

# *Digital Dissemination of Intangible Cultural Heritage: A Case Study of Folk Literature*

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**Abstract:** The rapid advancement of information technology has facilitated the widespread digital dissemination of intangible cultural heritage through social media, a trend that has gained considerable traction. Folk literature, acknowledged as a significant form of intangible cultural heritage, encapsulates traits such as cultural inheritance, cultural confidence, and distinctive local characteristics. This paper, utilizing Chinese folk literature as a case study, examines the digital dissemination of intangible cultural heritage on social media platforms. The study explores strategies for both digital dissemination and protection, aiming to realize the goals of rural culture revitalization and the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** Intangible cultural heritage, Folk literature, Protection, digital dissemination

## **1. Introduction**

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) has gained increasing significance as a crucial cultural resource inherited from our ancestors and transmitted to future generations [1]. As of December 2022, China boasts an impressive 43 projects listed on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List, marking the highest number globally. Serving as a vital component of China's rich traditional culture, intangible cultural heritage embodies profound connotations and historical memories of the national culture. Throughout the "14th Five-Year Plan" period, a key focus across various regions is the promotion of deep integration of intangible cultural heritage with sectors such as rural tourism. This aims to foster the development of intangible cultural heritage and contribute to the prosperity of the rural economy, representing a pivotal aspect of efforts to safeguard intangible cultural heritage.

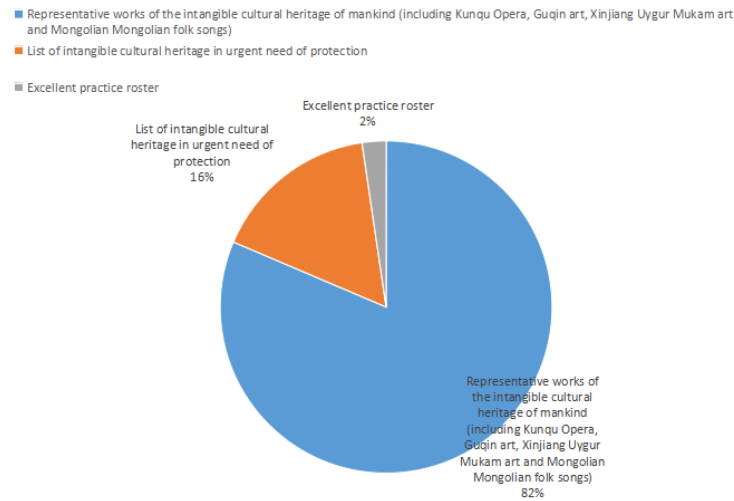


Figure 1: China has been selected into the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List (List) (43 items in total)

The preservation and advancement of intangible cultural heritage enhance rural tourism's appeal, injecting vitality into the rural economy. Simultaneously, safeguarding and advancing intangible cultural heritage propel local industry growth, fostering rural economic transformation and upgrade. The evolution of Chinese folk literature traces back to prehistoric mythology, manifesting diverse literary styles and historical characteristics [2]. It encapsulates deep-rooted heritage and distinctive traditional cultural features, serving as a fundamental pillar of non-material heritage and a crucial developmental aspect. Academic historical research, delineated by the pivotal May Fourth Movement, categorizes ancient Chinese folklore and modern folklore [3]. The establishment of the Collection Office of Ballads at Peking University in 1918 marks the commencement of theoretical exploration in modern Chinese folk literature and art [4]. Recent years have witnessed significant accomplishments in folk literature history and theory research. Notable articles like "Review of the Research of Chinese Storytelling in the past two Decades" [5] and "The Academic Course of Storytelling in Cultural Anthropology in the 20th Century" [6] recognize substantial strides in Chinese storytelling research. Scholars, employing metrological and modern research methods, analyze the recent research landscape of folk literature in works such as "Bibliometric Analysis of Chinese Folk Story Papers (1978-2010)" [7] and "Review of Chinese Folk Story Studies in the past 40 Years Based on a Highly Cited Perspective" [8], injecting renewed vigor into the field. Furthering the protection and advancement of intangible cultural heritage, exemplified by Pengzhou, and tapping into its latent economic, cultural, market, and communicative values, holds paramount significance in driving rural revitalization and achieving sustainable development.

