Storytelling in the Short-Video Communication of Intangible Cultural Heritage

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Abstract: The development of digital media has created new opportunities for the communication and transmission of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). Short-video platforms, characterized by audiovisual presentation, convenient access, and rapid information circulation, have gradually become important channels for presenting traditional culture to contemporary audiences. However, the expansion of digital communication does not necessarily guarantee a meaningful understanding of cultural heritage. Some short videos focus excessively on visual effects, brief demonstrations, and entertaining content, while neglecting the historical background, cultural significance, and human experiences behind traditional practices. Storytelling provides an alternative approach by connecting cultural knowledge with people, events, everyday experiences, and emotional expression. Through narrative structures, short videos can transform relatively abstract cultural information into accessible and engaging content, allowing audiences to understand not only what a traditional practice looks like but also why it has been preserved and what it means to the communities that maintain it. This article examines the characteristics, communicative value, existing problems, and improvement strategies of storytelling in the short-video communication of intangible cultural heritage. It discusses the narrative roles of inheritors, the presentation of traditional skills, the integration of local culture and everyday life, and the relationship between audiovisual expression and cultural meaning. It argues that effective storytelling should balance accessibility, entertainment, cultural authenticity, and community participation. Short-video communication should not simply reproduce traditional cultural symbols but should present the living experiences, social relationships, and cultural values that sustain intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords: intangible cultural heritage; short-video communication; storytelling; digital media; cultural transmission

1. Introduction

Intangible cultural heritage represents the accumulated knowledge, skills, customs, artistic expressions, and cultural practices developed and maintained by different communities over long periods of time. Unlike material heritage, which is often preserved through physical objects and historical buildings, intangible cultural heritage depends heavily on human participation and continuous practice. Traditional craftsmanship, folk music, oral traditions, festivals, performing arts, and local customs all rely on the transmission of knowledge and experience between generations. Their continued existence is closely connected with the everyday activities, collective memories, and cultural identities of the communities that maintain them.

With the development of digital communication technologies, the ways in which intangible cultural heritage is presented and transmitted have gradually expanded beyond traditional interpersonal communication, physical demonstrations, and organized cultural activities. Websites, digital museums, social media accounts, and short-video platforms provide additional opportunities for cultural documentation, public presentation, and audience participation. Digital media can make cultural information accessible to people who have limited opportunities to encounter traditional practices in their original social environments. It also creates new possibilities for connecting local cultural resources with broader audiences.

Among these communication channels, short-video platforms have attracted particular attention because of their combination of moving images, sound, subtitles, music, and brief narrative sequences. Compared with text-based communication, short videos can directly present the appearance, movements, materials, and performance processes associated with traditional cultural practices. Viewers can observe the production of handicrafts, listen to traditional music, watch folk performances, and encounter the daily lives of cultural inheritors through relatively short audiovisual content. These characteristics make short videos suitable for presenting cultural information that is closely connected with physical skills, sensory experiences, and human activities.

Nevertheless, the availability of digital platforms does not automatically lead to effective cultural transmission. The short-video format is strongly influenced by limited viewing time, rapid content circulation, and competition for audience attention. Creators may therefore prioritize attractive images, dramatic moments, popular music, and entertaining presentation. Although these elements can increase the immediate appeal of cultural content, they may also separate traditional practices from their historical backgrounds and social meanings. A traditional craft, for example, may be presented only through a visually impressive production process, while the knowledge, labor, local customs, and cultural values associated with that craft remain insufficiently explained.

This situation raises an important question concerning the relationship between short-video communication and cultural understanding. If the communication of intangible cultural heritage is limited to the display of traditional objects, performances, or techniques, audiences may recognize the external appearance of a cultural practice without understanding its deeper significance. Cultural transmission requires more than visual exposure. It also involves the communication of knowledge, values, memories, and social experiences.

