

Innovative Practices, Current Challenges, and Optimization Pathways for Youth-Oriented Dissemination of Traditional Culture in the Digital Age

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ABSTRACT

In the digital age, digital technologies are driving shifts in traditional cultural dissemination and fostering innovative practices, while also presenting challenges such as fragmentation. This paper analyzes these dynamics and proposes a "technology + cultural core" framework to enhance the transmission and preservation of traditional culture among young people.

KEYWORDS

Digital intelligence era; Traditional culture; Youth-oriented communication; Technology-empowered; Long-term communication system

1 Introduction

In the era of digital intelligence, young people have emerged as the core force driving cultural consumption and dissemination. The youth-oriented dissemination of traditional culture has gradually become a crucial pathway for its inheritance. This approach breaks down the barriers of "niche preservation," leveraging digital technology to reach a broader youth audience. It transforms traditional culture from static memory into dynamic participation, playing a vital role in revitalizing cultural vitality and achieving intergenerational transmission.

The revitalization of traditional culture requires both leveraging digital technology and intelligent algorithms for empowerment, while also confronting issues such as the fragmentation of cultural symbols and the distortion of traditions caused by excessive adaptation driven by traffic-oriented approaches.

This paper will follow the framework of "Communication Paradigm Shift—Innovative Practices—Real-World Challenges—Optimization Pathways" to dissect the core logic of communication. Ultimately, it will explore a sustainable system combining "technological empowerment with cultural core preservation" to empower the continuous transmission of traditional culture in the digital and intelligent era.

2 Exploring the Youthful Dissemination of Traditional Culture in the Digital Age

2.1 The Paradigm Shift in Communication: Fundamental Changes from "Niche Preservation" to "Circle-Breaking"

2.1.1 Diverse Participation from Intangible Cultural Heritage Bearers to Young Creators

In traditional contexts, the transmission of cultural heritage has primarily centered on intangible cultural heritage bearers. While the master-apprentice model safeguards the purity of cultural essence, its reliance on singular transmission channels and limited audience reach has confined it to niche preservation. Bearers serve as both custodians and sole disseminators of culture, constrained by individual capacity and physical venues, resulting in cultural influence confined to specialized enthusiast circles.

Technological advancements in the digital age have broken through these limitations. The proliferation of short-video platforms and creative design tools has opened pathways for young creators to engage in the dissemination of traditional culture. Today, social media has become a significant driver of societal structural change. The platforms they provide enable people to move "from sharing and collaboration to collective action."^[1] For instance, creator Li Ziqi uses short videos as a medium to deeply integrate traditional culinary arts, handicraft techniques, and pastoral life scenes. She once studied Shu embroidery techniques under an intangible cultural heritage inheritor, documenting the entire process from silk extraction and thread color matching to pattern creation. She also incorporates intangible cultural heritage skills like traditional rouge production and ancient brown sugar boiling into her daily vlogs. The videos showcase not only intricate craftsmanship but also convey the beauty of traditional living aesthetics. A single Shu embroidery-themed video has garnered over 10 million views, with a total online following exceeding 100 million, reaching audiences across all age groups.

Through these practices, Li Ziqi has transformed niche intangible cultural heritage skills into relatable lifestyle content for the general public by precisely grasping the principles of digital communication and meticulously presenting

traditional cultural living scenarios. By employing youthful video language and contextualized expressions, traditional culture has broken free from specialized circles, effectively overcoming barriers to its dissemination and propelling it from niche appreciation to widespread resonance.

2.1.2 Evolving from "Knowledge-Based Understanding" to "Emotional Resonance + Experiential Engagement"

Traditional cultural dissemination often remains confined to knowledge transfer, where audiences acquire cultural literacy through books, documentaries, or offline exhibitions. This one-way output model struggles to truly integrate culture into everyday life and fails to inspire sustained engagement. In the era of digital intelligence, young people's engagement with traditional culture is evolving from mere knowledge to deeper emotional resonance. They increasingly seek not just understanding what it is, but why it matters—pursuing emotional connection and experiential participation.

For example, the Palace Museum's "Digital Cultural Heritage Repository" not only displays high-definition details of artifacts but also allows users to dissect the firing process of blue-and-white porcelain through 3D modeling, enabling them to grasp the ingenuity of traditional craftsmanship through immersive interaction. This escalation of demand essentially reflects young people's pursuit of cultural belonging. By engaging in experiential participation, they establish deep connections with traditional culture and internalize its values through emotional identification. This also provides an audience foundation for traditional culture to break through its niche boundaries and achieve sustained dissemination.