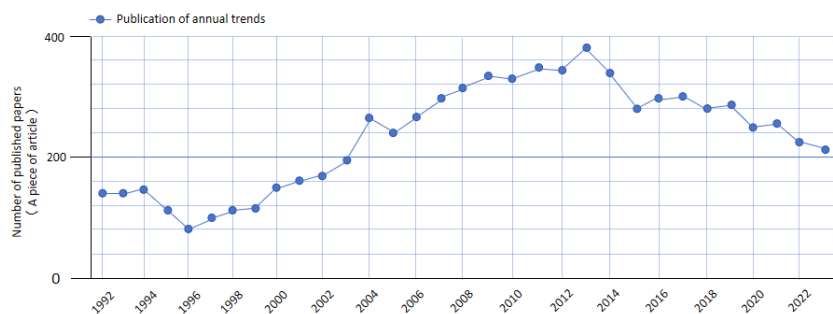


Figure 2: Trend Of Annual Folk Literature Publications Of CNKI (CNKI) Database

2. Present situation of endangered folk literature in Pengzhou City

Folk literature primarily emerged during the era of traditional agrarian economies, representing the inner sentiments, expressions, and externalizations of working-class individuals. It possesses distinctive oral and colloquial characteristics, free from prescribed temporal or spatial constraints, and imposes no knowledge prerequisites. Regardless of age or gender, anyone can assume the role of a folk literature creator. The creation of folk literature often occurs through an unconscious and improvisational process, showcasing both conscious and spontaneous elements. The primary mode of inheritance involves the transmission of folk culture (literature) through "oral transmission," a practice that has endured for millennia [9].

With a history spanning over 4,000 years, Pengzhou has evolved under the influence of both natural and cultural elements, fostering an ideal environment for the development of its folk literature. Endowed with unique advantages, the produced content reflects exceptional diversity and carries distinctive cultural and heritage value. The folk literature of Pengzhou warrants recognition as a central focus for protection not only within Pengzhou but also across the entire Sichuan province. However, the current status of folk literature protection falls short of satisfaction. There are problems such as aging of inheritors, insufficient protection measures, insufficient cultural confidence and protection awareness.

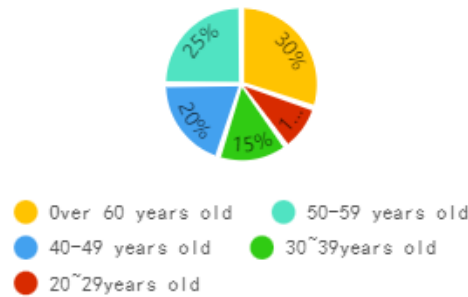


Figure 3: Survey results on the current status of protection of traditional literary heritage

Rural revitalization stands as a pivotal strategy for China's current economic and social development, wherein tourism and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage play crucial roles. The pursuit of rural revitalization transcends mere infrastructure development; it requires the exploration and preservation of local cultural traditions. This integration with agriculture and tourism efforts emphasizes not only physical transformation but also the preservation of rural areas' essence. A primary focus should be on uncovering local narratives, sentiments, and complexities to establish distinctive cultural characteristics. To effectively achieve rural revitalization, the government and relevant departments must actively facilitate tourism development and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. This entails strengthening the protection and sustainable utilization of local resources, fostering cultural confidence, and raising awareness about the importance of preservation among local residents. Such efforts will contribute to the integrated development of urban and rural areas, ultimately leading to the sustainable revitalization of rural communities.

Table 1: Statistical table of growth of Pengzhou tourism from 2021 to 2023

| Growth of tourism comprehensive operating income in Pengzhou |                     |                      |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| A given year                                                 | Receive tourists    | Gross tourism income |
| 2021.1-2021.12                                               | 10,449,500 visitors | 8.03 billion yuan    |
| 2022.1-2022.12                                               | 17,559,300 visitors | 10.101 billion yuan  |
| 2023.1-2023-6                                                | 10,449,500 visitors | 5.967 billion yuan   |

### **3. Digital protection strategy of endangered folk literature in Pengzhou City**

This paper employs case analysis, comparative research, and statistical analysis as research methodologies, focusing on Pengzhou city's folk literature, listed among endangered intangible cultural heritage. Through examining its communication status, the study aims to analyze strategies for expanding the communication channels of folk literature in the context of the new media era.

Pengzhou boasts a wealth of folk stories that encompass not only textual content but also embody a rich tapestry of folk culture. These stories carry profound meanings and possess significant spiritual influence. Integrating these narratives with intangible cultural heritage products can substantially enhance the cultural value of tourism products, meeting the growing demand for intangible cultural heritage in the realm of tourism. This paper aims to explore how such integration can be achieved, emphasizing the potential for increased added value and cultural enrichment in tourism offerings.