Storytelling offers an effective way to address this issue. By organizing information around people, events, experiences, and cultural meanings, storytelling can establish connections between traditional practices and contemporary audiences. A video about traditional embroidery, for instance, can introduce the person who practices the craft, explain how the technique was learned, present the production process, and describe the cultural significance of its patterns. Such an approach gives the audience a clearer understanding of the relationship between individual experience and collective cultural inheritance. Instead of presenting traditional craftsmanship as an isolated technical

activity, the video reveals the people and cultural environments that make the practice meaningful.

Existing discussions of digital intangible cultural heritage have addressed various aspects of cultural communication, including short-video marketing, digital preservation, interactive experiences, and intergenerational transmission. Feng, Fu, and Huang examine the influence of Douyin short videos on the purchase intention associated with intangible cultural heritage tourism products, using Wenchuan Qiang embroidery as a case study. Their discussion identifies cultural narrative construction as an important consideration in short-video content development (Feng et al.). Xu's analysis of digital media-enabled transmission of regional musical heritage also highlights the importance of cultural embeddedness, the visibility of inheritors, and accessible interpretation in the communication process (Xu). These discussions provide useful perspectives for understanding how digital media can connect cultural content with contemporary audiences.

However, the communication value of storytelling should not be reduced to its ability to attract viewers or encourage consumption. Its more fundamental function is to make cultural practices understandable within their historical, social, and human contexts. Short-video storytelling should therefore consider not only how to make intangible cultural heritage visually attractive but also how to communicate the knowledge, experiences, and values embedded in it.

This article examines storytelling in the short-video communication of intangible cultural heritage from the perspectives of narrative content, audiovisual expression, cultural meaning, and communication strategies. It argues that storytelling can improve the accessibility and continuity of cultural communication by connecting traditional practices with recognizable human experiences. At the same time, the use of narrative techniques should respect cultural authenticity and the participation of heritage communities. The ultimate purpose of short-video communication is not simply to increase the visibility of intangible cultural heritage but to encourage audiences to understand, appreciate, and participate in its continued development.

2. The Relationship Between Storytelling and Short-Video Communication of Intangible Cultural Heritage

2.1 The Communication Characteristics of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Intangible cultural heritage is closely connected with human activities and social relationships. Its value is not determined only by the physical products or visible performances associated with a tradition. It also exists in the knowledge, techniques, beliefs, memories, and collective experiences that communities maintain through continuous practice. Traditional handicrafts provide a clear example of this characteristic. Embroidery, woodblock printing, pottery, weaving, and metalworking involve specific materials, technical procedures, aesthetic principles, and accumulated practical knowledge. A finished product may display the artistic characteristics of a particular tradition, but its cultural significance cannot be fully understood through visual appreciation alone. The methods of production, the knowledge of practitioners, the origins of decorative patterns, and the social occasions in which the craft is used all contribute to its cultural meaning.

Similar characteristics can be found in traditional music, folk performances, oral traditions, and festivals. Their transmission depends on participation, observation, imitation, and repeated practice. In many cases, cultural knowledge is not completely recorded in written documents. It is preserved through the experiences of practitioners and the relationships between different generations. The importance of these human and social dimensions means that the communication of intangible cultural heritage requires more than the presentation of cultural objects. Digital media should communicate the relationship between cultural practices and the people who maintain them. A short video that introduces a traditional

performance, for example, can provide information about its movements and musical characteristics while also explaining the occasions on which it is performed and the role it plays in community life.

Özkan's discussion of the Gezek tradition in rural Türkiye demonstrates the importance of community participation, hospitality, traditional food, and social solidarity in maintaining local cultural practices. Although the organizational form of the tradition has changed, its social significance continues to be connected with collective participation and local experience (Özkan). This perspective suggests that cultural communication should pay attention to the social relationships that sustain heritage rather than treating traditional practices as isolated cultural products.

For short-video creators, this means that cultural content should be presented in ways that reveal its connection with everyday life. The audience needs opportunities to understand who practices a tradition, where it takes place, how it is maintained, and why it remains meaningful to the community.

2.2 Storytelling as a Communication Approach

Storytelling refers to the organization and presentation of information through a sequence of related events, characters, experiences, and meanings. In communication, it allows complex information to be presented through recognizable situations and human experiences. Instead of introducing a series of disconnected facts, storytelling creates relationships between different elements and provides audiences with a clearer understanding of the subject.

