

Inheritance and Innovation of Ethnic Minority Traditional Handicrafts in Ethnographic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

In the wave of globalisation and modernisation, traditional handicrafts of ethnic minorities, as the treasures of national culture, are facing unprecedented challenges and opportunities. The purpose of this paper is to explore the problems existing in the inheritance and innovation process of ethnic minority traditional handicrafts from the perspective of ethnology and to put forward corresponding countermeasures, aiming at promoting the living inheritance and sustainable development of ethnic minority traditional handicrafts and contributing to the protection of ethnic cultural diversity.

KEYWORDS

traditional minority handicrafts; inheritance and innovation; ethnographic perspective

Traditional handicrafts of ethnic minorities are cultural treasures created and accumulated by various ethnic groups in the course of long-term history, carrying rich historical information, cultural memory and aesthetic value, and are an important carrier of national identity. With the rapid development of industrialisation and information technology, traditional handicrafts are facing serious challenges such as shrinking market demand, loss of skills and aging of inheritors.

1 Problems in the inheritance and innovation of traditional handicrafts of ethnic minorities

1.1 Scarcity of inheritors and risk of decline

The inheritance of traditional handicrafts of ethnic minorities relies on the family or master-disciple system, this inheritance method maintains the purity of skills, but also limits the expansion of the scope of inheritance. With the gradual aging of the old generation of inheritors and the unwillingness or inability of the younger generation to inherit these skills due to the pressure of life, interest transfer, etc., the number of inheritors has been drastically reduced, and some of the handicrafts are facing the risk of being lost.

1.2 Unstable team of inheritors and imperfect system of skills inheritance and cultivation

At present, the inheritors of traditional ethnic minority handicrafts generally have problems such as unreasonable age structure, low level of knowledge and insufficient innovation ability. The lack of a systematic and scientific cultivation system for the inheritance of skills makes the inheritance of

skills lack continuity and stability, affects the quality of the inheritance of skills, and restricts the further development and innovation of skills.

1.3 Insufficient publicity and market squeeze

Under the background of commercialisation and marketisation, the traditional handicrafts of ethnic minorities are difficult to match with modern aesthetics and market demand, and the sales of products are poor, with the market share declining year by year. Coupled with insufficient publicity, many exquisite handicrafts cannot be known and appreciated by more people, further aggravating the shrinkage of the market.

1.4 Low production efficiency and lack of innovation in skills

Traditional handicrafts are mostly handmade, low production efficiency, cannot meet the needs of mass production. Insufficient technological innovation also restricts its development, and some inheritors are stuck in their ways, unwilling or afraid to try new materials and processes, and their products lack novelty and competitiveness.

2 Countermeasures for the Inheritance and Innovation of Traditional Handicrafts of Ethnic Minorities from the Perspective of Ethnology

2.1 Clarify the main position of the inheritors and strengthen the construction of the inheritance system

Adopting media propaganda, education and popularisation and other channels to enhance public awareness of and respect for craftsmen. Telling the stories of the inheritors and showing the hard work and unrelenting efforts behind their exquisite skills will make the general public understand and cherish the preciousness of this intangible cultural heritage.^[1] The government and all sectors of society set up special awards and honours, such as "Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritors" and "Masters of Crafts", etc., to commend those who have made outstanding contributions to the inheritance of handicrafts, and to enhance the sense of honour and pride in their profession. (c) Commending the inheritors who have made outstanding contributions to the inheritance of handicrafts, so as to enhance their professional honour and pride. Include the contributions of the inheritors in the Who's Who of local culture, so that their names and works become important symbols of regional culture.

Establish a detailed personal digital file for each important inheritor, including his/her basic information, characteristics of the craft, inheritance history, representative works, etc., to form a systematic database, record and preserve the historical information, and provide valuable information support for the subsequent research, teaching and inheritance.^[2] According to the characteristics of the handicrafts and the actual situation of the inheritors, an inheritance plan combining long-term and short-term is formulated. The plan specifies the objectives, contents, methods and expected results of the inheritance, takes into account the cultivation and introduction of the younger generation, and ensures the continuity and diversity of the skills. The government has set up a special fund to provide stable financial support for the inheritance of handicrafts, providing inheritors with subsidies for living, training in their skills, purchasing materials, and displaying their works. The introduction of tax, land use and other preferential policies to reduce the economic burden of the inheritors, to stimulate their inheritance enthusiasm.

2.2 Carrying out the research and teaching of traditional ethnic handicrafts with the help of university resources

As an important base for scientific research and education, universities have rich academic resources and teachers, relying on the platform of universities, to carry out research and teaching of traditional ethnic handicrafts.^[31] Colleges and universities, based on their own resource advantages and regional characteristics, set up specialised ethnic traditional handicrafts majors or add handicraft directions under their relevant faculties. The curriculum design needs to cover multiple dimensions such as basic theory, technique practice, history and culture, innovative design, etc., aiming at cultivating students' solid theoretical foundation, exquisite handicraft skills as well as profound cultural heritage. Encourage the cross-fertilisation of handicrafts with other disciplines, such as art and design, material science, history, folklore, etc., to form a composite talent cultivation mode, broaden students' horizons, promote the organic combination of handicrafts with modern science and technology and design concepts, and infuse new vitality into traditional handicrafts.