#### **3.1. The application of new media technology in the protection of intangible heritage**

##### **3.1.1. Non-genetic inheritors and channels are increasingly abundant**

In the era of Internet +, accelerating the transmission speed of intangible cultural heritage and bringing notable transformations in the locations, communities, audiences, and stakeholders involved in its inheritance. The inheritance process, once primarily overseen by local governments and carried out by inheritors themselves, has expanded to include media professionals engaged in publicity and promotion, the incorporation of commercial intangible cultural heritage for economic gains, and the research and promotion efforts by the academic community. Traditional inheritance channels, dominated by mainstream and industry media, have undergone a paradigm shift with the advent of new media, short videos, live broadcasts, and cultural and creative derivatives. The emergence of non-traditional channels has led to rapid and expansive development in the realm of non-genetic inheritance. Notably, new media has assumed a pivotal role in non-genetic inheritance. Through the combination of documentary-style storytelling, plot development, scene reproduction, and interpretation, well-crafted videos captivate attention and generate substantial online traffic. This immersive approach transports the audience into the scenarios depicted by the creators, transcending the limitations of time and space. Scene reproduction not only enhances the audience's connection with the content but also facilitates a deeper understanding of the creators' creative concepts. The incorporation of varied narrative levels adds an extra layer of interest to intangible cultural heritage films, making them more engaging and accessible to diverse audiences.

##### **3.1.2. The emergence of digital intangible cultural heritage in the era of new media provides a more convenient way for inheritance**

In the era of new media, a novel concept has emerged - "digital intangible cultural heritage." The integration of culture with science and technology through digital means empowers the younger generation to actively engage with traditional culture, fostering deeper reflections and insights. A notable example is the Digital China Summit organized by Fuzhou City in 2018. Participants, equipped with VR glasses and using tools like AR cards and AR e-books, could experience various traditional Chinese intangible cultural heritage projects such as lacquer painting, pyrography, Chinese paper cutting, and Mazu belief. The application of new media in a scientific manner underscores the importance of not only preserving the authenticity of intangible cultural heritage during the process of non-genetic inheritance but also emphasizing its dynamism. The objective is to bridge the gap between intangible cultural heritage and the public. Through digital sharing, the aim is to immerse people in the world of intangible cultural heritage, transforming it into an immersive experience that stimulates visual, tactile, and educational aspects. Ultimately, this approach seeks to gradually

reshape people's lifestyles through a newfound appreciation and connection with intangible cultural heritage.

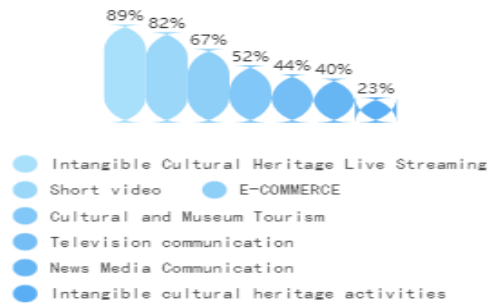


Figure 4: Survey results of the influence of various communication channels of intangible cultural heritage

### 3.2. Digital protection strategy of endangered folk literature in Pengzhou City

#### 3.2.1. Digital platform construction protection strategy in the new media era

With the widespread adoption and advancement of new media and short-form videos, digital means have become instrumental in the inheritance and documentation of cultural heritage. In Pengzhou, the birthplace of ancient Shu civilization in China, valuable intangible cultural heritage is at risk due to a shortage of inheritors in the preservation of folk literature. Therefore, it is crucial to employ new media for digital conservation. Utilizing database platforms and systems, various elements of intangible cultural heritage in folk literature can be preserved and reproduced using virtual reality technology. This approach facilitates the comprehensive and smooth development of overall inheritance and protection efforts for the intangible cultural heritage of folk literature in Pengzhou. Digital methods such as pictures, videos, animation, 3D capture technology, virtual reality, 5G8k, and others can enhance the representation of intangible cultural heritage visually. The use of these technologies enables the reproduction and restoration of scenes, strengthening the visualization of China's ancient myths and stories. Leveraging the interactive and audiovisual features of new media platforms, intangible folk literature can be vividly conveyed and passed on, significantly enhancing the sense of substitution for all users to experience and appreciate Chinese culture.

