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Research on Digital Communication of Intangible Cultural Heritage

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Abstract

Intangible cultural heritage is the memory and cultural gene of a nation, reflects the wisdom and spirit of a nation, and is the main manifestation of the inheritance practice of Chinese excellent traditional culture. In today's era of rapid development, China has strengthened the protection and dissemination of intangible cultural heritage in terms of policy. In terms of technology, the change of 5g network era has brought new opportunities for communication. Therefore, digital communication is one of the main ways of intangible cultural heritage communication. In the development and innovation of digital communication, this paper explores the subject, object and content of the digital communication of China's intangible cultural heritage, and puts forward some suggestions on the integration of cultural elements, the diversification of content and media in the innovation and development.

Keywords

Intangible cultural heritage; Digitization; Dissemination

1. Current Status of Digital Dissemination of Intangible Cultural Heritage

The development of intangible cultural heritage is a continuous process of improvement, with significant breakthroughs in both the pioneering and innovative efforts of its inheritors and in the methods of dissemination and transmission. Intangible cultural heritage itself is adapting to a rapidly developing society, integrating into every corner of people's lives. Similarly, the methods, channels, and content of its dissemination are constantly changing, contributing to its development. However, this development also faces certain problems. From its own perspective, many intangible cultural heritages are gradually fading or even disappearing from public life, largely because they cannot adapt to current development and cannot generate efficient economic benefits. From an external perspective, there is severe homogenization; well-known intangible cultural heritages are becoming increasingly well-known, while niche intangible cultural heritages are becoming increasingly niche, even to the point of extinction.

Early dissemination of intangible cultural heritage relied primarily on non-digital media, most commonly the four traditional media: television, radio, newspapers, and magazines. In television, CCTV launched the program "The Chinese Nation" in 1983, Tianjin TV launched "Relics and Protection" in 2007, intangible cultural heritage appeared on CCTV's Spring Festival Gala in 2015, and the national intangible cultural heritage competition program "Intangible Cultural Heritage in China" was held in 2018. Today, intangible cultural heritage is not only presented on television programs but also in films and television dramas, reaching audiences. Television media has continuously innovated and integrated with social development and remains the most important channel for non-digital dissemination. In radio, cities such as Beijing, Jiangxi, and Dalian have broadcast content, but the formats are relatively simple and the content is somewhat monotonous. A web search using the keywords "intangible cultural heritage and radio" reveals that in recent years, fewer and fewer products disseminated through radio have been broadcast, and intangible cultural heritage itself is increasingly moving towards digital media. Newspapers and magazines are the

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most widespread channels for the digital dissemination of intangible cultural heritage among the four traditional media. However, their content is relatively mixed, their distribution channels are extensive, and most are based in local newspapers and magazines, resulting in a small audience, poor dissemination effect, and weak user stickiness. For example, newspapers like *Baoji Science and Technology Daily* and *Jingmen Daily* are heavily limited by local and audience restrictions, making efficient dissemination difficult. In summary, the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage through traditional media is now struggling to meet the information needs of intangible cultural heritage and the general public, and the media itself is constantly innovating and transforming.

Since 2004, scholars have been exploring the digital dissemination of intangible cultural heritage. With technological advancements, from online websites to today's social media, digital dissemination has been continuously improving and innovating. Examples include official digital websites for intangible cultural heritage, the WeChat official accounts of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center and the Intangible Cultural Heritage Art Museum, and the Weibo account "Aiwei Space." More and more digital dissemination products are combining with intangible cultural heritage, resulting in diversified and engaging formats. However, certain problems also exist in the development of digital dissemination, such as imperfect laws and policies, resource shortages, and content homogenization. Therefore, the digital dissemination of intangible cultural heritage still has room for development and improvement.

2. The Main Body of Digital Dissemination of Tangible Cultural Heritage

The main entities involved in the digital dissemination of intangible cultural heritage can be divided into five categories: governments, industry organizations, media organizations, inheritors, and enthusiasts.

