

Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education Empowers Cultural Heritage Preservation: A Case Study of the "Restoring Armor for Prosperity" Project

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ABSTRACT

As an essential component of higher education, innovation and entrepreneurship education (IEE) serves not only as a key pathway for cultivating innovative talents but also provides new opportunities for the preservation and innovation of traditional culture. Taking the Restoring Armor for Prosperity project, a national college student innovation and entrepreneurship initiative, as a case study, this paper explores how IEE empowers cultural heritage through practice, facilitating the deep integration of traditional craftsmanship with modern demands.

KEYWORDS

innovation and entrepreneurship education (IEE); cultural heritage preservation; armor

1 Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education and Cultural Heritage Preservation

As an essential component of higher education, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education (IEE) aims to cultivate students' innovative thinking, entrepreneurial spirit, and practical abilities to meet society's demand for high-quality interdisciplinary talents. Through IEE, students develop multidimensional perspectives and enhance problem-solving skills. This educational model not only facilitates personal growth but also injects continuous innovative vitality into society. Culture forms the spiritual foundation of a nation and serves as a crucial source of social cohesion. Cultural heritage preservation represents not only respect for history but also responsibility for the future. Only through cultural preservation can society maintain cultural diversity and historical continuity while strengthening national identity and cultural confidence. IEE emphasizes innovation, while cultural heritage requires innovative approaches to adapt to modern societal needs. Through IEE, traditional cultural elements can be integrated into contemporary designs, products, and services, breathing new life into traditional culture. For instance, innovation and entrepreneurship projects can transform intangible cultural heritage into marketable cultural products, achieving both cultural preservation and innovation. This integration enriches the essence of IEE while providing new pathways for cultural heritage preservation.

2 The "Restoring Armor for Prosperity - New Platform Armor Industry" Project

"Restoring Armor for Prosperity - New Platform Armor Industry" is a college student innovation and entrepreneurship training project based on China's excellent traditional armor culture. The project team consists entirely of armor enthusiasts from diverse academic backgrounds, forming an interdisciplinary collaboration. Through project development, participants underwent profound immersion in traditional culture. As an award-winning innovation and entrepreneurship project, it effectively promotes traditional armor culture, raises public awareness, and achieves cultural dissemination and development.

(1) Theme Positioning: Promoting Traditional Culture

As a representation of national protective spirit, armor culture is internationally recognized for symbolizing boldness, courage, and patriotism. Chinese armor culture boasts particularly profound historical roots dating back at least 3,600 years. Ancient Chinese armor embodies rich cultural genes and represents an important component of excellent traditional culture. From the cold weapon era, armor evolved through different historical periods in terms of design, function, and craftsmanship, reflecting both the development of functional craftsmanship and the aesthetic evolution between functionality and beauty across dynasties. Today, armor carries significant spiritual and cultural meaning - it represents the heritage of ancient art and culture while symbolizing the Chinese nation's independence and perseverance.

In the post-pandemic economic recovery context, the armor industry is experiencing major development opportunities supported by cultural confidence policies and the rise of "Guochao" (China-chic). As the core carrier of Chinese martial culture, armor combines historical value with modern aesthetics and is transitioning from niche collectibles to mass consumer markets. Policy support and young generations' enthusiasm for traditional cultural IP, coupled with e-commerce platforms and 3D modeling technologies lowering entry barriers, are driving industry growth. The armor industry is poised to become a model for traditional cultural industry upgrading, with IP operation at its core,

integrating e-commerce, technology, and cross-sector collaboration to build a "content-product-community" ecosystem that achieves both cultural preservation and commercial value.

Gansu Province, as a strategic hub along the ancient Silk Road and military stronghold, boasts historical sites like Jiayuguan and Yumenguan rich in martial culture. The title "Golden City" for Lanzhou further demonstrates its long military tradition. Although armor culture hasn't gained widespread popularity in Gansu, current trends like armor-themed cosplay and photography on Douyin (TikTok) show tremendous market potential. The "Restoring Armor for Prosperity" project fully leverages Gansu's historical advantages by positioning itself at the intersection of historical culture and modern aesthetic appeal in armor industrialization. Through a tripartite model of "cultural preservation + technological innovation + commercial operation," it promotes traditional Chinese armor culture while injecting new momentum into Gansu's tourism industry, achieving win-win cultural and economic development.

