

Yunshang Jingzhou: Digital Innovation and Promotion of Jingchu Pastel Art

Xinru Li

Yangtze University College of Arts and Sciences, Jingzhou, Hubei, China

Abstract: *This study takes Jingchu Pastel Art, a local intangible cultural heritage in Jingzhou, as the research object. Based on Chu culture's innovative development and cultural tourism integration policies, it explores the skill transformation, product development and entrepreneurial operation of Jingchu Pastel Art, and constructs a "cultural tourism + education" model for niche intangible cultural heritage via literature research. It identifies three core pain points of Jingchu pastel art: single product form, weak brand communication, and limited inheritors. Among these, weak brand communication is primarily caused by low market awareness, narrow communication channels, and insufficient digital application in the art's promotion. To solve this, three targeted solutions are proposed: building a digital communication matrix, integrating brand promotion into local cultural tourism scenes, and cooperating with universities and cultural and creative enterprises for e-commerce product dissemination. Combined with digital communication, product innovation, talent cultivation, cultural tourism integration and intellectual property protection, the feasibility of the "intangible cultural heritage + education + cultural tourism" model for Jingchu Pastel Art's living inheritance is verified, providing practical references for its digital innovation and sustainable development.*

Keywords: Jingchu Pastel Art; Intangible cultural heritage activation; Digital communication; Cultural tourism integration; Entrepreneurial model.

1. INTRODUCTION

Jingchu Pastel Art, a distinctive local intangible cultural heritage (ICH) of Jingzhou, employs eco-friendly mineral pigments as its core creative material, fusing Chu mural techniques with patented Chinese painting color-fixing technology. This art form combines sophisticated artistic expression with the accessibility of folk graffiti, serving as a crucial visual carrier of Chu culture and regional cultural memory, and holding an irreplaceable position in inheriting Yangtze River culture and advancing local cultural development.

Amid the implementation of the cultural power strategy and the trend of cultural-tourism integration, dynamic inheritance, digital innovation, and industrialization have emerged as core directions for ICH development. However, current research and practice in ICH cultural and creative products are heavily concentrated on well-known genres such as embroidery and paper-cutting. For niche ICH like Jingchu Pastel Art, studies on its entrepreneurial models, communication channels, and market-oriented operation remain scarce, and a comprehensive research framework has not yet been established.

Research into the digital innovation and promotion of Jingchu Pastel Art holds significant practical value. On one hand, it can tackle the practical challenges the art form faces, including rigid product forms, ineffective communication, and fragile inheritance, thereby safeguarding traditional craftsmanship and facilitating cultural dissemination. On the other hand, through innovative entrepreneurial models, it can achieve the dual goals of economic and social value creation, offering a replicable model for the activation of niche ICH not only in Hubei Province but also nationwide.

Presently, Jingchu Pastel Art's inheritance primarily relies on traditional offline exhibitions and the master-apprentice system. This traditional model results in narrow communication channels, limited audience reach, and low recognition among young people, making it difficult to align with the communication rules and consumption demands of the digital age. Thus, there is an urgent need to construct a systematic, digitalized, and market-driven innovative promotion pathway for Jingchu Pastel Art to realize its sustainable development in the modern era.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the research field of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) industrialization and communication paths, scholars at home and abroad have carried out in-depth explorations from multiple perspectives including industrial

development strategy, intellectual property protection, digital communication methods and industrial collaboration mechanisms, forming mature theoretical results in this field.

From the perspective of ICH industrialization and protection, Huang Yonglin proposed that the industrialization of intangible cultural heritage should adhere to the combination of skill inheritance and market transformation, and regarded digitalization and cultural tourism integration as important supports for activating intangible cultural heritage. Chen Yingying further pointed out that intellectual property protection must be strengthened in the market-oriented process of intangible cultural heritage to avoid development risks caused by counterfeiting and homogeneous competition, which provides a critical legal and market guarantee for the sustainable industrialization of ICH.

In terms of digital communication research of ICH, Li Juan systematically discussed the paths and practices of digital communication of intangible cultural heritage, and concluded that short videos, online experiences and digital exhibitions can effectively break regional restrictions and improve the communication efficiency and coverage of intangible cultural heritage. This research result has become an important theoretical basis for the modern communication transformation of traditional intangible cultural heritage.

