

# Tell It Your Way:

Preserving Vietnamese Folktales through  
Collaborative Web-based Game Design

**MICRO – MESO – MACRO** Analysis

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# Research question

*How might community engagement be leveraged to preserve Vietnamese folktales through collaborative web-based game design?*

## Sub Questions

Q1: What digital-age factors contribute to the endangerment of Vietnamese folktales as living traditions?

Q2: How does standardized, text-based documentation influence Gen Z's perception and engagement with Vietnamese folktales?

Q3: In what ways can collaborative web-based games facilitate community participation in reinterpreting and preserving Vietnamese folktales?

Q4: How might we evaluate the effectiveness of collaborative web-based game design for preserving Vietnamese folktales using in-play observation and in-game analytics?

# MICRO

- Younger audiences, especially Gen Z, increasingly construct their cultural identity within online spaces dominated by global media and entertainment trends.
- Without interactive and participatory strategies, Vietnamese folktales risk being seen as **static textbook content** rather than living traditions.
- By engaging youth in the digital environments they already inhabit, folktales can be introduced as part of their everyday cultural identity.

## POTENTIAL SOLUTION:

- Web-based collaborative games reduce barriers such as physical attendance, equipment costs, and institutional gatekeeping, making folktales accessible across contexts.
- Unlike static documentation, games allow **co-creation, multiple narrative paths, and reinterpretation**, mirroring the natural variation of oral storytelling traditions.
- Interactive design situates folktales within familiar online ecosystems, fostering emotional connection and encouraging youth to treat these stories not as lessons from the past, but as **living narratives they can retell “their way.”**

# MESO

- Institutions tasked with cultural preservation often struggle with **limited resources, bureaucratic rigidity, and reliance on conventional methods**.
- Their archives are frequently static, difficult to verify, and presented in ways that fail to engage today's **digital-native audiences**.
- As a result, initiatives may appear outdated or inaccessible, generating little participation and leaving communities disconnected from their own heritage. This underperformance risks undermining public trust and reducing future support or funding, as stakeholders view these efforts as ineffective.

## POTENTIAL SOLUTION:

- A **ground-up, community-driven approach** can complement institutional efforts by directly engaging people through **collaborative gameplay**.
- Digital and interactive platforms also generate **measurable engagement data** (e.g., play metrics, user feedback), strengthening accountability and demonstrating impact.
- By leveraging native web technologies (e.g., HTML5), these tools can remain sustainable and accessible, while allowing communities — especially youth — to take an **active role in cultural preservation**.

# MACRO

- The sustainability of intangible cultural heritage depends on **younger generations embracing and reinterpreting living traditions**.
- While globalization has introduced a homogenizing effect, it also reshapes how youth engage with culture, often framing heritage as outdated or irrelevant compared to global media.
- If heritage remains static, it risks being sidelined in the digital environments.

## POTENTIAL SOLUTION:

- Heritage can be sustained as a **living practice** by embedding it within the **interactive, participatory platforms** already familiar to digital-native audiences
- By translating traditions digital experiences, youth not only consume heritage but actively **carry it forward**, adapting it in ways that resonate with their realities.
- This approach preserves cultural specificity while tapping into the **viral, shareable dynamics** of global digital culture — ensuring traditions remain **alive, evolving, and relevant**.

# Research Framework

- The project adopts a **practice-based Research through Design (RtD)** approach.

| Author(s)                                       | Key concept                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Frayling (1993)<br>– Research in Art and Design | Defines research through design as knowledge produced through practice.               |
| Schön (1983)<br>– The Reflective Practitioner   | Introduces <b>reflection-in-action</b> .                                              |
| Zimmerman, Forlizzi & Evenson (2007)            | Defines prototypes as <b>research probes</b> in interaction design                    |
| Löwgren (2007)                                  | Argues that <b>design artifacts</b> are <b>knowledge contributions</b> in themselves. |

# Research Framework

- The project will adopt the **design thinking framework** where the research cycle will move through **empathy, define, ideate, prototype and test** :
- **Empathy/Define:** Through semi-structured interviews with Vietnamese Gen Z and Vietnamese literature experts, this stage explores their **awareness, perceptions, and personal retellings of folktales**, as well as how they interact with cultural heritage in the digital space. It also investigates how youth currently **engage with storytelling in digital spaces**, while reviewing **case studies of interactive folktale adaptations** to ground the research context.
- **Ideate:** Insights from interviews and case studies inform the **generation of game concepts** that reinterpret folktales in ways that resonate with youth and encourage collaborative engagement.
- **Prototype:** Selected folktale concepts are developed into **iterative prototypes** using **HTML5-based technologies**. The process moves from **low-fi prototype** to **digital interactive prototypes**, each experimenting with how storytelling can be transformed into engaging gameplay.
- **Test:** Prototypes are evaluated through **playtesting sessions** with Gen Z participants, using **think-aloud method, observation in-play, and post-play interviews/surveys**. This stage measures not only usability and enjoyment but also **cultural resonance**, generating feedback that directly informs iterative improvements to both design and research outcomes.
- Through this iterative framework, design outcomes will both **embody and generate knowledge**.

# References

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