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# *The Role of New Media in the Dissemination of Intangible Cultural Heritage: Opportunities, Challenges, and Strategic Pathways*

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***Abstract.*** Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is a vital part of cultural identity and historical memory. Yet traditional methods of passing it down face serious problems. These include an aging pool of inheritors and shrinking audiences. Meanwhile, new media platforms like short-video apps and social media offer fresh opportunities for spreading ICH. This study examines how new media influences ICH communication through a review of existing research and an analysis of real-world cases. The study focuses on three major platforms—Douyin, Bilibili, and WeChat. It analyzes two representative examples: the "Qiren Jiangxin" MCN agency and the micro-documentary series Learning ICH in Quanzhou. The findings show that new media helps ICH reach more people. It provides new ways to tell cultural stories and encourages audiences to get involved. However, challenges remain, such as cultural oversimplification, content homogenization, excessive commercialization, and unequal digital access. The study concludes that effective ICH communication must carefully navigate the tension between authenticity and innovation. It should maintain cultural roots while adopting modern forms of expression. This study offers a practical reference for integrating digital communication with traditional heritage protection.

***Keywords:*** Intangible Cultural Heritage, New Media Communication, Short Video, Cultural Inheritance, Digital Dissemination

## 1. Introduction

Intangible Cultural Heritage, as defined by UNESCO, includes the practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities recognize as part of their shared cultural heritage. In China, carries unique national identity and collective historical memory. Even so, maintaining the continuity of traditional heritage remains difficult in modern society.

In fact, inheritors aged over 70 make up about 71% of the total group, while those under 50 account for only 1% [1]. This aging crisis, combined with weakened attention from young groups, places many fragile ICH traditions at risk of disappearance.

Digital technology has completely reshaped the current pattern of cultural communication. Short-video platforms and social media have become the main channels for information acquisition, especially among young users. Relevant data indicate that in 2023, ICH-related short videos on

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Douyin gained over 372.6 billion views, with around 19,000 ICH-themed live broadcasts launched every day [2]. Programs such as the "Douyin ICH Partner Plan" have continuously promoted the online promotion of traditional culture [2]. These realistic developments prove that new media possesses great potential to expand the influence of intangible cultural heritage.

However, existing research lacks in-depth discussion on how new media restructures the overall logic of ICH dissemination [3]. These practical issues still lack in-depth discussion in current academic circles. How do algorithm recommendation mechanisms shape the exposure of ICH content? What intermediate role do MCN organizations play in content production? How does audience participation reshape traditional inheritance modes? This study tries to fill these research gaps by analyzing the operation characteristics of Douyin, Bilibili and WeChat. It adopts two core research methods: literature sorting and in-depth case analysis. Theoretically, this research enriches the interdisciplinary research framework of digital media and cultural heritage. Practically, it provides targeted suggestions for optimizing the current situation of ICH new media communicatio

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Research trends in ICH communication

Studies on ICH communication have developed steadily over the past two decades. Early academic achievements mainly focused on legal norms and institutional mechanisms for ICH protection. Luo [4] summarized the overall context of ICH communication research, pointing out that academic focus has shifted from single protection-oriented research to dynamic exploration of the whole inheritance process.

The academic understanding of ICH communication has also undergone obvious changes. Traditional research regarded heritage communication as a one-way mode, in which inheritors output information to passive audiences. This updated research perspective lays a solid theoretical foundation for analyzing the value of new media in modern heritage dissemination.

### 2.2. Integration of new media and ICH communication

The integration between new media technology and heritage communication has gradually become a popular research direction in recent years. A large amount of ICH content has been widely spread on major digital platforms. According to the 2024 Douyin ICH Data Report, the platform has certified 1,428 professional ICH inheritors. Among them, 199 are young practitioners under 30, which suggests that younger generations are already taking part in the digital communication of ICH [2].

Scholars have explored this topic from multiple theoretical perspectives. Paquienséguy and Guo adopted the cultural industry theory to analyze Douyin's ICH promotion strategies, illustrating the coordination value of MCN institutions and the influence of AI algorithms on content recommendation. Xue et al. [5] applied Affective Events Theory to verify that emotional digital experience can effectively improve audience recognition of ICH content.

Platform-based research also provides detailed research findings. Individual creators remain the core force of ICH content output on Douyin, and works combining traditional skills with daily life show better communication effects [6].

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### 2.3. Research gaps and study positioning

Although relevant research is constantly accumulating, several key gaps still exist. Firstly, most studies independently analyze a single platform, while comparative research on different new media ecosystems is insufficient [3]. Thirdly, the transformation of inheritance relationships under digital scenarios requires further discussion [6]. This study adopts a cross-platform comparative perspective and combines systematic case analysis to make up for the above deficiencies and improve the completeness of relevant research.