2.2 Innovative Practice: Exploring Youth-Oriented Communication Through Technology Empowerment

2.2.1 .Form Innovation: AI and VR Create Immersive Experiences

In the digital intelligence era, the advancement of digital intelligence technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR) has made the modes of object presentation richer and more diverse^[2]. AI, VR, short videos, social platforms, and other technologies are deeply integrating with traditional culture, not only breaking down barriers to niche inheritance but also building a new ecosystem for youth-oriented dissemination characterized by immersive experiences, engaging participation, and targeted outreach.

Traditional cultural dissemination has largely relied on static, one-way displays of images, text, or physical artifacts, making it difficult for audiences to gain a deep understanding. AI and VR technologies, however, transform these into immersive experiences by creating accessible, interactive virtual environments—a key breakthrough in attracting young people. At the Palace Museum, the "Digital Twin of the Forbidden City" brings artifacts to life. Visitors wearing VR headsets can use hand gestures to open virtual memorials^[3]. Baidu AI Brings Ancient Painting to Life Using deep learning algorithms, Baidu has animated figures in the "Along the River During the Qingming Festival" scroll. Users can even engage in voice conversations with the characters depicted in the painting to ask questions. These initiatives use technology to reconstruct cultural experiences, transforming young people from passive observers into active participants. Data shows that users aged 18-30 account for over 65% of such experiential programs, with more than 80% reporting a significant increase in their interest in traditional culture. The effectiveness of current immersive experiences has been validated, yet there remains room for enhancement: On one hand, the breadth of experiential scenarios can be expanded—such as applying VR technology to traditional opera, allowing users to step behind the stage to observe costume and makeup creation, vocal rehearsals, and other cultural details up close. On the other hand, AI-powered personalized services can be enhanced. For instance, traditional costume enthusiasts could receive AI-generated design recommendations. By inputting preferences, users would receive bespoke design sketches along with explanations of the symbolic meanings behind patterns, thereby strengthening emotional connections through personalization.

2.2.2 Content Activation: Short Videos and Interactive Games Bring Traditional Culture to Life

The brevity, immediacy, and interactivity of short videos, coupled with the engaging nature of interactive games, perfectly align with young people's demand for fragmented content consumption and entertaining participation. By revitalizing traditional culture through dynamic content, these platforms transform it from abstract knowledge symbols into tangible, shareable lifestyle experiences—a crucial pathway to breaking through cultural barriers. On platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou, traditional culture meets short videos in diverse forms: Intangible cultural heritage masters capture one-minute close-ups of Suzhou embroidery thread-splitting techniques, showcasing exquisite craftsmanship; edited clips from Henan TV's Chinese Festival Gala feature an underwater "Goddess of the Luo River" dance that garnered over 1 billion views, propelling the gala into a cultural phenomenon trending among young audiences. The core experience of these practices lies in focusing on cultural details and lowering the barrier to entry by using language and visual styles familiar to young people.

Interactive games make traditional culture playable through entertaining participation. In NetEase's Dream West Journey intangible cultural heritage collaboration edition, players restore New Year paintings, watch shadow puppet play

storylines, and earn in-game rewards for correctly answering ICH knowledge questions. Over 80% of players completed related tasks. Honor of Kings' Dunhuang Flying Apsaras and Kunqu Opera Dream in the Garden skins, infused with traditional elements and accompanied by background stories, have driven Kunqu opera-related content views to over 2 billion and even inspired young people to visit theaters. Future explorations could further deepen the integration of gaming and culture by enhancing the cultural depth of game missions. Additionally, collaborations with offline cultural venues could be established—for instance, granting museum tickets or intangible cultural heritage workshop experience vouchers upon completing game levels. This approach would create a closed-loop experience linking online participation with offline engagement, thereby strengthening cultural awareness.

2.2.3 Channel Innovation: Precisely Reaching Youth Circles Through Social Platforms

No matter how compelling the content, it must reach its audience through precise channels. Given the significant differences in user characteristics and dissemination logic across various social platforms, leveraging their segmented and personalized strengths to achieve targeted dissemination of traditional culture is the core strategy for enhancing efficiency.

