

Research on the Cultural Communication Mechanism of Intangible Cultural Heritage Projects and Their Matching with Cultural Tourism Demand——A Case Study of Huangshan City

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Abstract—This study takes Huangshan City, China, as a case to explore the cultural communication mechanism of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) projects and their matching with cultural tourism demand. Firstly, it analyzes the dual-track communication of Huangshan's ICH (e.g., Huizhou Three Carvings, Huizhou Opera) through traditional channels (oral tradition, folk activities) and modern channels (social media, e-commerce), noting both the depth of traditional inheritance and the breadth of modern dissemination, as well as the pros and cons of cultural changes in communication. Secondly, it examines the tourism market demand: sightseeing tourists prefer representative ICH performances, leisure tourists favor relaxed experiences, study tour participants seek in-depth learning, and enterprises demand unique, innovative ICH tourism products and brands. Finally, it proposes matching strategies: selecting potential ICH projects based on demand (e.g., customized Huizhou Three Carvings, immersive Huizhou Opera experiences), optimizing communication via storytelling and new media, and aligning product design with market segments (parent-child interaction, high-end customization). These findings provide references for balancing ICH innovation and inheritance, and promoting the sustainable development of ICH cultural tourism.

Keywords— Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH); Cultural Tourism Demand; Huangshan City.

I. ANALYSIS OF THE CULTURAL COMMUNICATION MECHANISM OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE PROJECTS

1. Communication Channels and Methods

“In the digital age, the media plays a crucial role in the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage”^[1]. In the communication process of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) projects in Huangshan City, traditional and modern communication channels coexist, each playing a unique role with distinct communication effects. Rooted in the local cultural context of Huizhou, traditional communication channels rely heavily on oral tradition, the oldest and most fundamental method that remains irreplaceable in ICH inheritance. Take Huizhou folk songs as an example: in rural areas of Xiuning County, elderly residents naturally hum centuries-old tunes while working in fields or gathering with families, passing down lyrics, melodies, and the stories behind them to younger generations. Although this method has a

limited reach and slow spread, it possesses profound emotional resonance and cultural inheritance value, enabling ICH to be sustained naturally and deeply within families and villages.

Folk activities serve as more public and large-scale traditional communication platforms. For instance, performances of Mulian Opera, a national-level ICH project in Qimen County, are usually held during major festivals or sacrificial events. Villagers from surrounding areas gather to watch, with the on-site audience reaching hundreds or even thousands. During these performances, not only do local young people gain a deeper understanding of the opera's plots and performance styles, but tourists from outside also get the chance to experience this ancient art form. For example, the number of tourists attracted to the annual Mulian Opera Festival in Lixi Village, Qimen County, has been increasing year by year. Disseminating ICH through folk activities fosters a strong cultural atmosphere, enhances local residents' sense of identity and pride in their heritage, and leaves a profound cultural impact on visitors.

With the advent of the internet era, modern communication channels have injected tremendous vitality into ICH dissemination. Social media has become a forefront for promoting ICH, with a wealth of content about Huangshan's ICH projects available on platforms like Douyin and Xiaohongshu. Take Huizhou Three Carvings (wood carving, stone carving, and brick carving) as an example: numerous craftsmen share their carving processes and showcase exquisite works on Douyin, attracting attention from across China and even globally. In the comment sections, countless netizens express admiration for the craftsmanship and interest in Huizhou culture. E-commerce platforms such as Taobao and JD.com have also built bridges for the sales and cultural communication of ICH products. As an important ICH product of Huangshan, Huangshan Maofeng Tea enjoys impressive sales on these platforms. Through e-commerce, consumers not only purchase the tea but also learn about its production techniques, historical culture, and other relevant knowledge, achieving both product sales and cultural dissemination.