The first type of dissemination entity is the government. The government, through direct jurisdiction, connects with official media outlets serving both international and governmental purposes to digitally disseminate intangible cultural heritage, such as Xinhua Net, Guangming Net, and People's Daily Online. Taking People's Daily Online as an example, a search for the keyword "intangible cultural heritage" across the entire internet yielded 44,130 related articles, most of which focused on promoting and summarizing real-time news about intangible cultural heritage in various regions. The government, through official and Party media, acts as a bridge and link between the Party and the people. As mainstream media, it is crucial to utilize and leverage this dissemination effectively, allowing it to develop in the process. Simultaneously, its credibility, influence, and dissemination power must be authoritative in the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage. This is not only a responsibility for cultural dissemination but also a safeguard for maintaining public opinion and promoting the development of intangible cultural heritage, uniting positive and healthy forces, and creating an atmosphere conducive to cultural enrichment.

The second category of dissemination entities consists of industry organizations. These entities primarily include official associations for intangible cultural heritage and national cultural institutions—official organizations with qualifications and authority. For example, China established the "China Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center" in 2006, the "China Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Association" in 2013, and various local intangible cultural heritage associations. These entities mainly focus on uncovering and summarizing the current state of intangible cultural heritage discovery and related policies, acting as specialized and vertical dissemination bodies.

The third category of dissemination entities consists of media organizations. This category primarily includes traditional media and their affiliated new media platforms, such as People's Daily Online and its Weibo, WeChat, mobile apps, and short video accounts. Secondly, there are commercial media, mainly based on the four major portal websites: Sohu, Sina, Tencent, and NetEase. These entities have a wider audience and use diverse formats. Additionally, there are comprehensive news apps and mini-programs such as Yidian Zixun and Toutiao, which combine user behavior habits with the characteristics of their own media organizations to disseminate intangible cultural heritage.

The fourth category of disseminators consists of inheritors, who are individuals or groups possessing profound ethnic and folk cultural traditions, mastering the knowledge, skills, and techniques of a particular intangible cultural heritage, and holding the highest level of expertise, with recognized representativeness, authority, and influence. These entities often collaborate with governments and associations in their dissemination efforts. For example, since 2015, the Suzhou Intangible Cultural Heritage Office has held the annual "Touching"—a public welfare experience activity for citizens to explore intangible cultural heritage. This activity has not only been disseminated on online and news platforms but also presented the experiences of two intangible cultural heritage sites along the Wujiang and Zhangjiagang lines through modern live streaming. Ye Congjia —a representative inheritor of the national intangible cultural heritage project Chaozhou Kung Fu Tea—and Lang Jiaziyu — an inheritor of the intangible cultural heritage of dough figurines—along with numerous other intangible cultural heritage inheritors, use social media platforms

like Weibo to spread cultural connotations to the public through their own experiences and the development of their culture. However, with the continuous development and progress of society, many intangible cultural heritage inheritors face pressure from life, economic factors, and various challenges, leading to the increasing threat of extinction for many precious intangible cultural heritages. Therefore, as the main body of intangible cultural heritage, it will inevitably play a leading role in its digital dissemination. Inheritors can continuously explore the content from the essence and connotation of intangible cultural heritage, and based on the original appearance from the aspects of history, skills and development, they will greatly optimize the content in the dissemination process to make its dissemination more in-depth.

The fifth category of disseminators consists of enthusiasts who spread information as ordinary individuals. This group primarily relies on independent understanding and learning, with a minority of those involved in collaboration with inheritors, and engages in digital dissemination. These individuals often struggle to uncover the unique or outstanding aspects of intangible cultural heritage, resulting in content that tends to be homogenized. For example, the author himself created and disseminated the "Take You to See Intangible Cultural Heritage" public account, promoting the engaging applications and connotations of intangible cultural heritage through his own understanding of it and his exploration of its latest developments, thus leading the dissemination process primarily through his own efforts.

