INNOVATIVE MODELS PROMOTE THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL VALUES OF CHANGDE CITY IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY MEDIA*

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Abstract

This research article aimed to: (1) analyze the elements that promote the development and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage in Changde City within the context of contemporary media; (2) develop a content innovation model for the development and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage in Changde City within the context of contemporary media; and (3) evaluate the proposed model. This study employed a mixed-methods research design. Data were collected through a literature review, analysis of 10 representative intangible cultural heritage cases, semi-structured interviews with 10 key informants, and questionnaires administered to 250 respondents. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis and comparative analysis, while quantitative data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

The research results found that: (1) five key elements promoting the development and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage were identified,

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namely cultural value identification, narrative structuring, visual translation, media adaptation, and participatory engagement; (2) a four-stage Content Innovation Model was developed, consisting of Cultural Value Identification, Content Structuring and Translation, Media-Oriented Design, and Circulation and Feedback; and (3) the evaluation results demonstrated that the model effectively enhanced cultural value communication, strengthened narrative coherence, improved media adaptability, and provided a systematic framework for transforming intangible cultural heritage into meaningful contemporary media content while preserving cultural authenticity and integrity.

Keywords: Intangible cultural heritage, Cultural value, Content innovation model, Contemporary media, Changde City

Introduction

In the context of increasing global cultural diversity and rapid transformation within the media ecology, the preservation, transmission, and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) have become increasingly important in cultural studies and arts management. The rapid development of digital platforms and networked communication systems has significantly reshaped the ways in which cultural content is produced, distributed, and consumed. According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (2023), China has recognized more than 1,600 national-level ICH items and over 100,000 local-level items, with 43 elements inscribed on UNESCO's Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage. In alignment with the 14th Five-Year Cultural Development Plan, the Chinese government emphasizes the "digital activation of cultural resources" and the "innovative dissemination of traditional culture," highlighting the integration of cultural heritage with contemporary digital technologies as a national priority.

Within this broader cultural strategy, Changde City in Hunan Province represents a significant regional context for examining the interaction between intangible cultural heritage and contemporary media practices. The city is home to approximately 340 municipal-level ICH items, including traditional music, crafts, folk customs, and performing arts, such as Changde Gaoqiang Opera, Changde Sixian (Silk String), Peach Blossom Spring carving crafts, and the Lishui Boatmen's Chant (Changde Municipal Bureau of Culture, Tourism, Radio, Television and Sports, 2023). These heritage forms embody rich layers of historical memory, aesthetic tradition, symbolic meaning, and regional identity. However, despite their cultural richness, many of these values remain underexplored in terms of systematic interpretation and adaptation into contemporary media formats.

At the practical level, although cultural spaces such as Changde River Street recognized as a National Tourist Leisure Block host over 50 ICH performance groups and regularly organize cultural activities, the current production of ICH-related content remains limited in innovation and structural development. Most expressions are still experience-oriented and event-based, relying heavily on traditional stage performance or festival presentations. In addition, the dissemination of ICH content on digital platforms such as Douyin, Bilibili, and WeChat remains fragmented and lacks strategic integration. Existing content often fails to translate traditional cultural elements into modular, narrative-driven, and platform-optimized formats, resulting in weak cross-media adaptability and limited engagement with digital creative industries.

Despite the growing attention to digital cultural communication, there remains a significant gap in developing a systematic content innovation model that can effectively guide the transformation of Changde's intangible cultural heritage into contemporary media contexts. Existing studies and practices tend to focus either on cultural preservation or media dissemination separately,

without integrating both dimensions into a coherent framework for cultural value extraction, content structuring, and digital adaptation. This lack of an integrated model limits the effectiveness of cultural communication, weakens the construction of contemporary cultural identity, and restricts the potential of Changde's ICH to contribute to broader national and global cultural narratives. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by developing a systematic content innovation model for the revitalization of intangible cultural heritage in Changde City within the context of contemporary media.