#### 3.2.2. The digital model of "intangible cultural heritage +" is applied in the inheritance and protection of folk literature

The "Intangible Cultural Heritage + Cultural Industry" digital model faces challenges in gaining vitality within the modern market economic environment, influenced by Pengzhou's traditional agricultural economic background. Currently, the focus in intangible cultural heritage protection and the cultural industry realm lies in integrating heritage resources into the cultural industry framework. The objective is to infuse vitality into intangible cultural heritage within the contemporary market economy, leveraging cultural industry operation models to achieve creative transformation and innovative development. To address this challenge, there is a need to break free from outdated thinking and traditional notions, fostering a mindset conducive to scientific industrial development. A key goal is to actively foster harmonious interaction and mutual development between Pengzhou's national cultural industry and the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. This collaborative approach aims to position culture and the economy as dual drivers of regional development. As the era evolves, the methods of inheriting and safeguarding folk literature must undergo continuous updates to remain relevant to the changing times.

Regarding the "Digital Model for Intangible Cultural Heritage and Art", it is imperative to engage in innovative artistic approaches towards folk literature to infuse it with renewed vitality. Notably, drama, animation, and theatre emerge as pivotal mediums for presenting these works artistically, and their comprehensive development and utilization are highly encouraged. Furthermore, given the current significant influence of film as a mass media platform, leveraging it can greatly enhance the popularity and impact of folk literature. "Folk literature offers a wealth of mature story resources encompassing plotlines, character portrayals, and atmospheric settings" provides a reliable foundation for film creation and fostering a consistent audience base. Exploring effective ways to integrate folk literature into film can significantly contribute to breaking new ground and innovating the aesthetic concepts within Chinese film creation. This symbiotic relationship clearly holds mutual value, promoting the protection, inheritance, and dissemination of intangible cultural heritage.

#### **4. Folk literature non-heritage travel fusion inheritance strategy**

Pengzhou boasts a wealth of national, historical, and archaeological culture, vividly portrayed in its folk stories and collective memories. The safeguarding of these intangible cultural heritage elements can serve as a robust cultural foundation for the creation of film and television. With this objective in mind, the following initiatives should be undertaken to foster the growth of cultural tourism in Pengzhou.

##### **4.1. Centering on the intangible cultural heritage base: tourists as the carrier of inheritance**

We should proactively leverage the experiential and venue resources of Sichuan's intangible cultural heritage projects, such as the Pengzhou White Porcelain Art Center and Haiwozi Ancient Town. It is crucial to strategically plan their overall cultural functions, emphasizing their distinct market characteristics. For instance, in 2019, the Pengzhou White Porcelain Center was designated as a provincial base without on-site inspection by Sichuan Province. Chengdu recognized it as a themed tourism location for the New Tourism initiative and Chaocheng Chengdu, with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism listing it as a supported project for rural culture and tourism talent. In 2020, it was named among the seventh batch of municipal intangible cultural heritage representative projects in Chengdu, earning the title of the first batch of Sichuan Cultural and Creative Markets. Guided by the principles of intangible cultural heritage tourism, there is an urgent need to accelerate the development of intangible cultural heritage tourism routes in Pengzhou. Transforming the intangible cultural heritage project experience bases into pivotal hubs for preserving and safeguarding the folk literature of Pengzhou is crucial. These bases should not only serve as focal points in the promotion of cultural tourism in Pengzhou but also function as catalysts to pique the interest of tourists. The aim is to provide visitors with a more profound understanding of Pengzhou's culture, thereby establishing these sites as integral conduits for the ongoing transmission of Pengzhou's cultural heritage.

##### **4.2. Take festivals as the center: make residents the carrier of inheritance**

In the daily lives of people, festivals mark significant cultural periods, distinguishing themselves from regular days. It is imperative to recognize festivals as cultural moments in ethnic regions, presenting a unique opportunity to showcase various aspects of local culture in Pengzhou. By concentrating on curated displays during festivals, the goal is to allow individuals to experience the captivating charm of Pengzhou's culture, subsequently fostering the growth of the comprehensive tourism economy. For instance, leveraging the time of intangible cultural heritage festivals like the 'Tianpeng Peony Flower Fair' and the 'March 3rd Gexianshan Temple Fair,' there is a need to design activities rooted in traditional sports, singing and dancing performances, and ceremonial events. Emphasizing exhibitions and performances during this period creates an environment rich in festival cultural



atmosphere. During these performances, non-genetic inheritors such as Sichuan Opera artists can be invited to render scripts adapted from folk literature through song, infusing emotional depth into festival culture and elevating its overall appeal and interaction. However, caution must be exercised to prevent the dilution of its festival theme and the potential loss of authenticity.