When comparing the effects of traditional and modern channels, traditional channels excel in the depth of cultural inheritance and emotional connection, ensuring the stable preservation of ICH within local communities. In contrast, modern channels have greatly expanded the scope of communication, introducing Huangshan's ICH projects to national and global markets, attracting a large number of potential audiences, and enhancing the visibility and influence of these heritage items. However, modern channels fall short of traditional ones in terms of the depth and precision of cultural inheritance; some online audiences may only gain a superficial understanding of ICH without the willingness for in-depth experience and inheritance.

2. Cultural Changes in the Communication Process

In the process of ICH communication, cultural variations inevitably occur to adapt to the fast-paced modern life and diverse audience demands, and these changes bring both advantages and disadvantages.

Taking Huizhou Three Carvings as an example, the traditional production process is extremely complex, with a delicate wood carving work potentially taking craftsmen months or even years to complete. However, under the influence of modern communication and market demands, some Huizhou Three Carvings works have been simplified. To improve production efficiency and meet the huge demand for tourist souvenirs, some craftsmen have streamlined the carving procedures. Originally intricate manual polishing and elaborate carving steps are now partially replaced by machine-aided processing. A large number of Huizhou Three Carvings souvenirs sold in tourist shops on Tunxi Old Street show varying degrees of simplification. To a certain extent, this simplification has reduced production costs, making these products more accessible to consumers and expanding the dissemination scope of Huizhou Three Carvings. According to shop owners, these simplified souvenirs are priced relatively low and sell well, bringing certain economic benefits to the inheritance of Huizhou Three Carvings and exposing more tourists to this traditional craft.

Nevertheless, simplification has also brought many drawbacks. From an artistic perspective, simplified works have lost the delicacy and sophistication of traditional craftsmanship, failing to showcase the unique artistic charm of Huizhou Three Carvings. In traditional manual carving, craftsmen endow works with vivid lines, rich layers, and expressive details through masterful skills, while machine-made products often feature rigid lines and lack vitality. Culturally, simplified techniques hinder the inheritance and development of traditional craftsmanship. If younger generations of craftsmen primarily learn simplified techniques, they will struggle to master the essence of traditional skills, which may eventually lead to the gradual loss of traditional Huizhou Three Carvings techniques.

Huizhou Opera has also undergone changes in its communication. To adapt to modern audiences' aesthetic preferences and fast-paced lifestyles, some Huizhou Opera troupes have revised their repertoires. For example, they have streamlined plots by removing lengthy foreshadowing to

highlight core storylines, and incorporated modern stage effects and lighting designs to enhance visual impact. When performing the classic opera *Drunken Beauty*, one Huizhou Opera troupe used multimedia technology to create lifelike imperial court scenes, which, combined with the performers' exquisite acting, attracted a large number of young audiences. Such innovations have, to some extent, drawn more viewers to the theater, especially young people, injecting new vitality into the inheritance and development of Huizhou Opera.

However, excessive adaptation has sparked controversy. Some long-time fans argue that the revised operas have lost their original charm, with weakened traditional performance conventions and vocal characteristics. As a traditional opera with profound historical and cultural heritage, Huizhou Opera's unique vocal styles and performance techniques are its core cultural values. Overemphasis on modern elements and audience preferences may dilute its cultural connotations, deviate it from its original artistic path, and adversely affect its long-term development.

In general, cultural changes in the communication of ICH projects are a double-edged sword. Moderate variations enable ICH to better adapt to modern society, attract more audiences, and create new opportunities for its inheritance and development. However, excessive variations may damage the cultural authenticity and artistic value of ICH, threatening its long-term survival. Therefore, a critical challenge in ICH communication is to strike a balance between innovation and inheritance by properly managing the extent of cultural changes.

