention of individuals within the community possessing the characteristics of UNESCO Creative City Network representatives in Thailand.

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