A basic narrative generally contains several important elements, including characters, settings, events, development, and meaning. Characters provide a human perspective through which audiences encounter a story. Settings establish the cultural and social environment in which events occur. Events create a sequence that helps audiences understand the development of an experience. The relationship between these elements allows information to become more coherent and meaningful.

When applied to intangible cultural heritage, storytelling can organize cultural information around the experiences of inheritors, the development of traditional techniques, the history of local customs, or the relationship between cultural practices and community life. For example, a video about traditional papermaking can begin with the introduction of a craft inheritor, move to the selection and preparation of materials, present several important production stages, and conclude by explaining the contemporary value of the finished paper.

Such a narrative structure is different from simply displaying the production process. It gives the technical activity a human and cultural context. Viewers can understand that the craft is not merely a sequence of manual operations but a form of accumulated knowledge maintained through practice and experience.

Yu and Qin's discussion of intangible cultural heritage foods provides another perspective on the relationship between storytelling and cultural communication. Their study examines how storytelling and heritage labels function as packaging cues and identifies the importance of cultural identity in the communication of heritage-related products (Yu and Qin). Although their research focuses on packaging rather than short videos, it illustrates how narrative information can connect cultural resources with the meanings that audiences associate with them.

Storytelling in short videos should therefore be understood as more than an entertaining presentation technique. It is a way of organizing cultural information so that viewers can recognize the relationships between traditional practices, individual experiences, and collective cultural values.

2.3 The Compatibility Between Short Videos and Narrative Expression

Short videos provide several conditions that support storytelling. Their audiovisual format allows creators to combine images, sounds, subtitles, and spoken explanations within a single

communication process. This combination is particularly useful for presenting intangible cultural heritage because many traditional practices involve visible movements, distinctive sounds, and specific working environments.

For example, traditional musical performances can be communicated through both sound and image. The audience can hear the melody, observe the performer, and understand the relationship between musical expression and performance settings. Traditional handicrafts can be presented through close-up images of tools, materials, and hand movements, allowing viewers to observe details that may be difficult to communicate through written descriptions.

Short videos also support relatively flexible narrative structures. A complete cultural story does not necessarily need to be presented in a single video. Different videos can introduce an inheritor, explain a particular technique, describe a local custom, or discuss the cultural significance of a traditional practice. When these videos are connected through consistent themes and recognizable narrative elements, they can gradually construct a more complete understanding of the heritage.

At the same time, short-video communication requires careful selection of information. Limited duration means that creators cannot explain every historical detail or technical procedure in a single piece of content. They need to identify the most important information and organize it into a coherent sequence. This makes narrative structure particularly important.

The challenge is not simply to reduce the amount of information but to determine which information is essential for understanding the cultural subject. A video that contains many attractive images but lacks a clear narrative may be visually engaging while remaining difficult to understand. In contrast, a video with a clear central story can help viewers connect different images and details into a meaningful whole.

3. Main Forms of Storytelling in the Short-Video Communication of Intangible Cultural Heritage

3.1 Inheritors as the Main Characters of Cultural Narratives

People are among the most important elements in the communication of intangible cultural heritage. Traditional practices continue because individuals and communities preserve, develop, and transmit cultural knowledge through everyday activities. For this reason, presenting inheritors as the main characters of short-video narratives can help audiences understand the human foundation of cultural transmission.

An inheritor is not simply someone who demonstrates a traditional technique. Their experiences often contain information about learning, family relationships, local customs, personal choices, and changes in the cultural environment. These experiences provide valuable narrative material.

A short video can begin by introducing the inheritor's background, including how they encountered the tradition, who taught them, and what motivated them to continue practicing it. It can then show their daily activities and the specific skills involved in the traditional practice. Such an arrangement connects personal experience with cultural inheritance.