Establish on-campus handicraft studios and training bases, equipped with professional equipment and materials, to provide students with space and conditions for practical operations. Adopting the master-apprentice system and group co-operation, students can learn and master handicraft skills in a real working environment, and improve their hands-on and problem-solving abilities. It actively establishes cooperative relationships with craft enterprises and cultural institutions, and organises students to participate in off-campus internships, project cooperation and other activities, exposing students to a wider range of practical examples of handicrafts, helping them to understand the market demand and industry development trends, and laying a solid foundation for their future career development.

Organise academic activities to promote research and innovation. Regularly organise academic activities such as seminars and forums on traditional ethnic handicrafts, invite domestic and foreign experts and scholars, master craftsmen and inheritors to participate in exchanges, share research results, discuss development strategies, and display innovative works, etc., and encourage teachers and students to declare scientific research projects related to traditional ethnic handicrafts, and to focus on the inheritance of skills, material research and development, and product innovation. Carry out in-depth research. Focus on the transformation and application of scientific research results, transform research results into teaching resources, teaching tools or market products, and realise the integrated development of industry, academia, research and application. To promote the collision of academic ideas and exchange of skills, and to provide intellectual support for the inheritance and innovation of handicrafts.

Strengthen international co-operation and broaden the vision of inheritance. Actively participate in international exchange and cooperation programmes on handicrafts, and establish cooperative relationships with foreign universities, research institutions and handicraft groups. Through mutual visits and exchanges, joint training and joint research, we will learn from the advanced experience and technical means of foreign handicraft inheritance and development, and show the world the unique charm of Chinese national traditional handicrafts. We will make use of the platform advantages of universities to hold international handicraft exhibitions, cultural festivals and other activities to display the fine works and unique culture of Chinese national traditional handicrafts, enhance the international community's understanding and recognition of Chinese culture, and improve the international influence of Chinese handicrafts.

2.3 Optimising "brand communication" and expanding sales channels

Strengthen brand planning and clarify brand positioning. The traditional handicrafts of each ethnic minority contain rich history, culture and national emotions. The first and foremost task of

brand planning is to deeply excavate the cultural connotation of traditional handicrafts, and refine the unique brand story and core values, so that the brand is not only the logo of the product, but also the inheritor and disseminator of culture. Based on the excavation of cultural connotations, the brand positioning of handicrafts is clearly defined, including the definition of target consumer groups, the refinement of product characteristics and the shaping of brand personality, so as to make handicrafts stand out in the fierce market competition and attract and retain target consumers.

Optimise packaging design to enhance visual appeal. In packaging design, it is necessary to fully display ethnic characteristics and conform to modern aesthetic trends. Skillfully integrating elements such as national patterns, colours and materials with modern design concepts, we create packaging works that are both ethnically inspired and fashionable, enhancing the overall visual effect and attractiveness of the handicrafts. Highlight the brand logo and visual elements on the packaging to ensure that consumers can recognise the brand at a glance in a large number of products, establishing brand memory points and enhancing brand loyalty.

Innovative marketing and promotion strategies to broaden market channels. Combining online and offline resources, we use a variety of marketing tools to enhance brand awareness. On the online side, social media, short video platforms, live streaming with goods and other emerging channels are used to promote the brand; on the offline side, exhibitions, cultural festivals and experiential activities are organised to allow consumers to experience the charm of handicrafts first-hand. Cross-border co-operation with other brands or cultural IPs to launch co-branded products, leveraging the brand influence of the co-operation partner to enhance the visibility and reputation of handicrafts.^[4]

2.4 Integrate modern concepts and carry out technological innovation

Integrating modern design concepts and technical means on the basis of maintaining the essence of traditional handicrafts is the key to realising their innovative development. Try to innovate the form, function and use of the products. Use modern design techniques to deconstruct and reorganise traditional elements to create new products with traditional flavour and modern aesthetics. Conduct in-depth research on modern consumers' aesthetic preferences and market demand, and understand market trends and hot spots. Adjust the direction of product design according to the research results, so that new products meet the actual needs of consumers and lead the market trend.^[5] Actively seek opportunities for cross-border co-operation with fashion, design, technology and other fields. Through joint design and joint research and development, traditional handicrafts are combined with the advantageous resources of other fields to achieve resource sharing and complementary advantages.

3 Conclusion

As an important part of national culture, traditional handicrafts of ethnic minorities have inestimable value. In the face of the challenges of inheritance and innovation, we should analyse the root causes of the problems from the perspective of ethnology and put forward practical solutions, so as to promote the living inheritance and sustainable development of the traditional handicrafts of the ethnic minorities, and to contribute to the protection of the diversity of ethnic cultures.

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