## 3. Current status of ICH new media communication

### 3.1. Communication subjects: a more diverse group of creators

The participants of ICH communication on new media have changed from single official inheritors to a diversified interactive ecosystem. Current content producers include certified ICH inheritors, professional MCN agencies, independent creators, cultural and tourism institutions, and ordinary online users [2].

### 3.2. Communication content: different ways to tell stories

ICH content presents diverse narrative features on different platforms. Short videos ranging from 15 to 60 seconds dominate Douyin, focusing on strong visual impact and immediate emotional resonance [7]. Bilibili prefers long-form content such as documentaries and skill teaching videos, which are suitable for in-depth interpretation of craft details and cultural background [3]. WeChat relies on official accounts and group communities to realize continuous content sharing and localized communication [3].

### 3.3. Audience characteristics and effects

The main audience of ICH new media content is composed of young digital natives. Young users show stronger interest in traditional culture when it is presented through modern digital forms [5]. More than 13.79 million users shared their personal ICH experience on Douyin in the past year [2]. These data prove that new media not only enhances the exposure of intangible cultural heritage, but also promotes the reasonable economic transformation of traditional industries.

### 3.4. Communication challenges and problems

Several prominent dilemmas restrict the high-quality development of ICH new media communication. Firstly, platform recommendation algorithms tend to prioritize content with fast interaction effects, which may marginalize those traditional ICH projects that require long-term appreciation and professional understanding [8]. Thirdly, excessive commercial pursuit turns traditional heritage into superficial performance, which separates ICH from its original cultural context [6]. Fourthly, digital inequality exists in different regions. Areas with rich ICH resources often lack professional digital operation capabilities compared with economically developed regions [9].

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## 4. Case Analysis

### 4.1. "Qiren Jiangxin": MCN-supported ICH communication

"Qiren Jiangxin", which means "Extraordinary People, Ingenious Craftsmanship", is China's first professional MCN focusing on traditional culture and intangible cultural heritage [7]. Founded in 2018, the institution has established long-term cooperation with more than 100 craft masters and operated over 50 certified inheritor accounts. It covers more than 100 million cultural enthusiasts across major platforms, with monthly content views exceeding 1 billion.

This case reflects both the advantages and hidden contradictions of professional ICH content production. MCN organizations provide technical support, creative guidance and platform resources for elderly inheritors, helping grassroots craftsmen break through digital barriers and gain online attention [6]. However, standardized content production modes may weaken the personalized characteristics of traditional craftsmen. The conflict between commercial needs and cultural inheritance has always been the core contradiction faced by professional heritage content teams [7].

### 4.2. Learning ICH in Quanzhou: cross-cultural construction of cultural memory

From our perspective, this case has high reference value for international communication research. It clearly shows that new media can break geographical and cultural barriers without losing local cultural characteristics. In December 2024, the series was selected as an excellent practice case by UNESCO, recognizing its positive contribution to heritage revitalization through digital media [10].

## 5. Strategic pathways for better ICH communication

Based on the above analysis and case discussion, multiple targeted strategies can be summarized to optimize ICH new media communication. After optimizing platform algorithms, high-quality heritage content produced by MCN institutions can gain more stable exposure. The "Douyin ICH Plan", which trained 11,695 professional ICH communicators in 2023, sets a good example for improving the overall ability of heritage creators [2]. At the content level, creators need to balance professional cultural expression and popular presentation, making traditional content easy to understand while retaining core cultural value [11]. At the talent level, universities and cultural institutions should cultivate compound talents with both cultural literacy and digital skills, to lay a foundation for sustainable ICH communication. At the regional level, targeted policy support is required to narrow the digital gap [9]. Cross-cultural works like Learning ICH in Quanzhou also provide a clear reference for local heritage to go global, helping resource-rich regions participate in the digital cultural economy fairly [10].

## 6. Conclusion

The research results reveal that new media has reshaped heritage communication in three main ways. It breaks the restrictions of region and age. It enriches diverse cultural expression forms. And it transforms passive audiences into active participants in cultural inheritance.

Nevertheless, the overall analysis reveals multiple practical challenges restricting high-quality ICH communication. Improper algorithm mechanisms may limit the spread of niche heritage projects with slow rhythms [8]. Severe content homogenization weakens the diversity of traditional culture [11].

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This research still has several obvious limitations worthy of reflection. As a typical qualitative research method, case analysis cannot fully represent the overall situation of all ICH categories. Future research can adopt big data quantitative analysis to evaluate communication effects more comprehensively [4]. In addition, this study mainly focuses on domestic new media platforms, and cross-national comparative research can be supplemented in follow-up exploration [8].

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