The value of this approach lies in making cultural transmission more concrete. Abstract statements about the importance of preserving traditional culture may not immediately attract viewers. However, an account of an individual who has spent many years learning a traditional craft can provide a recognizable human perspective. Audiences can understand the effort involved in maintaining a skill and the personal meaning associated with continuing a family or community tradition.

Xu's discussion of regional musical intangible cultural heritage emphasizes the importance of inheritor visibility in digital communication. The presentation of performers and their cultural environments helps establish a connection between

online content and the living practices being transmitted (Xu). This suggests that the identity and experience of cultural practitioners should not be treated as secondary information.

In practice, inheritor-centered storytelling should avoid presenting practitioners only as symbols of tradition. Their individual personalities, professional difficulties, creative decisions, and changing experiences should also receive attention. This approach can prevent cultural narratives from becoming overly formal or repetitive.

It is also important to recognize differences between individual inheritors and the communities to which they belong. Some traditions are maintained through collective participation rather than the work of a single person. In such cases, narratives should present the relationships between practitioners, families, local organizations, and community members. This can provide a more comprehensive picture of cultural inheritance.

3.2 Process-Based Narratives and the Presentation of Traditional Skills

Traditional skills provide another important source of storytelling material. Many intangible cultural heritage practices involve complicated production procedures and accumulated practical knowledge. Short videos can make these procedures visible by organizing the production process into a sequence of related activities.

A process-based narrative generally includes the preparation of materials, the use of tools, the completion of important technical stages, and the presentation of the final result. This structure allows audiences to understand how a traditional product or performance is created.

However, simply recording each technical step does not necessarily produce an effective narrative. The creator needs to identify the cultural and practical significance of the process. For example, a video about traditional embroidery can introduce the selection of thread and fabric, demonstrate several characteristic stitching techniques, and explain the meanings associated with particular patterns. The production process then becomes a way of communicating both technical knowledge and cultural information.

Yi et al. examine the learning of intangible cultural heritage crafts through interactive simulation and video instruction. Their discussion distinguishes the understanding of conceptual information from the acquisition of procedural knowledge, highlighting the importance of learning how specific techniques are performed (Yi et al.). This distinction is relevant to short-video communication because audiences need opportunities to observe not only the appearance of a craft but also the sequence and logic of its production.

The presentation of traditional skills should therefore emphasize meaningful details. Close-up images can show hand movements, materials, tools, and changes occurring during production. Spoken explanations and subtitles can clarify the purpose of particular actions. When necessary, the creator can explain why a specific technique requires experience or why certain steps cannot easily be replaced by modern alternatives.

Process-based storytelling can also create a sense of development. Instead of showing only the finished product, the video can present the difficulties encountered during production and the decisions made by the practitioner. This makes the technical process more understandable and helps audiences appreciate the knowledge and effort behind traditional craftsmanship.

Nevertheless, creators should avoid turning every traditional technique into a dramatic performance. Some procedures require patience and repeated practice, and their cultural value may not be immediately visible. Their presentation should remain faithful to the actual production process rather than exaggerating difficulty or manufacturing conflict for entertainment.

3.3 Everyday Life and the Cultural Environment

Intangible cultural heritage exists within specific social and cultural environments. Traditional practices are often connected with family life, local occupations, festivals, community relationships, and regional customs. Presenting these everyday

contexts can help audiences understand why particular traditions developed and how they continue to function.

Everyday-life storytelling focuses on the relationship between cultural practices and ordinary activities. Instead of presenting a tradition only during formal performances or organized exhibitions, short videos can show how it appears in daily life.

For example, a traditional food-making video can introduce the local ingredients, preparation methods, family participation, and occasions on which the food is prepared. A video about folk music can show not only the performance itself but also the community celebrations or social activities in which the music is used. These scenes allow viewers to understand that cultural heritage is not separated from ordinary life.

Özkan's study of the Gezek tradition illustrates how local customs are maintained through community participation and changing patterns of social organization. The tradition is associated with hospitality, food preparation, collective gatherings, and social solidarity (Özkan). These elements provide useful material for understanding how everyday experiences contribute to the continuity of cultural practices.

