

Research on Digital Communication and Brand Buildings of Rural Intangible Cultural Heritage: A Case Study of Yingge Dance in China's Puning

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Abstract

This paper takes the national intangible cultural heritage “Yingge Dance” in Puning, Guangdong Province, China, as the research object and explores the application of digital technology in cultural communication and brand building. Through literature analysis, field research, and case studies, this paper reviews the current state of inheritance and the need for digital communication of Yingge Dance in Puning. It proposes the use of short video platforms, virtual reality (VR) technology, and social media matrices to achieve cultural revitalization. Additionally, strategies such as intellectual property (IP) development, cultural tourism integration, and brand collaboration are suggested to build a distinctive brand. Research has revealed that digital communication can break geographical barriers, enhance interactivity and reach intangible cultural heritage, whereas systematic brand building can increase economic value and social impact, providing cultural momentum for rural revitalization.

Keywords

Intangible Cultural Heritage, Digital Communication, Brand Building, Yingge Dance, Puning, China

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of Yingge Dance

Yingge Dance in Puning, China, is a unique folk dance art in the Puning area of Jieyang, Guangdong Province, and is listed as a national intangible cultural heritage. Its origins can be traced back to the Ming and Qing dynasties, which combined elements of martial arts, dance, and drama. On the basis of the story of “The Heroes of Liangshan Marsh” from *The Water Margin*, performers wear traditional costumes, paint their faces, hold short sticks or drumsticks, and perform vigorous and rhythmic movements that showcase the bold spirit and unique charm of Chaoshan culture. Yingge Dance is typically performed during traditional festivals, such as the Spring Festival and Lantern Festival, and serves as an important ritual for folk blessings and a symbol of community cohesion.

1.2 Challenges and Research Objectives

In recent years, with the increasing awareness of intangible cultural heritage protection, Yingge Dance has gradually spread beyond the Chaoshan region, becoming an important window for showcasing Chaoshan culture. However, its inheritance still faces challenges such as low participation among the younger generation and limited communication channels, necessitating the use of digital technology and innovative communication methods for revitalization and promotion. This paper aims to explore the synergistic path of digital communication and brand building for Yingge Dance, providing practical references for the revitalization of intangible cultural heritage and rural cultural development.

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is an important cultural resource for rural revitalization. However, traditional ICHs such as Yingge Dance in Puning face challenges such as limited communication channels, low brand recognition, a small scope of influence, a lack of successors, and insufficient protection efforts (Li et al., 2021). The rise of digital technology provides new ideas for the protection and innovation of ICHs. This paper takes Yingge Dance in Puning as an example, explores the synergistic path of digital communication and brand building from the perspective of film and television photography and production, aiming to provide practical references for the revitalization of the ICH and rural cultural revitalization.

2. Current State and Challenges of Yingge Dance Inheritance in Puning

2.1 Organizational and Communication Limitations

“Northern Ansai Waist Drum, Southern Puning Yingge Dance.” Yingge Dance in Puning, China, is a folk art that combines martial arts, dance, and drama and is listed as a national intangible cultural heritage. However, currently, Yingge Dance teams in Puning are independently managed by various townships without a specialized organization for centralized management, resulting in scattered cultural resources across different towns (Li, 2019).

2.2 Market and Brand Development Challenges

Yingge Dance relies on offline festival activities, with audiences limited to local residents. It lacks a unified visual identity and commercial development model, restricting its cultural added value and market potential. For example, during the 2022 Puning Yingge Dance Cultural Festival, there were fewer than a thousand online live broadcasts, highlighting insufficient digital engagement.

3. Exploration of Digital Communication Paths

3.1 Viral Communication via Short Video Platforms

3.1.1 Case Study: Douyin and Kuaishou

Short video platforms (e.g., Douyin and Kuaishou) have become critical for reaching young audiences. In 2018, with Douyin and Kuaishou launching topics and subsidies related to intangible cultural heritage, these platforms became major gathering places for ICH inheritors (Zhu, 2020). During the 2023 Puning Yingge Dance Cultural Festival, a Douyin live broadcast attracted 500,000 viewers, demonstrating the potential of short videos to break geographical barriers.

3.1.2 Challenges and Optimization

Challenges include content homogenization and insufficient cultural depth. Future research should explore balancing authenticity with innovation and optimizing algorithms for enhanced communication.

3.2 Immersive experience with Virtual Reality (VR) Technology

3.2.1 Technological Applications

“VR technology also makes the interaction between sculpture works and the audience more natural and intuitive. Audiences can use VR devices to immerse themselves in the experience of viewing, touching, and

even altering sculpture works, gaining an unprecedented immersive experience” (Xu, 2024). VR technology can overcome time and space limitations, providing an immersive cultural experience. For example, Foshan's “Lion Dance AR Interactive Experience” uses augmented reality technology to promote lion dance culture, and in Chaozhou near Puning, the “VR Guangji Bridge” project uses virtual reality technology to restore historical scenes of Guangji Bridge. This finding shows that technological empowerment not only preserves the “authenticity” of traditional skills but also enhances user engagement through interactive design.