II. CULTURAL TOURISM MARKET DEMAND FOR INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE PROJECTS

1. Tourists' Preference for ICH Experiences

Tourists with different travel purposes exhibit distinct preferences for ICH experiences. Sightseeing-oriented tourists prioritize the visibility and representativeness of ICH projects. When visiting scenic spots such as Xidi and Honggun Ancient Villages, they hope to see distinctive local ICH performances or exhibitions, such as admiring ancient buildings decorated with Huizhou Three Carvings and watching Huizhou folk song performances, to enrich their travel experience and create lasting memories. When choosing ICH experiences, these tourists often give priority to projects that are visually striking and impactful.

Leisure-oriented tourists prefer relaxed and enjoyable ICH activities to unwind. They may choose to taste Huangshan Maofeng Tea while appreciating Huizhou tea art performances in scenic teahouses, or participate in hands-on experiences like making Huizhou pastries to enjoy the fun of craftsmanship. These tourists have high requirements for the environment and atmosphere of the experience, emphasizing comfort and pleasure throughout the process.

Study tour participants have the deepest and most systematic demand for ICH experiences. They aim to acquire relevant knowledge and skills and gain an in-depth understanding of local culture through participation. Study tour groups organized by schools usually include specialized ICH courses. For example, in Huizhou culture study tours held

in ancient villages of Yixian County, students not only visit ancient Huizhou residences and learn about Huizhou Three Carvings but also take part in hands-on courses such as Huizhou seal carving and bamboo weaving, with professional instructors explaining the cultural connotations and historical origins behind these crafts. Study tour participants have high expectations for the professionalism and educational value of the experiences, hoping to accumulate knowledge and enhance their abilities through personal involvement.

2. Market Demand for ICH Products

In terms of product design preferences, tourists favor designs that are simple, fashionable, innovative, and reflect ICH cultural connotations. For patterns, representative Huizhou elements such as Huizhou Opera facial masks, Huizhou architecture, and Huangshan scenery are highly popular. For instance, a necklace featuring simplified and modernized Huizhou Opera facial mask patterns paired with a stylish chain not only showcases Huizhou Opera culture but also aligns with modern fashion trends, making it very popular in the market. In terms of materials, natural materials such as wood, bamboo, silk, and ceramics are more favored by consumers due to their environmental friendliness, good texture, and ability to highlight the traditional craftsmanship of ICH products. For example, Huizhou bamboo weaving crafts made from natural bamboo exhibit inherent textures and a primitive charm that enhances their appeal. Additionally, tourists expect ICH products to offer interactivity and experiential value, such as assemble-yourself Huizhou architecture models or ICH souvenirs with QR codes that provide access to additional cultural background information. These features allow tourists to further explore ICH culture after purchase, strengthening their identification with and affection for the products.

From the perspective of market consumption trends, as consumers increasingly pursue cultural connotations, the market demand for ICH-related products is on the rise. At the same time, consumers have higher requirements for product quality, design, and personalization. ICH products that combine innovation, practicality, and cultural significance will occupy a larger market share. Furthermore, the rise of online consumption channels has brought new opportunities for the sales of ICH products.

3. Development Needs of Cultural Tourism Enterprises for ICH Projects

In project planning, cultural tourism enterprises generally aim to develop unique and attractive ICH tourism projects. As important venues for displaying and experiencing ICH, scenic spots hope to integrate ICH elements with their own characteristics to create differentiated tourism products. For example, Huangshan Scenic Area plans to develop an ICH experience route themed around Huangshan tea culture based on its existing tourism routes. Tourists will not only enjoy Huangshan's natural scenery but also visit tea gardens to learn about the planting and picking processes of Huangshan Maofeng Tea, participate in tea-making experiences, and taste authentic Huangshan Maofeng Tea. Additionally, the scenic

area intends to introduce cultural activities such as Huizhou tea art performances and Huangshan tea song recitals to enrich tourists' experiences. Travel agencies focus more on integrating ICH projects into travel itineraries, aiming to develop ICH-themed routes that meet diverse tourist needs. For example, for the parent-child travel market, they design routes centered on Huizhou traditional craftsmanship experiences, including Huizhou seal carving and bamboo weaving, allowing children to learn traditional culture while traveling. For the elderly travel market, they launch routes featuring Huizhou Opera appreciation and Huizhou folk custom experiences to cater to the elderly's love for traditional culture.