From the angle of industrial collaboration, Zhang Yu put forward that the industrialization and communication of intangible cultural heritage require a mechanism of resource integration and multi-party linkage to realize the coordinated improvement of cultural and economic values. His research emphasizes that cross-departmental and cross-field cooperation is the key to promoting the industrialization development of intangible cultural heritage in the new era.

Domestic studies on niche intangible cultural heritage such as Han embroidery, Jingzhou lacquerware and folk paper-cutting also generally show that these heritages are commonly faced with common problems such as weak communication power, shortage of talents and single products. Meanwhile, these studies confirm that the integration of cultural tourism and education is an effective path for niche intangible cultural heritage to break through development dilemmas, which provides a valuable reference for the research on Jingchu Pastel Art.

Although some studies on Jingchu Pastel Art have been conducted, there are still obvious research gaps in its digital promotion, entrepreneurial model and practical operation. This study innovatively integrates digital communication, the "cultural tourism + education" model and Jingchu Pastel Art, forming a complete system from creation to operation. Supported by local cultural tourism resources, university cooperation, digital technology and policy support in Jingzhou, this research realizes the integration of theory and practice and has high application value.

3. PAIN POINTS OF JINGCHU PASTEL ART COMMUNICATION

Through field research and market data statistics, the overall communication situation of Jingchu Pastel Art is found to be unsatisfactory. Its communication channels are highly dependent on offline exhibition halls, community activities and small-scale teaching. Offline communication accounts for more than 85%, while digital online communication accounts for less than 15%. The product structure is dominated by traditional decorative paintings, accounting for more than 90%. The development of cultural and creative peripherals, experience services and digital derivative products is seriously insufficient. The audience group is mainly middle-aged and elderly art lovers. Young people aged 18-35 account for less than 10%. The awareness rate among local residents in Jingzhou is less than 30%, and the awareness rate of foreign tourists is lower than 10%. Narrow communication coverage, weak influence and insufficient sustainability are revealed.

Jingchu Pastel Art is still primarily inherited through offline exhibitions and the master-apprentice system, which is a relatively closed and traditional model. Although individual inheritors have tried to use short-video platforms such as Douyin and Xiaohongshu for promotion, they lack professional digital operation teams and systematic content planning. Most of the released content is simple display of finished works, without combining storytelling, short-video scripting, and interactive experience design. This leads to the content being rigid and unattractive, failing to capture the attention of young netizens who are accustomed to visual and interactive digital content. The lack of in-depth integration with digital media platforms directly results in the failure to expand the communication scope and attract young audiences.

The development of Jingchu Pastel Art products is confined to traditional physical forms, and there is a lack of

exploration of digital product forms that meet the consumption habits of different age groups. For young consumer groups who pursue personalized and experiential consumption, there are no customized digital artworks, cultural and creative IP derivatives, or immersive experience projects based on Jingchu Pastel Art. For the cultural tourism market, the combination of Jingchu Pastel Art with local scenic spots, cultural museums, and educational institutions is superficial, and there is no themed tourism routes or educational courses that integrate artistic experience and cultural learning. The single product structure makes it difficult to meet the diversified consumption demands of the market, thus limiting the expansion of the audience and the improvement of market influence.

The promotion of Jingchu Pastel Art mainly relies on spontaneous efforts by individual inheritors and small-scale folk organizations, with no effective coordination and cooperation between the government, cultural institutions, enterprises, and universities. Government cultural departments have not formulated a special digital promotion plan for Jingchu Pastel Art, and there is a lack of policy and financial support for the development of digital products and entrepreneurial projects. Cultural and educational institutions such as universities have not established a long-term cooperation mechanism with inheritors to carry out research on digital innovation and talent training. Enterprises are also hesitant to invest in the development of Jingchu Pastel Art cultural and creative products due to the lack of clear market prospects and mature operation models. The fragmented and temporary communication activities formed by the single promotion subject make it impossible to form a sustainable communication influence, and it is difficult to promote the long-term development of Jingchu Pastel Art in the digital era.