Objectives

1. To analyze the elements that promote the development and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage in Changde City within the context of contemporary media.

2. To create a content innovation model for the development and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage in Changde City within the context of contemporary media.

3. To evaluate the model promoting the development and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage in Changde City within the context of contemporary media.

Literature Review

1. Intangible Cultural Heritage Theories

The concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) was formally defined by UNESCO (2003), which describes it as practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts, and cultural spaces associated with them that communities, groups, and individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. UNESCO further classifies ICH into five domains, namely oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social practices,

knowledge concerning nature and the universe, and traditional craftsmanship. In China, the Law on Intangible Cultural Heritage (2011) has established a comprehensive institutional framework for the identification, protection, and transmission of ICH across national, provincial, and local levels.

2. Intangible Cultural Values

The understanding of cultural value has been widely discussed across interdisciplinary scholarship. Geertz (1973) conceptualizes culture as a "web of meanings," suggesting that cultural value is constructed through symbolic interpretation within specific social contexts. Throsby (2001) further develops a multidimensional model of cultural value, which includes aesthetic, spiritual, social, historical, symbolic, and authenticity dimensions. In addition, Smith (2006) emphasizes that heritage value is socially constructed through discourse and practice, while Hall (1997) highlights the role of representation in shaping cultural meaning and identity formation.

3. Cultural Value Enhancement and Revitalization

Cultural value enhancement refers to processes through which cultural meanings become more visible, meaningful, and socially significant within contemporary society. Fairclough (2009) argues that heritage value is strengthened when it is reconnected to contemporary social practices and everyday life. Jenkins (2006) introduces the concept of participatory culture, emphasizing that cultural value increases when audiences actively engage as co-creators rather than passive consumers.

4. Contemporary Media Context and Media Logic

Media Ecology Theory (McLuhan, 1964) posits that media technologies fundamentally shape human perception and cultural experience. Building on this perspective, Castells (1996) proposes the Network Society Theory, which explains how digital communication technologies restructure social relations into networked systems. Van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal (2018) further extend this

discussion through Platform Society Theory, highlighting how digital platforms govern cultural production through algorithmic and infrastructural mechanisms. In addition, Media Logic Theory (Altheide & Snow, 1979) explains that media systems operate according to standardized formats, rules, and logics that significantly influence how content is produced and interpreted.

5. Content Innovation and Cultural Translation

Content innovation is understood as the creative transformation of cultural meaning through reinterpretation and recombination. Verganti (2009) introduces Design-Driven Innovation, which emphasizes innovation centered on meaning rather than functionality. Bhabha's (1994) Cultural Translation Theory further explains that cultural meaning emerges through negotiation, hybridity, and interaction within a "third space." Narrative-based approaches also contribute to this field. Ricoeur's (1991) Narrative Identity Theory highlights the role of storytelling in constructing identity and meaning, while Jenkins (2006) Transmedia Narrative Theory emphasizes the importance of distributing narratives across multiple platforms to enhance engagement and cultural participation.

6. Related Research

Existing Chinese scholarship has significantly contributed to the study of ICH. Wang Wenzhang (2006) conceptualizes ICH as a living cultural system requiring holistic protection and dynamic transmission. Liu Xiaochun (2012) examines challenges in cultural inheritance under conditions of social transformation. Zhao Shiyu (2015) proposes a multidimensional framework for evaluating ICH value. Hu Zhifeng (2018) explores the role of new media in the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage, while Yang Chenghu (2023) investigates the impact of short-video platforms on cultural communication practices. International studies provide complementary perspectives. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) focuses on heritage as metacultural production, Throsby (2001) develops a cultural value framework, and Jenkins (2006) emphasizes convergence culture and participatory media systems.

