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Exploring the Value Reshaping and Practical Approaches to the Digital Inheritance of Cultural Heritage from the Perspective of Culture-Tourism Integration

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Abstract

Driven by the dual forces of culture-tourism integration and the digital transformation wave, the inheritance of cultural heritage now confronts the epochal challenge of technological innovation and value reconstruction. It further reveals the alienation dilemmas manifested in subject disjunction, value disorientation, and technological divide, and uncovers the structural contradictions between technological application and cultural logic. In response, the paper proposes a trinity of practical systems—"subject synergy, ethical constraints, and capability support"—to offer theoretical guidance for the long-term preservation and innovative transmission of cultural heritage. This framework seeks to contribute to the construction of a culturally strong nation in the new era and promote the high-quality development of the culture-tourism industry.

Keywords

culture-tourism integration
cultural heritage
digital inheritance
value reshaping
practical approaches

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1. Introduction

Cultural heritage embodies historical memory and cultural essence; its preservation and transmission are vital to maintaining cultural diversity and ensuring the continuity of civilization. As a major country rich in world heritage, China finds that traditional methods of heritage protection are increasingly inadequate in the face of globalization and the digital revolution. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China has issued documents, including the Opinions of the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council on Promoting the Implementation of the National Cultural Digitalization Strategy, identifying digitalization as a key initiative in cultural development. These directives open up new avenues for the inheritance of cultural heritage. To achieve the long-term preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage, digital transmission has become an inevitable choice.

2. The Dimension of Value: The Intrinsic Value and Theoretical Foundation of the Digital Inheritance of Cultural Heritage

The core of the digital inheritance of cultural heritage lies in activating its intrinsic value through technological means within the context of digital civilization, thereby constructing a transmission system in which tradition and modernity coexist. This process of value reshaping entails the synergistic realization of ontological value, identity value, and developmental value.

2.1. The Modern Activation of Ontological Value: From Static Preservation to Living Continuity

The ontological value of cultural heritage is reflected in its irreplaceability as a "witness of history." Digital inheritance represents a paradigm shift from "passive preservation" to "proactive continuation," enabling cultural heritage to transition from a static state to a dynamic, living presence. According to the historical materialist perspective, material production forms the foundation of human survival and development, while spiritual production constructs the cultural and value systems of human society[1]. As the crystallization of human spiritual production, cultural heritage evolves in its form of existence in accordance with changes in modes of production. In traditional models, the ontological existence of cultural heritage depends on the continuity of physical carriers and is thus vulnerable to both natural and human-induced threats. Digital technologies, through high-precision data acquisition and modeling, transform material forms into digital codes, thereby establishing a dual mode of existence: the "physical entity–digital replica" model [2], enabling the achievements of spiritual production to transcend temporal boundaries. Moreover, digital inheritance, by constructing a "digital map of cultural heritage," enables a holistic representation of its internal logic—integrating historical context longitudinally and interlinking cultural elements laterally. This not only deepens the understanding of ontological value but also reinforces the continuity of cultural heritage as a "living cultural gene"[3].

2.2. Multidimensional Expansion of Identity Value: From Regional Symbols to Shared Memory

Cultural heritage serves as a vital symbol in the construction of identity and collective belonging. Its identity value lies in providing cultural answers to the existential questions of "Who am I?" and "Where do I come from?" Digital inheritance promotes the transition of identity value from "regional limitation" to "diverse sharing," facilitating a shift from cultural identity to political identity, thereby contributing to the consolidation of a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation.

On the one hand, under traditional models, cultural heritage has often been confined to specific locations, constrained by factors such as geography, limited opening hours, and unequal resource distribution, making inclusive access and universal sharing difficult to achieve[4]. Digital technologies have broken down these barriers, enabling a broader audience to transcend temporal and spatial limitations and equally enjoy the spiritual nourishment offered by cultural heritage. On the other hand, as a carrier of the collective memory of the Chinese people, the transmission of cultural heritage in its traditional form has relied heavily on authoritative narratives. Through "narrative innovation" and "interactive participation," digital inheritance transforms the transmission of collective memory from "passive reception" to "active construction," thereby strengthening the emotional connection between the people and cultural heritage[5].