Everyday-life narratives also help reduce the distance between traditional culture and contemporary audiences. Some viewers may consider intangible cultural heritage something historical or unfamiliar. When a short video connects a traditional practice with recognizable experiences, such as preparing food, celebrating festivals, learning a skill, or interacting with family members, cultural information becomes easier to approach.

However, the representation of everyday life should not become a superficial collection of attractive rural images. Traditional villages, old houses, local clothing, and natural landscapes may provide visual context, but they cannot independently explain the meaning of cultural practices. Their narrative value depends on the relationships they establish with people, activities, and cultural knowledge.

3.4 Visual and Audio Narratives as Cultural Expression

The audiovisual characteristics of short videos provide additional opportunities for storytelling. Images and sounds do not merely decorate cultural information. They can communicate important aspects of intangible cultural heritage that may be difficult to explain through language alone.

Visual storytelling is particularly important for traditional crafts and performing arts. Close-up shots can reveal details of materials and techniques, while wider shots can establish the relationship between performers and their environments. Changes in camera distance and movement can guide viewers' attention toward specific elements of a cultural practice.

Sound also plays an important role. Traditional music, dialects, spoken explanations, workshop sounds, and environmental audio can help establish the atmosphere of a cultural setting. For example, the sound of traditional instruments may communicate the characteristics of a musical tradition more directly than a written explanation. The sounds generated during a craft-making process can also reveal the physical nature of the activity.

Guo's discussion of digital museum experiences emphasizes the relationship between visual, audio, and interactive elements in presenting intangible cultural heritage. The study highlights the role of multimodal interaction in improving the way audiences encounter digital heritage content (Guo). Although a short video is different from an interactive museum system, both forms of communication demonstrate the importance of combining different sensory elements.

The relationship between image and sound should remain consistent with the cultural subject. Music selected only because it is popular may distract from the original characteristics of a traditional performance. Excessive visual effects may also weaken the clarity of technical demonstrations. Audiovisual design should therefore serve the communication of cultural meaning rather than

become an independent display of technical creativity.

Subtitles and spoken explanations are equally important. Some traditional terms, dialect expressions, and cultural symbols may not be immediately understood by viewers. Brief explanations can help audiences recognize their meaning without interrupting the visual experience. The combination of images, sounds, and language allows different forms of information to complement one another.

3.5 Sequential Narratives and Series-Based Communication

A short video has limited space for presenting complex cultural information. One way to address this limitation is to organize related content into a series. Instead of attempting to explain every aspect of a tradition in one video, creators can divide the subject into several connected narrative units.

A series about a traditional craft, for example, may include separate videos introducing the inheritor, the history of the craft, the selection of materials, the production process, characteristic patterns, and contemporary applications. Each video can focus on one central issue while contributing to a broader understanding of the tradition.

This approach has several advantages. First, it reduces the amount of information that viewers need to process at one time. Second, it allows creators to provide more detailed explanations of particular cultural elements. Third, it creates continuity between different pieces of content.

A coherent series should maintain a recognizable central subject and consistent narrative direction. If individual videos are unrelated or repeat the same information, the series may fail to develop a meaningful cultural narrative. Each part should contribute something new while maintaining a clear relationship with the overall subject.

Series-based communication can also present cultural change over time. One video may introduce the traditional production method, another may show how younger practitioners learn the technique, and a later video may discuss its contemporary applications. This arrangement allows audiences to understand that intangible cultural heritage is maintained through continuous practice rather than remaining unchanged.

4. The Communicative Value of Storytelling in Intangible Cultural Heritage Short Videos

4.1 Improving the Accessibility of Cultural Information

One of the main advantages of storytelling is its ability to make cultural information easier to understand. Intangible cultural heritage often contains specialized knowledge, historical references, technical terminology, and local cultural meanings. When these elements are presented without sufficient explanation, audiences who lack relevant background knowledge may find them difficult to understand.

Storytelling can connect unfamiliar information with recognizable experiences. A traditional technique can be introduced through the story of the person who practices it. A local custom can be explained through the events and relationships involved in its performance. A cultural symbol can be presented within the historical or social context in which it is used.