(2) Multidimensional Promotion Strategy for Traditional Culture

A.Cultural Creative Approach to Promote Traditional Culture

Face Mask Series

We have designed the "Mountain Pattern" face mask, featuring precise reproductions of the characteristic "mountain"-shaped 3D patterns from traditional mountain-pattern armor on its outer layer. Inspired by metal plate designs from Chinese mountain-pattern armor, this product perfectly blends cold weapon-era military aesthetics with modern protective gear. Each pattern replicates actual Ming Dynasty mountain-pattern armor pieces from museum collections, embodying the essence of Chinese martial culture described as "Steel-clad horses, swallowing enemies across vast territories." This mask represents both a contemporary interpretation of traditional armor culture and an innovative practice transforming intangible cultural heritage into daily necessities, allowing users to experience the profound heritage of Chinese civilization through routine protection.

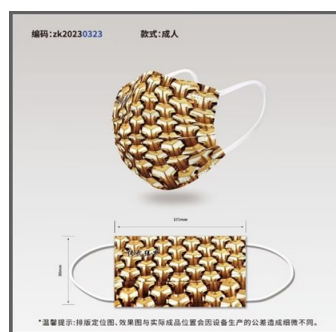


Figure 1 Face Mask

Phone Lanyard Series

The design inspiration for this armor-patterned phone lanyard stems from dual cultural origins: Early Shang Dynasty motifs – Drawing from armor patterns unearthed at the Houjiazang Shang Dynasty tombs in Henan, representing one of China's oldest surviving armor artifacts. Intangible cultural heritage craftsmanship – Incorporating traditional leather armor motifs from the Lisu ethnic group in Yunnan, showcasing the evolution of Chinese armor culture.

The product originated from team discussions on modernizing traditional culture, aiming to provide practicality and cultural depth for enthusiasts of classical aesthetics and armor. The inaugural Shang Dynasty-style lanyard, now commercially available, employs wear-resistant nylon and laser engraving to meticulously replicate historical patterns. Future Development Planned as a "dynastic evolution" series, subsequent releases will feature distinctive motifs from the Zhou, Han, Tang, and Ming dynasties, constructing a comprehensive product line that revitalizes traditional martial artistry through contemporary lifestyle accessories.



Figure 2 Phone Lanyard

Acrylic Keychain & Standee Series

This armor-inspired cultural product draws from two key dimensions: Market-driven design: Through in-depth consumer research, we identified strong demand among armor enthusiasts and anime subculture communities for products blending historical heritage with fantasy aesthetics. Cross-cultural innovation: Creatively integrating noble armor motifs from the Western Han Dynasty's Qi King Mausoleum with Western fantasy elements, we've constructed a unique "Alternate-World Han Dynasty" universe. Utilizing high-precision 3D modeling, the designs balance historical authenticity (faithfully reproducing Han Dynasty armor silhouettes) with fantasy flair (through magical runes and beast-shaped ornaments). The product line features: Dynasty Series: Chronicles China's armor evolution from Shang-Zhou to Ming-Qing periods Mythical Beasts Series: Combines zodiac symbols with adorable armored creature designs With versatile applications – from anime merchandise and cosplay props to museum and blind box collectibles – these products demonstrate strong scenario adaptability. Future development will involve community co-creation with historians and anime designers to build a comprehensive "Oriental Fantasy Armor" IP ecosystem.



Figure 3 Acrylic Keychain&standee

Digital Collectibles (NFT Series)

The NFT Digital Collectibles Series of this project represents an innovative cultural product based on blockchain technology, utilizing Non-fungible Tokens (NFTs) to assign unique ownership certificates to each digital artwork. Currently, we employ a "physical + digital" dual-collection model: when consumers purchase physical armor-themed display stands, they will simultaneously receive corresponding NFT digital collectibles (Block Height: 103786996, Hash Address: 59353...db4b0, IPFS Address: QmSo...VMv9). This bundled sales approach satisfies collectors' desire for physical ownership while leveraging blockchain technology to guarantee the scarcity and ownership authenticity of digital artworks.