2.3. Temporal Transformation of Developmental Value: From Historical Relics to Future-Oriented Resources

The developmental value of cultural heritage lies in its capacity to provide spiritual nourishment and cultural empowerment to contemporary society. Through activation and innovation enabled by digital inheritance, cultural heritage is transformed from a "relic of the past" into a "resource of the era," thereby facilitating the multidimensional release of value centered on cultural significance. From the perspective of culture-tourism integration, digital inheritance provides an innovative practical mechanism for transforming intangible cultural heritage (ICH) IP into collective economic assets. By deeply exploring the connotations and distinctive elements

of ICH, attractive IP images can be developed[6], forming a model of "ICH IP + e-commerce." Simultaneously, by centering tourism experience projects around ICH IP, this model not only promotes the development of local tourism but also stimulates the prosperity of related industries such as catering and accommodation. In doing so, it fosters cultural dissemination while advancing economic development. Furthermore, digital inheritance, through the extraction and reconfiguration of cultural elements, offers abundant material and inspiration for contemporary cultural creation. This enables the transformation of value from "tradition as foundation" to "innovation as application," allowing innovation to resonate with the deep logic of culture.

3. Alienation Dilemmas: Structural Contradictions and Risks in Digital Inheritance

3.1. Subject Dilemma: Intergenerational Disruption and Breakdown of Collaboration

3.1.1. Intergenerational Transmission Crisis: Systemic Disruption of Inheriting Subjects

The transmission of cultural heritage—particularly intangible cultural heritage—is, by nature, a "human-centered inheritance." At its core, it involves the intergenerational transmission of cultural genes to ensure continuity[7]. The intervention of digital technologies has disrupted the core logic of "physical presence" inherent in traditional transmission, leading to a systemic rupture in the inheritance chain[8]. From the perspective of intergenerational structure, the "temporal accumulation" required for mastering traditional skills is at odds with the "instant gratification" culture of the digital age. The value systems upheld by older inheritors are often incompatible with the cognitive frameworks of younger generations, creating a cultural comprehension gap that results in the widespread challenge of "no successors" in ICH transmission. From the perspective of transmission content, digital tools may simplify the process of skill dissemination, stripping away the cultural context and spiritual essence, and ultimately producing a hollow shell of transmission characterized by "technique without culture."

3.1.2. Failure of Collaborative Mechanisms: Fragmentation of Responsibility Among Diverse Actors.

The digital inheritance of cultural heritage requires the formation of a synergistic network among diverse actors with complementary functions. However, current practice is marked by blurred boundaries of responsibility and misaligned objectives. At the governmental level, digitalization is frequently treated as a performance-driven project, with emphasis on investment over long-term operational sustainability. Enterprises, guided by commercial interests, tend to overemphasize entertainment value and traffic conversion, which dilutes the cultural content[9] and neglects the public-welfare dimension of cultural heritage. Meanwhile, research institutions often suffer from a disconnect between technological R&D and real-world practice; their tools are frequently too complex for practical use at the grassroots level[9]. This fragmentation of responsibility among diverse actors essentially reflects a conflict between differing value logics—the "indicator-oriented" logic of administration, the "efficiency-oriented" logic of the market, the "tool-oriented" logic of technology, and the "value-oriented" logic of culture are often irreconcilable. As a result, the digital inheritance of cultural heritage falls into an inefficient state characterized by "multi-agency governance with dispersed responsibilities," ultimately failing to form a cohesive force for effective protection and transmission.

3.2. Value Disorientation: The Erosion of Cultural Ontology by Instrumental Rationality

3.2.1. Technological Spectacle Weakening the Deep Connotation of Cultural Heritage.

The "sensory feast" generated by digital technologies is gradually obscuring the historical depth and spiritual essence of cultural heritage. Immersive technologies such as VR and AR often center on visual impact and interactive stimulation, thereby reducing cultural heritage to a set of consumable visual symbols. As a result, its essential role as a "witness to history" and its function as a "spiritual bond" are progressively weakened. From a philosophical perspective, this phenomenon reflects the dominance of instrumental rationality over value rationality. When the criteria for evaluating

digital inheritance focus primarily on technological sophistication and novelty of experience, the value of cultural heritage becomes quantified into data metrics, falling into the trap of "form over substance." Without a fundamental respect for cultural subjectivity, digital practices ultimately lead to the paradox of "technological externalization" and "cultural hollowing," depriving cultural heritage of its intrinsic spiritual core[10].