This approach changes the way cultural information is organized. Rather than requiring audiences to understand a series of abstract concepts, it allows them to follow a recognizable sequence of events. As viewers encounter the people and situations associated with a tradition, they can gradually understand its cultural significance.

The combination of visual presentation and narrative explanation is particularly valuable for audiences who have limited prior knowledge of a cultural practice. They can observe what happens while receiving information about why it happens. This reduces the gap between visual recognition and cultural understanding.

Dong's discussion of digital intangible cultural heritage applications emphasizes the importance of making cultural resources accessible and understandable to different groups of users. The

study also highlights the value of connecting cultural items with practitioners, processes, and places rather than presenting them as isolated digital materials (Dong). This perspective reinforces the need to organize cultural content around meaningful relationships.

Accessibility also involves language. Short-video creators should avoid excessive technical terminology and explain specialized concepts in clear expressions. However, simplification should not lead to inaccurate descriptions. Cultural information needs to remain understandable without losing its essential meaning.

4.2 Strengthening Emotional Connection and Cultural Identity

Storytelling can also establish emotional connections between audiences and intangible cultural heritage. Cultural practices are often associated with family memories, local identity, historical experience, and personal relationships. These dimensions provide opportunities for narrative expression.

An account of an inheritor learning a traditional craft from an older family member, for example, can communicate the relationship between personal memory and cultural continuity. A video about a local festival can show how different generations participate in shared activities. Such narratives allow viewers to recognize the human experiences behind cultural practices.

Emotional expression does not require exaggerated language or dramatic editing. It can emerge naturally from the presentation of real experiences, such as the patience required to master a skill, the responsibilities involved in maintaining a family tradition, or the satisfaction of completing a difficult craft.

Cultural identity is also connected with the recognition of shared values and collective memories. When audiences encounter stories that reflect their regional background, family experiences, or cultural environment, they may develop a stronger sense of connection with the cultural content.

Xu's discussion of regional musical heritage considers the relationship between digital exposure, emotional resonance, cultural identity, and learning participation in the context of intergenerational transmission (Xu). This provides a useful perspective for understanding why cultural communication should move beyond visual exposure and establish meaningful relationships between audiences and heritage practices.

At the same time, cultural identity should not be presented as a fixed or uniform response. Audiences have different experiences, backgrounds, and levels of cultural knowledge. A story that is familiar to one group may be unfamiliar to another. Effective storytelling should therefore provide sufficient cultural context while allowing audiences to interpret the content from their own perspectives.

4.3 Connecting Traditional Culture with Contemporary Life

The continued development of intangible cultural heritage depends on its ability to remain meaningful within changing social environments. Short-video storytelling can help communicate the relationship between traditional practices and contemporary life. Traditional craftsmanship, for example, can be presented through both its historical functions and its current applications. A video may introduce the original purpose of a traditional product and then show how contemporary practitioners adapt its techniques or designs to new contexts. This creates a connection between cultural continuity and creative development.

The same approach can be applied to traditional music, folk performances, and local customs. Creators can explain how traditional practices are maintained while presenting the ways in which they appear in contemporary cultural activities.

Zhang's discussion of digital protection strategies for Weifang's traditional bronze craft emphasizes the importance of connecting digital collection, communication, and transformation. The study argues that digital resources should not remain limited to the preservation of cultural information but should also support communication and

appropriate contemporary applications (Zhang). Although its focus is broader than short-video storytelling, this perspective highlights the relationship between cultural preservation and active public communication.

Zhuang also discusses the use of digital media in supporting the living inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, emphasizing the role of digital resources in expanding the communication and transmission of traditional culture (Zhuang).

These perspectives suggest that short-video storytelling should avoid presenting traditional culture as something that exists only in the past. A narrative can introduce the historical background of a tradition while showing how it continues to participate in contemporary life. Such an approach helps audiences recognize that cultural heritage is not merely a historical record but an ongoing social practice.