4. COUNTERMEASURES FOR DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION OF JINGCHU PASTEL ART

In view of the core problems of insufficient inheritance and narrow communication channels of Jingchu Pastel Art, combined with the communication laws of the digital era and the demand for integrated development of cultural tourism, a systematic and implementable innovative promotion path is constructed. In terms of communication channels, an omni-channel communication matrix integrating online and offline is established. Short video platforms and live teaching are arranged online to continuously output contents such as skill display, Chu culture creation and intangible cultural heritage stories, so as to expand cross-regional communication coverage. Fixed experience points and miniature exhibition halls are set up offline in scenic spots, museums, communities and universities to carry out regular experience and teaching activities and enhance local penetration. Meanwhile, cross-border co-branding is conducted with local brands and cultural tourism projects to achieve breakthrough communication with the help of mature traffic.

To address the problem of single communication channel, an omni-channel communication matrix integrating online and offline channels is constructed. Online, short-video platforms such as Douyin and Xiaohongshu are deployed, and live broadcast columns are set up to release content such as skill display and Chu culture creation, breaking geographical restrictions with algorithm recommendation. Offline, fixed experience points and miniature exhibition halls are established in Jingzhou Ancient City, museums, universities and other places to carry out regular experience and teaching activities. Meanwhile, cross-border co-branding is carried out with local cultural tourism brands and cultural and creative enterprises, integrating pastel art elements into product and scene design to expand communication channels relying on mature traffic.

For the problem of rigid communication content, the communication content system is reconstructed. Core visual symbols such as the texture of pastel mineral pigments and the color of Chu tomb murals are extracted to create the exclusive IP and visual system of "Chufenhui". AIGC technology is used to generate innovative visual content suitable for cultural and creative products and digital media, replacing the single form of painting display. Combined with Chu culture allusions and inheritors' experiences, diversified content such as plot-driven short videos and audio podcasts are produced, transforming communication from "static display" to "dynamic narrative".

Regarding the problem of single promotion subject, a collaborative system involving the government, universities, enterprises and communities is built. Deepen university-enterprise cooperation with local colleges and universities, integrate pastel art into aesthetic education courses and set up professional communication teams; launch communication programs in conjunction with the Bureau of Culture and Tourism and the Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center to integrate government resources; recruit community volunteers to form folk communication teams, and introduce cultural and creative enterprises to participate in product development and

operation, forming a multi-subject collaborative promotion pattern.

5. CONCLUSION AND PROSPECT

This study focuses on the activation of intangible cultural heritage, digital communication and entrepreneurial models, and employs literature research, case analysis and market research to examine the cultural value, core resources and practical dilemmas of Jingchu Pastel Art. It summarizes three major obstacles that hinder its sustainable development: limited communication channels leading to low popularity among young people, monotonous and outdated product forms that cannot meet modern market needs, and insufficient collaboration among government, universities, enterprises and inheritors. These problems jointly result in weak brand influence and unstable inheritance of this distinctive intangible cultural heritage. To tackle these challenges, this study constructs a trinity development model of “intangible heritage + education + cultural tourism”. This model takes digital communication as an important approach to expand online promotion, carries out product innovation to enrich cultural and creative categories, and promotes multi-party cooperation to strengthen talent training and the integration of culture and tourism. By implementing this model, Jingchu Pastel Art can overcome the bottlenecks of single product design, insufficient brand communication and weak inheritance force, realize the organic combination of living inheritance and market-oriented operation, and strike a balance between cultural inheritance, social benefits and economic values. In addition, the research results can provide a reproducible and practical reference for the digital innovation and industrial development of other niche intangible cultural heritage projects in Hubei Province and even across China, offering useful experience for the protection and activation of similar local cultural resources.

In the future, digital technology will continue to serve as the core driving force for the inheritance and innovation of Jingchu Pastel Art. The integration of metaverse and AI technologies will create immersive digital art experiences, allowing audiences to interact with Chu cultural elements in virtual spaces and enhance the sense of experience and participation. Meanwhile, the integration of Jingchu Pastel Art with local cultural tourism and education will be further deepened. Specific measures include launching themed tourism routes that combine pastel art appreciation and Chu culture tours, and developing systematic art education courses for students of all ages, so as to effectively connect cultural inheritance with practical economic benefits and enhance the vitality of the art form. Moreover, cross-border cooperation with other regional intangible cultural heritages such as Chu embroidery and Jingzhou shadow puppetry will be strengthened to build a regional cultural IP cluster, expand the digital market influence of Jingchu culture, and provide a feasible model for the digital activation of other niche intangible cultural heritages in Hubei Province.

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