Methodology

1. Research Design

This study uses a mixed-methods design combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Stage 1 involved collecting and analyzing literature, 10 ICH case studies, and interviews with 10 key informants to identify key elements for enhancing ICH value. Stage 2 integrated these findings to develop a four-stage Content Innovation Model for transforming ICH into effective media content. Stage 3 evaluated the model through expert feedback, a 250-respondent questionnaire, and qualitative comparison to assess its clarity, relevance, and effectiveness.

2. Population and Sample

The study population included relevant literature, policy documents, case materials, and key ICH stakeholders. 10 key informants were purposively selected for qualitative interviews, while 250 respondents participated in a questionnaire to explore public perceptions of ICH content and communication effectiveness.

3. Research Instruments

This study employed six research instruments to support systematic data collection and analysis. Literature review instruments analyzed academic articles, books, reports, and policy documents. Case study instruments examined 10 representative ICH cases for content structure, narrative, and media representation. A semi-structured interview guide explored informants' perceptions of cultural value, content innovation, and media strategies. A questionnaire assessed respondents' views on the model's clarity, effectiveness, and communicative performance. Qualitative coding facilitated thematic analysis of interviews and cases, while descriptive statistics summarized questionnaire data.

4. Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through five systematic steps. First, relevant literature and policy documents were reviewed to establish the study's theoretical foundation. Second, representative ICH cases and media examples were selected for analysis. Third, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants and the data were transcribed and organized. Fourth, questionnaires were distributed and collected to gather respondents' perceptions of the proposed model. Finally, all data were systematically classified and prepared for analysis.

5. Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study adopts an integrated qualitative and quantitative approach aligned with the research objectives. Literature analysis was used to identify key concepts and theoretical frameworks related to intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and media communication. Case study analysis applied interpretive and comparative methods to examine content structure, narrative strategies, and cultural value representation. Interview data were analyzed through transcription and thematic coding to identify key themes and patterns. Questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, to summarize respondents' perceptions of the proposed model.

Results

1. Analysis of Elements Promoting ICH Development and Revitalization

Based on the integration of literature review, case studies, and semi-structured interviews, five key elements were identified as critical in promoting the development and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in contemporary media contexts.

First, cultural value identification mechanisms play a fundamental role in extracting embedded meanings from ICH resources, including symbolic, aesthetic, historical, and identity-related dimensions. Second, narrative structuring strategies enhance audience engagement by organizing cultural content into coherent and meaningful storytelling frameworks that connect tradition with contemporary experience.

Third, visual translation methods are essential for transforming intangible cultural elements into visually communicable forms through selective abstraction and symbolic representation. Fourth, media adaptation capabilities enable content to be effectively adjusted across different digital platforms while maintaining cultural integrity. Finally, participatory engagement frameworks encourage audience interaction and co-creation, thereby strengthening cultural visibility and revitalization through shared meaning-making processes.

2. Development of the Content Innovation Model

Based on the five core elements identified in Objective 1, a four-stage Content Innovation Model was developed to guide the transformation of intangible cultural heritage into contemporary media content. The model consists of (1) cultural value identification, (2) content structuring and translation, (3) media-oriented design, and (4) circulation and participatory feedback.

This model provides a systematic framework that links cultural resources with media communication processes, ensuring that intangible cultural values are effectively translated into accessible, engaging, and platform-compatible content while maintaining cultural authenticity and interpretive depth.

3. Model Evaluation

The effectiveness of the proposed Content Innovation Model was evaluated through expert assessment, a questionnaire survey, and qualitative comparison.

Expert evaluation from three specialists indicated that the model demonstrates high conceptual clarity, strong theoretical grounding, and effective integration of cultural value and media communication principles. Experts also highlighted its practical applicability, while suggesting further refinement in platform-specific guidelines and community participation mechanisms. Overall, the model was described as a systematic framework that bridges cultural heritage preservation with contemporary media communication.