3.2.2 Cost and Accessibility

High technical costs and accessibility barriers remain challenges, requiring government subsidies and industry-academia collaboration.

4. Brand Building Strategy Design

4.1 Building a Cultural IP System

4.1.1 IP Development and Monitoring

Creating a “Yingge Hero” cartoon character and launching emojis/blind boxes can transform abstract culture into marketable products. Through visual design and storytelling, a distinctive Yingge Dance IP is created. The revenue layer is the largest monetization channel for cultural IP value development, including film, television, animation, and games; the derivative layer is a series of derivative products developed from the creation layer, which is a new market highly popular among young groups (Wang, 2020). Therefore, individual creations can be used to produce rich cultural IP products, increasing local cultural content and traffic while spreading culture. For example, the “Chaoshan Kung Fu Tea Emoji” created by a local Chaoshan designer had over 50,000 downloads on WeChat, with related reports in *Chaozhou Daily*; the “Chaozhou Embroidery Postcard” launched by the Chaozhou Cultural and Tourism Bureau sold approximately 300 sets per month, with related reports in *Chaozhou Daily*. In the future, Puning Yingge Dance can design a “Yingge Hero” cartoon character, incorporate traditional Chaoshan patterns into the costume, and launch a series of emojis and blind box peripherals for sale on e-commerce platforms. Using IP operations to transform abstract culture into tangible products can enhance market acceptance.

4.2 Cultural Tourism Integration and Cross-border Collaboration

4.2.1 Case Study: Yingge Dance-themed Products

The Puning Cultural Center's tea canister design sold 1,000 units monthly, illustrating the economic potential of cultural tourism integration. Yingge Dance elements should be integrated into rural tourism and commercial brands to expand application scenarios. Research results show that the integration of the tourism economy and cultural industry not only enhances the cultural connotations of tourism products but also brings broader market space and richer business models to the cultural industry (Liu, 2025). Such cultural tourism integration and cross-border collaboration not only inject new vitality into the intangible cultural heritage of Yingge Dance but also greatly promote the communication and protection of its cultural heritage. For example, the Puning Cultural Center launched a Yingge Dance-themed tea canister, with dance movements as design elements, selling approximately 1,000 units per month, with related reports in *Jieyang Daily*. Cultural tourism integration enhances the depth of cultural communication and injects vitality into the rural economy.

5. Challenges and Countermeasures

5.1 High Technical Costs

Government subsidies and industry-academia partnerships can lower VR/AR development costs. High Technical Costs: The application of VR/AR technology in the digital inheritance of intangible cultural heritage such as Yingge Dance faces the challenge of high technical costs. To address this issue effectively, efforts can be made in terms of both government and industry-academia cooperation. First, the government can provide special subsidies or tax incentives to alleviate the economic burden on enterprises in technology research and application. Second, strengthening industry-academia cooperation can achieve technology transfer and

commercialization of research results through resource sharing and complementary advantages, effectively lowering the threshold for VR/AR development. This cooperation model not only enhances the technological innovation capabilities of enterprises but also promotes the commercialization of academic research.

5.2 Homogeneous Competition

Differentiation through Chaoshan dialect lyrics and martial arts elements can enhance brand uniqueness. Homogeneous Competition: In the process of the digital inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, traditional cultural forms such as Yingge Dance often face the dilemma of homogeneous competition. To avoid this phenomenon, it is necessary to explore in depth the unique cultural connotations and artistic characteristics of Yingge Dance, such as Chaoshan dialect lyrics and martial arts elements, to construct differentiated brand labels. By strengthening brand recognition and cultural uniqueness, the competitive advantage of Yingge Dance in the market can be enhanced. Moreover, innovative communication methods and forms should be emphasized to meet the diverse needs of different audience groups.

5.3 Copyright Protection

Blockchain technology and digital resource libraries can safeguard intellectual property. Copyright Protection: Copyright protection in the digital inheritance of intangible cultural heritage cannot be ignored. To strengthen copyright protection, a digital resource library for intangible cultural heritage can be established to systematically standardize the organization and storage of traditional cultural resources such as Yingge Dance. On this basis, the immutability and transparency of blockchain technology can be used to trace and confirm copyright information. Once infringement is detected, legal measures can be taken quickly to protect rights. Additionally, strengthening copyright awareness education and legal regulations can increase public awareness and support the copyright protection of intangible cultural heritage.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Findings

Yingge Dance in Puning is deeply loved by the people, with a solid mass foundation and social base. It is widely regarded as a cultural symbol of promoting righteousness, suppressing evil, and symbolizing auspiciousness and peace (Wu, 2024). This study demonstrates that digital communication and brand building are pivotal for revitalizing Yingge Dance. Technological empowerment and market-oriented strategies enable dynamic inheritance, breaking traditional constraints.

6.2 Future Research Directions

Future studies should explore the “culture + technology + industry” synergy, addressing gaps in cost efficiency and copyright frameworks to ensure sustainable rural revitalization.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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