Therefore, the digital dissemination of intangible cultural heritage should develop in two directions. When carrying out digital dissemination, modern digital media should be used to ensure the complete dissemination, recording and preservation of intangible cultural heritage, which is more conducive to protecting the accuracy and authenticity of intangible cultural heritage.

3. Targets of Digital Dissemination of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Intangible cultural heritage is a nation's memory and cultural gene, embodying its wisdom and spirit, and is a primary manifestation of the inheritance and practice of outstanding traditional Chinese culture. Therefore, the target audience for the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage is all compatriots of the Chinese nation. Many members of the public lack understanding of the connotation and value of intangible cultural heritage, and are unclear about its importance for dissemination. For dissemination, a people-centered approach is essential; different groups require different channels and methods of communication. Broadly speaking, these can be categorized into the elderly, the general public, and youth. Utilizing modern digital media and various media formats can achieve engaging, comprehensive, and effective publicity.

For many elderly people, intangible cultural heritage represents cultural confidence and serves as a crucial witness to cultural inheritance and development. For the general public, it provides a spiritual refuge in a fast-paced era, a way to reflect on and appreciate life. For young people, it is also a vital target audience. Young people are the primary consumers of digital media and the main active users of new media. Furthermore, they are the successors of my country's cultural undertakings, the main force in the future inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, and the guardians of its development and innovation. Therefore, digital dissemination is a crucial channel for young people to learn about excellent traditional culture and enhance their national identity and cultural confidence.

4. Content of Digital Dissemination of Intangible Cultural Heritage

In the entire process of digital communication, the content is the primary factor. The content reflects and expresses the communicator's intentions and desires, while also requiring the planning of different content for different media formats, and ensuring that the recipients understand and accept it.

The dissemination of intangible cultural heritage primarily focuses on popular science, the culture and stories of inheritors, and information about intangible cultural heritage. Representative examples of this popular science approach include the self-media public account "Intangible Cultural Heritage Family," which mainly showcases intangible cultural heritage items to the world and conducts activities such as exploring intangible cultural heritage. For instance, the article "Qiang Embroidery: The Simple Yet Magnificent Beauty of the Ethnic Group"; the "Intangible Cultural Heritage Cuisine" public account founded by Jiangxi TV combines food with intangible cultural heritage , satisfying the audience's dual needs for food and culture through promotional articles introducing and making intangible cultural heritage foods ; and Douyin (TikTok) short video platforms such as "Intangible Cultural Heritage Shakes Up" and "Intangible Cultural Heritage Dayu" create columns on intangible cultural heritage culture,

intangible cultural heritage crosstalk, and intangible cultural heritage cuisine in video format. Representative examples focusing on individuals include the "Lovely China" short video series, co-organized by the Cyberspace Administration of China's Bureau of Internet News and Information Dissemination , Galaxy Studio, and Guangming.com, which tells the stories of intangible cultural heritage inheritors from 56 ethnic groups; and the "Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center" WeChat official account organized by the association to conduct a special event on "Intangible Cultural Heritage People in Action" to combat the epidemic, showcasing how inheritors contribute their skills to the fight against the epidemic. Representative examples focusing on information include the China Intangible Cultural Heritage Network and the China Intangible Cultural Heritage Digital Museum, which provides cutting-edge news and real-time updates on various intangible cultural heritage items. Representative examples focusing on culture and stories include the WeChat official account "Cultural Industry Review," a platform for sharing the value of China's cultural industry and providing comprehensive services. Examples include articles such as "Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritance: Because of Love, We Never Take it Perfunctorily."

5. Innovation and Improvement of Digital Dissemination of Intangible Cultural Heritage

In the future development of the digital dissemination of intangible cultural heritage, it is necessary to explore more media and content formats, and to create derivative works from existing content to avoid wasting resources and homogenization. This can be achieved through mainstream media channels such as augmented reality, videos, and games, and even by combining various artistic techniques with different media in any way, fully integrating visual and sensory experiences to bring humanity a richer cultural and artistic experience of intangible cultural heritage.