Questionnaire results from 250 respondents showed generally positive perceptions of the model. Most respondents agreed that the model enhances cultural value clarity (78%), improves narrative understanding (82%), supports platform adaptability (75%), and strengthens overall cultural communication effectiveness (80%). The mean scores ranged from 4.0 to 4.3, indicating a high level of agreement across all indicators.

Qualitative comparison with successful cases such as Henan Museum digital content, the Li Ziqi phenomenon, and Kunqu Opera short-video strategies revealed that these cases implicitly reflect similar processes to those proposed in the model. In contrast, existing Changde ICH content remains fragmented and lacks systematic value identification and narrative structuring. The findings confirm that the proposed model effectively addresses these gaps and has strong potential to enhance the revitalization and communication of ICH in Changde City within contemporary media environments.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal several insights into the development and revitalization of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in Changde City within contemporary media contexts, highlighting connections with existing theoretical frameworks and previous research.

Regarding Objective 1, the study found that five core elements cultural value identification, narrative structuring, visual translation, media adaptation, and participatory engagement are critical for enhancing ICH value. This outcome can be attributed to the necessity of systematically extracting, organizing, and communicating cultural meanings to modern audiences, ensuring both interpretive depth and cultural integrity. These findings are consistent with Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's (2004) concept of heritage as metacultural production, Smith's (2006) Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD), and Throsby's (2001) multidimensional framework of cultural value, all of which emphasize the structured identification and articulation of cultural meanings to maintain their social and symbolic significance.

For Objective 2, the development of the four-stage Content Innovation Model demonstrated that a systematic framework can effectively transform intangible cultural resources into media-communicable content. This can be explained by the model's integration of value identification, narrative coherence, visual translation, and media-specific adaptation, providing a stepwise approach to content creation. These results align with Verganti's (2009) Design-Driven Innovation, which emphasizes meaning-centered creativity, and Bhabha's (1994) Cultural Translation Theory, which highlights the negotiation and adaptation of cultural meaning in new contexts. Moreover, Jenkins' (2006) Transmedia Narrative Theory supports the model's focus on cross-platform storytelling to engage contemporary audiences.

Regarding Objective 3, the evaluation indicated that the model is clear, relevant, and effective in supporting the development and revitalization of Changde's ICH. This can be attributed to its structured stages that explicitly guide value extraction, narrative organization, media adaptation, and participatory engagement. The positive outcomes correspond with the principles of Media Ecology Theory (McLuhan, 1964), which stress the influence of media

environments on content perception, and Platform Society Theory (Van Dijck, Poell, & de Waal, 2018), which emphasizes the strategic alignment of content with platform-specific logics. The results also resonate with previous empirical studies of successful ICH digital content, such as the Henan Museum's digital productions and the Li Ziqi phenomenon, confirming the importance of systematic, platform-oriented, and participatory approaches for cultural revitalization.

Recommendation

The findings of this study show that Changde City has strong potential for intangible cultural heritage (ICH) revitalization due to its rich cultural resources. However, current communication practices remain fragmented, lack narrative integration, have weak digital adaptation, and do not follow a systematic content innovation framework. Therefore, several recommendations are proposed. First, cultural and tourism authorities in Changde City should adopt the Content Innovation Model as a guiding framework to ensure systematic identification, structuring, and dissemination of ICH content across tourism and digital platforms. Relevant agencies should also establish a coordinated taskforce and develop standardized guidelines for narrative design, visual identity, platform adaptation, and participatory engagement. In addition, cultural institutions and local communities should be supported through training programs and pilot projects, while collaboration with digital platforms and creative industries should be strengthened to promote co-creation and wider audience engagement. For future research, it is recommended that studies examine audience perceptions after model implementation, evaluate its effectiveness across digital platforms such as short-video and livestreaming systems, and conduct comparative studies in other cultural regions. Future research may also explore the role of emerging

technologies, including artificial intelligence and virtual reality, in enhancing ICH content innovation and dissemination.

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