3.2.2. The Logic of Traffic Distorting the Authentic Expression of Cultural Heritage

In the dissemination ecology shaped by digital media, traffic has become the central metric for measuring communication effectiveness, thereby influencing the authentic expression of cultural heritage. Some digital projects, in the pursuit of wide dissemination, deliberately cater to popular preferences, resulting in partial interpretations or even intentional reconstructions of cultural heritage that dilute its original cultural significance, leading to what can be termed "symbolic distortion." In more extreme cases, to satisfy the demands of fragmented communication, complex connotations are simplified into labeled expressions, and pluralistic interpretations of culture are replaced by singular, popular narratives. This trend leads to increasingly one-dimensional and stereotypical public perceptions of cultural heritage. The distortion of authenticity not only compromises the quality of cultural transmission but may also result in a deviation of cultural identity, thereby weakening the function of cultural heritage as a carrier of collective memory.

3.3. Technological Divide: The Uneven Impact of Digital Empowerment

3.3.1. Structural Disparity in Urban-Rural Digital Infrastructure.

The uneven distribution of digital infrastructure has led to pronounced urban-rural differences in the digital inheritance of cultural heritage, manifesting spatially as a "digital divide." Urban areas, equipped with advanced hardware facilities such as comprehensive 5G networks and cloud computing centers, are capable of achieving high-precision digitization and efficient dissemination of cultural heritage. In contrast, rural areas, constrained by lower levels of economic development and geographic conditions, suffer from relatively lagging digital infrastructure development, making it difficult to meet even the basic requirements for the digitization of cultural heritage. Urban cultural heritage is able to achieve value enhancement through advanced digital technologies, thereby forming a virtuous cycle of "digitization — wide dissemination — high value." In contrast, due to insufficient levels of digitization, rural cultural heritage is often undervalued or even neglected, resulting in a vicious cycle of "weak digitization — narrow dissemination — low value." This exacerbates the imbalance in cultural development between urban and rural areas and may further lead to the accelerated loss of rural cultural heritage.

3.3.2. Intergenerational Gap in Digital Literacy.

Intergenerational differences in digital literacy hinder the effective transmission of cultural heritage. From the perspective of cultural bearers, many ICH inheritors are elderly and have long been immersed in traditional transmission environments, making them less receptive to and proficient in digital technologies. As a result, numerous valuable skills and experiences cannot be effectively transformed into digital resources. From the audience's perspective, older generations often lack the ability to navigate digital platforms, limiting their participation in digital heritage transmission and creating a disconnect between this demographic and the digital representations of cultural heritage. On the other hand, although younger generations are more adept at using digital tools, their relatively limited cultural knowledge base may lead to misinterpretations or distortions in the content they produce, undermining the authenticity of digital dissemination.

4. Practical Approaches: Collaborative Construction of an Innovative System for the Digital Inheritance of Cultural Heritage

The alienation dilemma in the digital inheritance of cultural heritage essentially arises from the imbalance between technological application, cultural logic, and the diverse interests of multiple stakeholders. To overcome these challenges, it is necessary to construct an integrated

inheritance and innovation system characterized by "multi-agent collaboration, ethical constraints, and capacity support." This system should seek a dynamic balance between technological empowerment and cultural authenticity, thereby achieving the sustainable development of digital inheritance.

4.1. Activation of Stakeholders: Reshaping the Multi-Governance Network

4.1. 1Establishing a Digital Copyright Dividend Protection Mechanism for Inheritors.

The subjectivity of inheritors constitutes the core of the living inheritance of cultural heritage, while the protection of copyright and related rights in the digital era is key to stimulating their motivation for inheritance. Currently, there is a significant imbalance between the commercial use of digitalized cultural heritage outcomes and the profit distribution to inheritors, resulting in a disconnection between "labor and revenue." Therefore, it is imperative to establish a digital copyright dividend protection mechanism. Apparently, the ownership of digital copyrights must be clarified. Leveraging blockchain technology, the craftsmanship of inheritors should be confirmed and incorporated into a unified national cultural heritage digital copyright registration system, ensuring the inheritors' rights of attribution, modification, and remuneration. Meanwhile, a tiered dividend mechanism should be established, wherein the profit-sharing ratio is determined based on the commercial value of digital products and automatically executed via smart contracts.

4.1.2. Building a Content Creation Platform with Broad Public Participation.

The inheritance of cultural heritage should not be confined to a limited group of professionals but should instead become a cultural practice in which the public can participate collectively. Such a mechanism not only ensures the accuracy of cultural expression but also stimulates public creativity. In terms of incentive mechanisms, outstanding user-generated content should be incorporated into official digital resource repositories, with creators granted digital copyright certification and a share of the resulting revenue. This approach fosters a positive feedback loop of "creation–dissemination–benefit." Such a model of "professional guidance combined with public participation" transforms the public from mere "observers" of cultural heritage into active "participants." By building a content creation platform with broad public engagement, this strategy effectively addresses the dilemma of a "dysfunctional collaborative mechanism."