4.4 Encouraging Public Participation in Cultural Transmission

Storytelling can create opportunities for audiences to move from passive viewing toward more active participation. When short videos present cultural practices through understandable narratives, viewers may become interested in learning more, visiting relevant cultural locations, attending performances, or trying traditional activities.

Participation does not necessarily mean purchasing cultural products. It can also involve sharing cultural knowledge, discussing local traditions, learning traditional techniques, supporting cultural practitioners, and introducing cultural practices to other people.

Feng, Fu, and Huang examine the relationship between Douyin short-video content and the purchase intention associated with Qiang embroidery tourism products. Their study identifies cultural and informational elements as important dimensions of short-video communication and discusses cultural narrative construction as one of the directions for improving content development (Feng et al.). Although commercial responses are one aspect of digital cultural communication, the broader significance of storytelling extends to cultural awareness and participation.

Wang and You's discussion of digital experience service design for the Hezhen Yimakan also highlights the relationship between interactive experience, emotional and aesthetic experience, and cultural understanding (Wang and You). This suggests that cultural communication can benefit from providing audiences with opportunities to encounter heritage through different forms of experience.

Short-video creators can encourage participation by providing information about learning activities, cultural exhibitions, traditional performances, and community events. They can also invite viewers to share relevant experiences and ask questions about cultural practices.

However, public participation should not be measured only through views, likes, comments, or commercial transactions. These indicators may reflect audience attention, but they cannot fully demonstrate whether viewers understand the cultural meaning of a tradition or become involved in its continued transmission.

5. Existing Problems in the Storytelling of Intangible Cultural Heritage Short Videos

5.1 Excessive Attention to Visual Effects and Entertainment

One common problem in short-video communication is the excessive emphasis on visual attractiveness and entertainment. Because short-video platforms encourage rapid content consumption, creators may prioritize striking images, dramatic scenes, popular music, and humorous presentations.

These techniques can attract attention, but they may also weaken the communication of cultural knowledge when used without a clear narrative purpose. A video about traditional embroidery, for example, may focus entirely on the appearance of the finished product or the speed of production while providing little information about the craft's history, techniques, or cultural significance.

The problem is not the use of entertainment itself. An engaging presentation can make traditional culture more accessible. The difficulty arises when entertainment becomes the primary objective and cultural content is reduced to visual decoration.

Some creators may also exaggerate traditional practices to create dramatic effects. A normal production process may be presented as unusually difficult, or a particular cultural custom may be simplified into a dramatic scene. Such presentations can generate attention but may create inaccurate impressions of the cultural subject.

Effective storytelling should therefore establish a clear relationship between entertainment and cultural explanation. Visual attractiveness should support the narrative rather than replace it.

5.2 Fragmented Narratives and Insufficient Cultural Context

The limited duration of short videos encourages creators to select only a small amount of information. While this helps audiences process content quickly, it can also lead to fragmented narratives.

Some videos present isolated images of traditional clothing, musical performances, handicrafts, or festival activities without explaining how these elements are connected. Viewers may recognize individual cultural symbols but remain unaware of their historical background or social function.

Fragmentation can also occur when creators divide a complex subject into multiple videos without maintaining narrative continuity. Individual videos may attract attention, but audiences who encounter only one or two of them may not develop a complete understanding of the tradition.

Cultural context is particularly important for practices that involve specialized terminology, local beliefs, or historical relationships. Without sufficient explanation, a cultural symbol may be misunderstood or interpreted only through its visual appearance.

Dong's discussion of digital heritage applications highlights the importance of organizing cultural resources through connections between cultural items, people, processes, and places (Dong). This principle is equally relevant to short-video content. Cultural information should be organized through meaningful relationships rather than presented as disconnected materials.

5.3 Insufficient Attention to Cultural Authenticity

Storytelling often requires the selection and organization of information. However, excessive creative intervention may lead to the distortion of cultural practices.

Some short videos may modify traditional procedures, clothing, music, or performance settings to create more attractive visual effects. Others may use modern narratives without explaining the relationship between contemporary presentation and the original cultural practice. Such approaches can blur the distinction between authentic cultural elements and creative adaptations.