Product innovation is a key focus for cultural tourism enterprises. Cultural and creative enterprises seek to explore more ICH elements to develop innovative cultural and creative products. Taking Huizhou Three Carvings as an example, in addition to traditional wood, stone, and brick carving crafts, enterprises aim to develop new cultural and creative products by integrating modern technology and design concepts. For instance, 3D printing technology can be used to create miniature models of Huizhou Three Carvings for application in jewelry and home decorations, or Huizhou Three Carvings elements can be incorporated into digital products, such as interactive apps that allow users to appreciate, learn, and even virtually create Huizhou Three Carvings works on mobile phones. Cultural communication companies are committed to innovating ICH communication methods, utilizing new media technologies such as short videos, live streaming, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) to create immersive ICH cultural experiences. For example, VR technology can transport users to a Huizhou Opera performance, while AR technology can display the original appearance and historical stories of ancient Huizhou buildings in real-world scenes.

Brand building is crucial for cultural tourism enterprises. Enterprises hope to enhance product visibility and reputation and strengthen market competitiveness by building ICH brands. Many cultural tourism enterprises state that they will thoroughly explore the cultural connotations of ICH projects, tell compelling ICH stories, and shape unique brand images. For example, when promoting Huizhou Opera, a cultural communication company adopted the theme "Huizhou Opera - A Bright Pearl of Huizhou Culture," and comprehensively built the Huizhou Opera brand through various initiatives, including organizing Huizhou Opera Cultural Festivals, producing documentaries, and launching Huizhou Opera-themed cultural and creative products. Meanwhile, enterprises focus on brand communication and promotion, expanding their influence through multiple channels such as social media and online-offline activities. In cooperating with ICH projects, enterprises aim to establish long-term and stable partnerships with ICH inheritors, leveraging the inheritors' professional expertise to improve product quality and cultural connotations. They also hope the government will provide more policy support and financial assistance to help reduce costs, enhance innovation capabilities, and promote the healthy development of the ICH cultural tourism industry.

III. MATCHING STRATEGIES BETWEEN ICH PROJECTS AND CULTURAL TOURISM DEMAND

1. Selection and Development of ICH Projects Based on Demand

Based on the detailed analysis of market demand above, Huangshan City needs to accurately select ICH projects with significant potential for cultural tourism development and formulate targeted and effective development plans.

Among traditional craftsmanship ICH projects, Huizhou Three Carvings, with their exquisite techniques and high artistic value, have great potential for cultural tourism development. To meet the market demand for personalized and high-end products, customized Huizhou Three Carvings services can be developed. For example, specialized custom workshops can be established in core tourist areas such as Tunxi Old Street. Tourists can provide design sketches or creative ideas according to their preferences, and experienced ICH inheritors will lead teams to complete the carving. During the production process, tourists can visit at any time to understand each procedure and even participate in simple links under professional guidance. Meanwhile, to meet the demand for mass tourist souvenirs, a series of affordable small Huizhou Three Carvings accessories can be launched. Taking Huizhou wood carvings as an example, small items such as keychains, bookmarks, and phone holders themed around Huangshan scenery, Huizhou architecture, and Huizhou folk customs can be designed and produced. A combination of machine assistance and manual refinement can ensure a certain output while maintaining a certain artistic standard.