To innovate and improve the main body of communication, we can collaborate with other entities for shared dissemination. As mentioned above, current content dissemination is often redundant and homogeneous, making it difficult to identify new directions. Therefore, we can create a powerful alliance among five key entities: government, industry organizations, media organizations, inheritors, and enthusiasts. This alliance will unite intangible cultural heritage inheritors to produce content and knowledge, industry organizations to promote activities, and government, media organizations, and enthusiasts to disseminate information through multiple channels. This cross-sectoral alliance will leverage complementary strengths to create and maintain a valuable partnership, better promoting intangible cultural heritage to the public.

The innovation and improvement of the subject matter, enabling the creation of digital picture books on intangible cultural heritage, can broaden the audience. Digital picture books primarily target infants and toddlers, allowing the digital dissemination of intangible cultural heritage to reach a wider audience, including children and middle-aged parents. Furthermore, digital picture books are not only highly engaging but also interactive, offering quick and convenient dissemination and reading. They can be viewed anytime, anywhere, without geographical, time, or delivery restrictions, and can be given as gifts to friends and family, achieving secondary dissemination.

Innovation and improvement of content are crucial, given China's rich intangible cultural heritage resources. Further exploration of intangible cultural heritage content can be undertaken, including creating series of stories, producing articles for public accounts, and developing engaging picture books. By integrating intangible cultural heritage with current trends and hot topics, buzz can be generated. This can also be used to create variety shows, short videos, and documentaries. Simultaneously, it's essential to analyze the current integration of intangible cultural heritage content, identifying both homogenized and differentiated elements.

For example, creating electronic pets, electronic gifts, and personalized physical items pays homage to classics and revitalizes ancient charm. Combining intangible cultural heritage content with gifts can create a dual online and offline experience, allowing for customized digital gifts (videos, music, etc.) based on intangible cultural heritage, and even product realization. DIY integrates intangible cultural heritage, making it more personalized, innovative, and diversified. Examples include: mythical beast pets (intangible cultural heritage), intangible cultural heritage food experiences, and new intangible cultural heritage clothing.

The integration of intangible cultural heritage content with digital products will become the biggest development trend in the future, combining traditional concepts and reshaping the soul of intangible cultural heritage.

6. Summary

The rapid development of modern digital technology has influenced how people perceive the world and changed the linear dissemination model of traditional media. The planning, production, and development of digital products have

evolved from a singular approach to a more diversified and interactive one. Effectively disseminating intangible cultural heritage resources requires addressing existing problems and exploring innovative methods. Currently, the digital dissemination of intangible cultural heritage still faces challenges such as incomplete "intangible cultural heritage identity information," redundant and homogenized content, a lack of technical talent, and the substitution of dissemination channels. These issues are significant factors affecting the transmission of intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, compared to traditional digital dissemination, new media, as a new information dissemination channel, is the mainstream method based on people's current habits of content reception and media use. Everyone can be both a disseminator and a receiver of self-media; therefore, in the new media landscape, trendy platforms such as short videos and microblogs will enhance the effectiveness and impact of information dissemination and will become the mainstream method of communication.

Protecting and disseminating intangible cultural heritage is an extremely challenging task, requiring not only efficient dissemination by propagators but also enhanced public awareness and confidence in the culture. In recent years, with national support and encouragement, activities such as "Intangible Cultural Heritage Entering Universities," "Intangible Cultural Heritage Entering Welfare Homes," "Intangible Cultural Heritage Entering Communities," and various intangible cultural heritage competitions have been continuously carried out and disseminated, playing a significant role in the spread of intangible cultural heritage. Especially in this era of ubiquitous social media and digital society, the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage must better align with the needs and content acquisition methods of the public. Currently, many social media products about intangible cultural heritage exist, mostly using social media to drive traffic and achieve dissemination or economic benefits, while innovation in digital products is scarce. In the future, digital products will gradually become the direction of development, bringing ancient charm back to life and paying tribute to tradition. The digital dissemination of China's intangible cultural heritage will bring more opportunities, and spreading excellent traditional culture is the responsibility of each and every one of us.

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