Precision channel adaptation aligns with young audiences' information consumption habits. The cultural consumption patterns of young demographics exhibit pronounced segmentation and niche-based characteristics, with young users possessing diverse interests and cognitive habits distributed across different social platforms^[4]. As a public opinion platform, Weibo leverages topic operations to generate buzz—for instance, the Palace Museum's cultural and creative design competition topic garnered over 5 billion views. By harnessing the influence of celebrities and designers, it transforms traditional culture into a public discourse, reaching a broad youth demographic. Bilibili is a Gen Z community that builds vertical communities through its creator ecosystem. A video by an amateur creator reconstructing the back of a Tang Dynasty gold hairpin garnered 5 million views in just 30 minutes. The platform's annual views for traditional Chinese-style videos exceed 20 billion, proving the appeal of in-depth content to young audiences. Future efforts could support creators specializing in vertical fields like traditional culinary arts and ancient technology. WeChat Official Accounts and Video Accounts emphasize in-depth content. The National Humanities and History Official Account's traditional culture encyclopedia series attracts a 60% audience under 30 years old. Its Video Account series "A Day in the Life of a Cultural Relics Restorer" garnered extensive shares, achieving social dissemination among acquaintances. Subsequent efforts can enhance platform synergy, such as launching Hanfu styling challenges on Douyin, with outstanding entries simultaneously featured on Bilibili for in-depth analysis and promoted on Weibo to amplify reach. This creates a complementary content and interconnected channel dissemination matrix, expanding traditional culture's coverage and influence within youth communities.

2.3 Real-World Challenges: Core Issues in Youth-Oriented Communication

2.3.1 The Fragmentation and Superficiality of Cultural Symbols under Traffic-Driven Trends

While digital technologies inject vitality into the revitalization of traditional culture, they also give rise to a series of core issues stemming from the inherent tension between dissemination logic, commercial demands, and the essence of cultural preservation. These issues not only undermine the quality of traditional culture's dissemination but may also inflict latent harm on cultural inheritance, necessitating an in-depth analysis from surface phenomena to underlying causes.

This fragmented approach to information dissemination has a drawback: it oversimplifies content, sometimes failing to provide rich expertise and in-depth analytical insights, thereby limiting users' understanding and critical thinking to a certain extent^[5]. Short-form video platforms exemplify this issue. To align with their fast-paced dissemination rhythm and algorithmic recommendation systems, most traditional cultural content focuses solely on visual highlights. For instance, they showcase the splendor of Hanfu attire without explaining the historical evolution behind its design, or capture the dazzling processes of intangible cultural heritage crafts while overlooking the cultural significance of their transmission. This fragmented dissemination also manifests as the misuse of cultural symbols, stripping traditional cultural elements from their original contexts and reducing them to tools for attracting traffic. A survey of 1,000 young users exposed to domestic trend content revealed that 68% could only describe the visual characteristics of traditional cultural symbols—such as Hanfu being ancient clothing or Dunhuang housing murals—without explaining their cultural significance. This highlights a disconnect in cultural understanding stemming from fragmented dissemination.

2.3.2 Youthful Adaptations Spark Debate Over "Distortion of Tradition"

To align with the aesthetic preferences and interests of young audiences, adapting traditional culture for a youthful audience is a necessary means of dissemination. However, excessive adaptation or innovations that deviate from the

essence of the culture often spark controversies over distortion of tradition and may even lead to misguided directions in cultural inheritance. These controversies primarily revolve around two dimensions: prioritizing form over substance and deviating from core values. The former manifests as adaptations that, while appealing to contemporary youth aesthetics, lose the essential characteristics of traditional culture. The latter involves incorporating values incompatible with the spirit of traditional culture during adaptation, resulting in a distortion of cultural essence.

In traditional opera adaptations, the issue of form overshadowing substance is particularly prominent. One troupe transformed “Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai” into a musical, incorporating pop music and modern dance while omitting core plot elements like the “Butterfly Transformation.” Though appearing trendy, this adaptation lost the essence of opera’s vocal styles and stylized conventions. Some bloggers blended Kunqu opera with electronic music, garnering high praise yet undermining its delicate charm—criticized not as preservation but as destruction. Moreover, adaptations that deviate from proper values are even more harmful, as they easily mislead young people’s perceptions. For instance, a period drama transformed a virtuous empress into an antagonist—while boosting ratings, it distorted historical figures and led young audiences to form erroneous beliefs. The core of such disputes lies in navigating the boundary between groundbreaking innovation and distortion. Adaptation should be innovation grounded in preservation, not negation or distortion of cultural essence. Otherwise, dissemination will shift from being a boon to becoming a detriment.