Future development will focus on three key directions:

Original Content Expansion – Commission emerging artists to create an "Alternate-World Han Dynasty" themed illustration series, with each artwork released as a limited-edition NFT.

Interactive Experience Enhancement – Develop AR functionality enabling NFTs to display 3D armor models in real-world environments via smartphone scanning.

Community Ecosystem Building – Grant special privileges to NFT holders, including priority access to offline events and exclusive merchandise purchase rights.

By harnessing NFT technology to transcend spatiotemporal limitations, we revitalize traditional armor culture through contemporary digital forms, constructing an innovative cultural dissemination system that bridges historical artifacts, modern art, and the metaverse. All NFT artworks will utilize smart contracts to ensure copyright protection and transaction transparency, achieving organic integration between cultural value and the digital economy.

B. Cultural Promotion Through Experiential Activities

During the Jin Kingdom Special Exhibition (June 25 - September 2022) co-hosted by Nanjing Museum and Shanxi Museum – which showcased 231 archaeological treasures tracing 600 years of Jin history from the "Tongye Fengdi" legend to the "Partition of Jin" period – our Restoring Armor for Prosperity team participated wearing self-crafted armor replicas. Key Achievements: The archaeologically-informed yet modern-material armor became an exhibition highlight

Live demonstrations of armor-wearing and military history lectures enhanced visitor engagement. Collected valuable feedback for future product development. Established methodology for promoting armor culture in museum settings. This event transcended armor enthusiast gatherings, becoming a paradigm for innovative cultural transmission – where historical rigor meets contemporary craftsmanship to revitalize ancient military heritage.



Figure 4 The images are sourced from the internet

2022 marked the 40th anniversary of Nanjing's designation as one of China's first National Historical and Cultural Cities. To celebrate this milestone, the city hosted a series of events, with the most prominent being the "Millennial Capital of Culture, A Model City" exhibition commemorating four decades of Nanjing's historical and cultural legacy.

As members of the "Military Command of Yingtian Prefecture" historical association, our project team participated in the opening ceremony as the grand finale. We showcased seven museum-grade replica armors spanning dynasties (Qin, Han, Wei-Jin, Tang, Five Dynasties, Song, Ming, etc.) and twelve sets of elaborate traditional attire. Dressed in these exquisitely restored armors and costumes, we brought Nanjing's millennia-old cultural grandeur to life through an immersive historical fashion show.



Figure 5 The images are sourced from the internet

3 The Value and Significance of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Education in Empowering Traditional Culture

The integration of innovation and entrepreneurship education (dual-innovation education) with cultural heritage preservation carries profound theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, this synergy expands the boundaries of dual-innovation education, reveals the intrinsic connection between cultural inheritance and innovation, and provides a fresh theoretical perspective for higher education reform. Practically, it offers a viable pathway for universities to cultivate interdisciplinary talents with both cultural literacy and innovative capabilities, while injecting new momentum into the

sustainable development of cultural industries. This convergence facilitates the coordinated advancement of education, culture, and the economy, thereby bolstering comprehensive societal progress.

As a vital component of higher education, innovation and entrepreneurship education (dual-innovation education) serves not only as a core approach to fostering innovative talent but also opens new dimensions for the preservation and revitalization of traditional culture. The "Armoring the Path to Prosperity" project exemplifies this integration: the team not only conducted in-depth field research to uncover the historical context of armor culture but also developed experiential products such as immersive armor design workshops, crafting studios, and cultural creative derivatives. These initiatives transform traditional craftsmanship from static museum displays into dynamic, living heritage. Dual-innovation education plays a dual role in this process: Technological Innovation – By integrating multidisciplinary knowledge, it infuses traditional techniques with modern technological elements. Market-Oriented Thinking – Through entrepreneurship training, it cultivates students' business acumen, shifting cultural preservation from passive conservation to active innovation. This practice model—driven by technological advancement, guided by market demand, and extended through social impact—demonstrates the unique power of dual-innovation education in facilitating the creative transformation of traditional culture. It not only revitalizes ancient armor restoration techniques in modern society but also validates the deep-seated connection between educational innovation and the sustainable preservation of cultural heritage.

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