4.2. Ethical Regulation: Normative Construction of Technological Application

4.2.1. Establishing a Standardized System for the Digital Interpretation of Cultural Heritage.

Without proper regulation, the application of digital technology in interpreting cultural heritage is prone to fall into the trap of "technology-driven" dominance, which can lead to the distortion of cultural connotations. The construction of a standardized system for digital interpretation must adhere to the principle of "primacy of cultural ontology," clearly defining the boundaries and methodologies of technological application. From the content dimension, the standards should encompass three core elements: First, integrity of historical context, which requires that digital interpretations incorporate background information such as the origin and developmental trajectory of the cultural heritage in question; Second, correctness of value orientation, which aims to prevent the simplification of cultural heritage into mere entertainment symbols, explicitly identify the core values that digital products should convey, and incorporate an early warning mechanism to flag deviations from these values; Third, appropriateness of expressive form, which entails selecting technological means in accordance with the specific type of cultural heritage being represented.

4.2.2. Formulating Standards for Authenticity Preservation in Digital Restoration.

While digital restoration technology compensates for the physical deterioration of cultural heritage, it also carries the risk of "over-restoration," which may result in the loss of historical information. To address this issue, standards for authenticity preservation in digital restoration must adhere to the principles of "minimal intervention" and "recognizability," ensuring a balanced relationship between technological repair and historical authenticity, and clarifying the boundaries of technological intervention. During the data acquisition

stage, comprehensive multi-dimensional documentation of the restoration target is required, including the original condition prior to damage, the causes of damage, and records of previous restorations, in order to establish a "restoration archive database." In the restoration process, a "layered restoration" approach should be employed, storing original data and restoration data in separate layers to prevent viewers from mistaking restored elements as authentic historical features.

4.3. Capacity Reconstruction: Systematic Enhancement of Rural Digital Literacy

4.3.1. Educational Support: Promoting Universal Access to Digital Intangible Cultural Heritage Classrooms.

The lack of digital literacy in rural areas is a key factor exacerbating the "technology divide," and education serves as the foundational mechanism for enhancing rural digital literacy. Promoting the universal coverage of digital ICH classrooms requires the establishment of an integrated "online + offline" educational system that is tailored to the specific needs of rural communities. In terms of curriculum design, a modular approach combining "theory + practice" should be adopted: The basic module focuses on the use of smartphones and common software tools, such as how to record high-definition videos of craftsmanship and how to back up digital resources using cloud storage; The intermediate module introduces fundamental principles of cultural heritage digitization, including the technical process of 3D scanning and basic legal knowledge of digital copyright; The specialized module provides targeted training based on local intangible heritage types. In terms of teaching implementation, offline instructional sites should be established by leveraging rural cultural centers and New Era Civilization Practice Centers, while online courses should be developed to accommodate low-bandwidth environments, with offline download functionality to support asynchronous learning.

4.3.2. Talent Reinvestment: Implementing a Youth Return and Technological Empowerment Program

Attracting young talents to return to their hometowns and leverage their technological expertise is key to addressing the shortage of digital professionals in rural areas and promoting coordinated urban-rural development. The implementation of a Youth Return and Technological Empowerment Program requires a support system constructed around three dimensions: talent attraction, talent cultivation, and talent utilization. In terms of talent attraction, policy incentives should be introduced to lower the threshold for returning youth—for example, offering entrepreneurship subsidies to returnees and giving them priority access to undertake local cultural digitization projects. At the same time, a "city–countryside" technology matching platform should be established to connect students majoring in digital-related disciplines at universities with rural needs, thereby facilitating short-term technical volunteer services. For talent cultivation, a "school-enterprise cooperation" model should be adopted, whereby local governments collaborate with vocational institutions to offer targeted training programs on "cultural heritage digitization."

5. Conclusion

Against the backdrop of culture-tourism integration, the digital inheritance of cultural heritage is not only an inevitable outcome of technological empowerment but also a strategic initiative to safeguard the cultural roots of a nation. Only by achieving a dialectical unity between technological empowerment and cultural integrity can we ensure that cultural heritage not only "comes alive" but also "lives on" in the digital era—becoming a spiritual bond that connects the past and the future, the individual and the collective, the local and the global. In doing so, it will provide profound nourishment and enduring momentum for the construction of modern Chinese civilization.

Disclosure statement

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