Among traditional opera ICH projects, Huizhou Opera, with its profound historical heritage and unique artistic charm, is deeply loved by some tourists. In response to the market demand for cultural performance experiences, an immersive Huizhou Opera theater can be created. In Shexian County or Huizhou District, ancient stages or specially constructed theater spaces can be used to present carefully choreographed Huizhou Opera performances combined with modern stage technologies such as multimedia background displays and surround sound systems, creating an immersive viewing experience for tourists. Before the performance, a guided tour can be arranged to introduce the historical origin, vocal characteristics, and performance conventions of Huizhou Opera. During the performance, interactive sessions can be organized, inviting tourists to go on stage to learn simple Huizhou Opera movements and arias, enhancing their sense of participation. Meanwhile, for the study tour market, specialized Huizhou Opera study courses can be developed. Cooperating with schools and educational institutions, 1-to-3-day Huizhou Opera study programs can be designed, covering theoretical knowledge learning, basic skill training, and repertoire rehearsal and performance, taught by professional Huizhou Opera performers and ICH inheritors, allowing students to deeply understand Huizhou Opera culture and develop an interest in traditional opera.

Huizhou folk songs, a traditional music ICH project, can also be innovatively developed according to market demand. In response to tourists' demand for relaxed, enjoyable, and

interactive cultural experiences, regular Huizhou folk song singing activities can be held in scenic spots and leisure venues, such as rest areas in Huangshan Scenic Area and courtyards of ancient residences in Xidi and Hongcun. Local folk singers can be invited to interact with tourists, teaching them simple and easy-to-learn Huizhou folk songs. Meanwhile, folk song creation workshops can be organized to encourage tourists to write simple lyrics based on their travel experiences in Huangshan and sing them to the tune of Huizhou folk songs. Additionally, Huizhou folk songs can be integrated with modern musical elements to create characteristic music albums or tourism promotion songs, which can be widely disseminated through scenic area broadcasts, online tourism platforms, and music streaming software to enhance the visibility and influence of Huizhou folk songs.

2. Optimization of Communication Content and Forms

Based on the analysis of different audience characteristics and communication effects, the communication of Huangshan's ICH projects needs comprehensive optimization in content and forms to enhance communication appeal and influence.

In terms of communication content, storytelling and interesting expressions should be adopted. Taking the production techniques of Huangshan Maofeng Tea as an example, the legendary story of "Xie Zheng'an Creating Huangshan Maofeng Tea" can be told. This story weaves the historical culture and production techniques of Huangshan Maofeng Tea into a narrative about Xie Zheng'an's dedication to tea quality, his discovery of high-quality tea tree varieties in Huangshan's unique natural environment, and his success in developing Huangshan Maofeng after numerous experiments. This story can be disseminated through short videos, official WeChat articles, and tourism brochures to arouse audience interest. At the same time, folk tales and celebrity anecdotes behind ICH projects should be explored, such as the connection between Huizhou Opera and Huizhou merchants, telling how Huizhou merchants loved and promoted the development of Huizhou Opera, endowing ICH culture with richer humanistic connotations and interest.

"In the current context of new media, short video platforms have become excellent communication channels for intangible cultural heritage (ICH) culture. Short videos related to ICH are emerging one after another, and the communication paths for such videos have also been expanded"^[2]. In terms of communication forms, full use should be made of new media for innovation. Short video platforms such as Douyin and Kuaishou have become important venues for ICH communication. Huangshan City can organize ICH inheritors and cultural tourism enterprises to shoot and produce high-quality ICH short videos. For Huizhou Three Carvings, short videos can showcase the entire production process from raw material processing to finished products, highlighting the ingenuity of each carving step with vivid narration and lively music to attract viewers' attention. When releasing videos, popular hashtags such as #HuizhouThreeCarvings and #ICHInheritance can be used to increase video exposure.

Statistics show that some well-produced ICH short videos have received hundreds of thousands or even millions of views. Live streaming is another promising communication form. Regular live broadcasts of ICH projects can be carried out, such as inviting Huizhou Opera performers to give live performances, interacting with the audience during the broadcast to answer questions about Huizhou Opera and introduce knowledge about its costumes and props. During live broadcasts, lucky draws with Huizhou Opera peripheral cultural and creative products as prizes can be held to attract more viewers. In addition, VR and AR technologies can be utilized to create immersive ICH communication experiences. For example, an AR navigation app for ancient Huizhou villages can be developed. When tourists visit Xidi and Hongcun, they can scan ancient buildings with their mobile phones to access detailed introductions and historical backgrounds of Huizhou Three Carvings on the buildings, and even view the carving process in AR form, enabling them to understand ICH projects more intuitively and deeply.