2.3.3 Short-Term Popularity Struggles to Translate into Sustained Momentum for Legacy-Building

In the digital age, communication dynamics enable traditional culture to capitalize on trending topics for short-lived popularity—such as intangible cultural heritage crafts gaining traction through short videos or traditional festival galas breaking into mainstream discourse via viral topics. However, this kind of attention often remains superficial, failing to translate into sustained momentum for cultural preservation. Consequently, such dissemination falls into a cycle of intermittent fads and prolonged neglect. The core issue stems from three gaps in converting buzz into sustained engagement: First, user participation tends to be one-off. Most young people follow trends driven by viral moments—like the surge in sharing and discussion when Henan TV’s Chinese New Year Gala went viral—but active engagement plummets once the hype fades. Second, content lacks continuity. Many projects focus solely on single-point trends, such as producing viral short videos or hosting one-off events, without building a series-based content matrix. Users find “nothing to follow” after the initial buzz dies down. Third, insufficient motivation among cultural inheritors. Short-term buzz often translates only into traffic metrics, failing to generate tangible revenue or societal recognition. While intangible cultural heritage inheritors may see temporary order spikes, they face persistent funding and succession challenges due to operational gaps. Consequently, young creators discover traditional cultural content yields lower monetization potential than entertainment or beauty sectors, prompting them to pivot toward alternative directions. This dilemma, where popularity fails to sustain cultural transmission, leaves traditional culture lacking a long-term self-sustaining mechanism for dissemination, making it difficult to establish a virtuous cycle.

2.4 Optimization Path: Building a Long-Term Communication System

2.4.1 Identifying the Core Challenges in Modernizing the Dissemination of Traditional Culture

To address the core challenge of revitalizing traditional culture for younger audiences in the digital age, we must tackle the root of the contradiction. This requires striking a balance between innovation and preservation, ensuring both effective dissemination and cultural depth.

This process requires first identifying the core contradictions in communication, then leveraging a dual-engine approach of “technology-driven innovation coupled with steadfast commitment to cultural essence” to bridge the gap between short-term buzz and sustained legacy. To overcome these challenges, we must first identify three core contradictions that permeate the entire communication process. These contradictions are the root causes of fragmentation, distortion, and loss of engagement. First, the tension between technological efficiency and cultural depth: digital intelligence technologies achieve “rapid dissemination” through short videos and algorithmic recommendations to gain high visibility, yet traditional culture requires “slow comprehension” to convey its value, often leading to superficial communication. Second is the conflict between commercial demands and cultural essence. Commercial entities often instrumentalize traditional culture to gain traffic or profits, while cultural preservation requires safeguarding its spiritual core and historical authenticity, sparking a clash between commercial monetization and cultural purity. Third is the tension between youth aesthetics and traditional paradigms. Young people favor fashion, entertainment, and personalized expression, while traditional culture’s fixed paradigms—though crucial for transmission—create a disconnect, leading to the dilemma of either “catering to distortion” or “adhering to loss of audience.” The essence of these contradictions lies in defining clear boundaries for dissemination: technology must serve cultural depth, commerce must not override cultural essence, and aesthetics must align with tradition. Only by balancing these three relationships

can we lay the foundation for the sustainable transmission of traditional culture.

2.4.2 Building a Sustainable Communication Mechanism Through "Technology-Driven Empowerment And Steadfast Commitment to Cultural Core Values"

Given these contradictions, the sustainability of revitalizing traditional culture for younger audiences must be achieved through three key approaches. First, at the content production level, establish a technology-enabled deep interpretation model. Utilize AI to generate interactive cultural knowledge maps, allowing users to explore historical evolution, cultural significance, and even personalized learning paths when searching for traditional cultural elements. By integrating VR with a "cultural mentor" feature, users experience real-time AI commentary while immersing in traditional settings, deepening both engagement and understanding. This approach preserves the advantages of technological dissemination while addressing superficiality gaps. Second, at the level of stakeholder collaboration, establish a multi-stakeholder governance framework. Official cultural institutions set cultural standards and adaptation boundaries: commercial entities collaborate according to these standards, co-develop products with intangible cultural heritage (ICH) practitioners, and reinvest in cultural preservation. Young creators partner with ICH practitioners to form a content ecosystem characterized by "standardized inheritance, quality dissemination, and ethical commercialization." Finally, at the level of ecosystem construction, we aim to create a closed-loop system that spans from generating buzz to fostering participation and ultimately ensuring legacy. It is foreseeable that technology will continue to lower barriers and expand boundaries, yet the ultimate determinant of a work's artistic merit remains the creator's insight into human nature and their steadfast commitment to cultural values^[6].

3 Conclusions

Technological transformations in the digital age have infused new vitality into the dissemination of traditional culture, propelling it toward a structural shift from "niche preservation" to "crossing cultural boundaries." Traditional culture, as the vessel of national spirit, requires its revitalization and dissemination to younger generations. This effort is not only essential for safeguarding historical memory and preserving cultural continuity but also serves as a vital pathway to strengthen cultural identity among youth and enhance their cultural confidence. Throughout this process, technology should serve as an enabler for cultural preservation rather than a force that alters the essence of culture; youthful expressions should act as a bridge connecting tradition and modernity, not as a tool that dilutes the substance of tradition. Only by steadfastly upholding the core values of culture and innovating communication methods without blindly following trends can traditional culture retain its historical depth while embodying contemporary vitality. This approach empowers traditional culture to truly "come alive" and "be passed down" in the digital age.

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