#### **4.3. Centering on tourist attractions: Creating cultural tourism with in-depth experience of intangible cultural heritage**

In tourist attractions, the richness of landscape scenery and the depth of humanistic spirit are pivotal factors contributing to their appeal as tourist resorts. Pengzhou's natural scenic spots and historical sites are accompanied by a plethora of legendary stories, providing a unique opportunity to leverage intangible cultural heritage narratives. Enhancing the content of tour explanations can be achieved by incorporating storytelling elements into the tour guide's presentation. Efforts should be directed towards training volunteer teams and guides to actively share diverse oral stories tailored to the interests of tourists, steering clear of monotonous and overly formalized explanations. Furthermore, the integration of written materials, such as commemorative manuals, travel guides, and scenic spot descriptions, directly within the attractions can augment the visitor experience. This allows tourists to engage with informative content at their own pace, deepening their understanding of Pengzhou's culture throughout their site visit.

#### **4.4. Taking the story content as the center: creating "Pengzhou Beauty" cultural tourism**

Cultural tourism not only relies on the protection of intangible cultural heritage but also plays a significant role in deepening such preservation efforts. These two aspects mutually reinforce and complement each other, contributing to the creation of enduring cultural and social values. To effectively integrate the current folk literature texts of Pengzhou, it is essential to actively construct a classification standard for cultural tourism. One approach is to categorize Pengzhou's folk stories into distinct themes, such as those related to ethnic origin history, celebrity legends, local site scenery, and stories about gods and illusions. These categories, including tales like the Legend of Yangping Dongtian, Emperor Jianwen and Chen's nine Niang, and stories about Ge Xianshan, can effectively preserve and inherit the ancient Pengzhou culture.

The essence of cultural tourism lies in the exploration of local customs. Narrating intangible cultural heritage stories during visits to natural and cultural landscapes or participation in ethnic festival activities, based on predetermined categories, enables tourists to deeply immerse themselves in local traditions. This personalized experience brings joy and satisfaction to visitors. In Pengzhou, the richness of folk stories extends beyond textual content to encompass vibrant folk culture. Storytelling, carried out by inheritors, particularly non-genetic inheritors, is a crucial link in preserving Pengzhou's narrative heritage. Addressing the shortage of inheritors in Pengzhou's folk stories can be approached by establishing homestays in towns associated with these stories, featuring non-invasive assessments. By transforming each homeowner into an "inheritor" and encouraging locals to share stories from their unique perspectives, tourists can organically immerse themselves in Pengzhou's tales. This approach ensures the seamless transmission of intangible folk stories, fostering a deeper connection between visitors and Pengzhou's cultural heritage.

#### **4.5. Product-centric: Creating cultural tourism with non-legacy products**

To ensure the successful sale of tourism cultural and creative products, it is essential to imbue these products with both unique and practical value. Simultaneously, infusing local characteristics and positive meanings into the products is crucial. Folk tales serve as cultural narratives that can contribute significantly to achieving this goal. The stories of Pengzhou, with their beautiful

connotations and rich spiritual power, possess an ancient and mysterious allure, creating numerous points of emotional resonance. Associating these captivating stories with intangible cultural heritage products can substantially enhance the added value embedded in tourism product culture. This approach not only meets the practical needs of consumers but also fosters a demand for tourism-related intangible cultural heritage products. Moreover, storytelling should extend beyond scenic spots to encompass other facets of intangible cultural research and tourism. For instance, the incorporation of narratives surrounding renowned Pengzhou crafts like osmanthus clay pottery and white porcelain can further enrich the cultural experience associated with tourism cultural and creative products.

## 5. Conclusion

Recognized as an oral intangible cultural heritage, folk literature holds irreplaceable value in terms of both inheritance and academia. In Pengzhou, folk literature represents the essence of rural culture, constituting a veritable treasure trove of intangible cultural heritage. To breathe vitality into this cultural wealth, it is imperative to focus on its inheritance, display, and dissemination. The synergy between tourism and intangible cultural heritage serves as a catalyst for preserving rural culture and bolstering cultural self-confidence. Tourism, as a form of cultural exchange and interaction, provides visitors with an opportunity to comprehend and embrace local culture through visits to scenic spots and participation in cultural activities. This, in turn, facilitates the inheritance and development of local intangible cultural heritage, elevating the visibility and influence of the local culture. Simultaneously, tourism plays a pivotal role in stimulating the self-confidence and cultural identification of local residents. As they witness the appreciation of their culture by visitors, residents are more likely to recognize the importance of protecting and inheriting their cultural heritage. Thus, tourism becomes a driving force in fostering cultural awareness, appreciation, and sustainable preservation at the local level.

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