Communication content and forms should be precisely tailored to different audience groups. For young people, content should emphasize fun and interactivity, such as developing ICH-themed games and animations. Huizhou folk song legends can be told through animations, and mobile games themed around Huizhou seal carving can be designed to allow young people to learn about ICH culture through entertainment. For middle-aged and elderly groups, content should highlight cultural connotations and historical heritage, and communication forms can combine traditional and new media. Special ICH programs can be produced on local TV stations, inviting experts, scholars, and ICH inheritors to provide in-depth interpretations. At the same time, in-depth articles can be published on official WeChat accounts to meet the middle-aged and elderly groups' demand for in-depth exploration of ICH culture.

3. Alignment of Product Design with Market Demand

In developing ICH cultural tourism products, full integration of market demand elements is necessary to meet the diverse needs of tourists at different levels.

For the parent-child travel market, parent-child interactive ICH experience products can be designed. For example, a series of "Huizhou Parent-Child Handicraft Workshop" products can be launched, including Huizhou bamboo weaving parent-child sets and Huizhou paper-cutting parent-child packages. In product design, the need for joint parent-child participation should be fully considered, with production processes simplified and divided into steps suitable for parents and children to complete together. Taking the Huizhou bamboo weaving parent-child set as an example, it can provide bamboo strips of various specifications, tools, and detailed production tutorials. Parents and children can cooperate to make simple bamboo weaving items such as bamboo dragonflies and small bamboo animals. The supporting tutorials can include both graphic instructions and video QR codes for parents and children to refer to at any time. Such parent-child interactive ICH experience products

not only allow children to develop creativity and an interest in traditional culture through hands-on activities but also strengthen the emotional bond between parents and children, meeting the educational and entertaining needs of the parent-child travel market. According to market feedback, such products sell well during holidays, with many parents expressing willingness to spend on their children's cultural experiences.

For high-end tourists pursuing quality and personalization, high-end customized ICH cultural and creative products can be developed. Taking Huizhou Three Carvings as an example, high-quality raw materials such as red sandalwood and Hetian jade can be used to create limited-edition cultural and creative products designed and produced personally by national-level ICH inheritors. These products can include high-end wood carving ornaments, stone carving jewelry, and brick carving decorative paintings. In design, customer needs and Huizhou cultural elements should be fully integrated. For example, relevant elements can be incorporated into the design of three-carving works based on family stories or personal preferences provided by customers, creating unique cultural and creative products. Meanwhile, exclusive packaging and services should be provided for high-end customized products, such as customized exquisite gift boxes, collection certificates, and one-on-one cultural explanation services. Although these high-end customized ICH cultural and creative products are priced high, the market demand is on the rise, especially among the high-end business gift market and collectors.

In the design of tourist souvenirs, emphasis should be placed on integrating practicality with cultural connotations. For example, thermos cups shaped like Huizhou architecture can be designed, cleverly incorporating elements such as horse-head walls and blue tiles of Huizhou-style buildings into the cup's appearance. These cups not only have practical thermal insulation functions but also allow tourists to feel the Huizhou cultural atmosphere at all times. In addition, characteristic ICH food souvenirs with local flavors can be developed, such as delicately packaged traditional foods like Huangshan sesame cakes and Huimo crisp pastries. Cultural patterns and introductions can be printed on the packaging to meet tourists' demand for tasting local delicacies and serve as unique souvenirs for gifting relatives and friends. Market research and sales data analysis show that such practical and culturally rich tourist souvenirs have stable sales and high market acceptance, effectively enhancing the market competitiveness of ICH cultural tourism products.

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