Cultural authenticity does not mean that every tradition must remain unchanged. Intangible cultural heritage has always developed through interaction with changing social environments. Different communities may maintain variations of the same practice, and contemporary practitioners may introduce appropriate innovations.

The important issue is whether changes are presented clearly and whether they respect the knowledge and values associated with the tradition. Creators should avoid presenting an adapted version as the only authentic form or using cultural symbols without understanding their meanings.

Community participation is essential in this regard. Practitioners and cultural communities possess knowledge that may not be available through general online materials. Their involvement can help creators identify inaccurate explanations and avoid inappropriate representations.

Özkan's study of community-based safeguarding demonstrates the importance of local participation and the social practices through which cultural traditions are maintained (Özkan). Nualnoom et al. similarly discuss the role of co-production in supporting endangered traditional crafts,

emphasizing the importance of cooperation between cultural communities and other participants (Nualnoom et al.).

These discussions indicate that the communication of cultural heritage should not be controlled entirely by external content creators. Those who maintain the tradition should have opportunities to participate in how their cultural practices are represented.

5.4 Homogenization of Narrative Content

Another problem is the increasing similarity of narrative structures and presentation styles. Some short-video accounts repeatedly use the same opening techniques, background music, editing patterns, and emotional expressions. As a result, different cultural traditions may be presented through nearly identical communication formats.

For example, many videos about traditional crafts may follow a simple structure: introduce an old craft, show an inheritor working, display the finished product, and conclude with a general statement about cultural preservation. Although this structure is easy to understand, excessive repetition can reduce the distinctiveness of individual traditions.

Homogenization may also affect cultural interpretation. Different traditions have different historical backgrounds, technical characteristics, and social functions. A narrative format that works well for traditional embroidery may not be equally suitable for folk music or oral storytelling.

Creators should therefore develop narrative structures according to the characteristics of each cultural subject. A traditional craft may require a process-based narrative, while a folk song may be better communicated through performance, personal memory, and local history. A festival may require attention to collective participation and the sequence of activities.

5.5 Confusing Online Visibility with Effective Cultural Transmission

High viewing numbers do not necessarily indicate that audiences have understood a cultural practice. Short-video platforms can increase the visibility of traditional culture, but visibility is only one aspect of communication.

A video may receive considerable attention because of an attractive scene, a popular creator, or a controversial topic. However, viewers may remember only the visual image without understanding the cultural knowledge behind it. In this situation, the tradition becomes recognizable as online content but may not achieve meaningful cultural communication.

The distinction between exposure and understanding is particularly important for intergenerational transmission. Young viewers may encounter traditional practices through short videos, but sustained learning requires more than occasional viewing. It involves repeated exposure, practical experience, guidance from knowledgeable practitioners, and opportunities to participate in cultural activities.

Xu's discussion of digital media-enabled intergenerational transmission emphasizes that online visibility alone does not necessarily guarantee continued transmission. The relationship between digital exposure, cultural identity, emotional resonance, and learning participation is important in understanding the broader communication process (Xu).

Therefore, the value of short-video storytelling should not be judged exclusively by immediate platform performance. Its contribution to cultural understanding, public awareness, and participation should also receive attention.

6. Strategies for Improving Storytelling in the Short-Video Communication of Intangible Cultural Heritage

6.1 Building Narratives Around the Actual Characteristics of Cultural Heritage

Improving storytelling begins with understanding the cultural subject itself. Different forms of intangible cultural heritage have different characteristics, and their narratives should be

designed according to the knowledge, practices, and social relationships involved.

For traditional craftsmanship, creators can focus on the inheritor, production materials, technical procedures, and the cultural meanings of the finished product. For folk music and performing arts, the narrative can emphasize performers, musical characteristics, performance settings, and the relationship between artistic expression and local culture. For festivals and customs, collective participation, social relationships, and historical development may provide more suitable narrative foundations.

The selection of narrative content should begin with accurate cultural information. Creators need to understand the basic history, characteristics, and contemporary situation of the tradition before deciding how to present it. Relevant information can be obtained through cultural heritage records, public documents, interviews with practitioners, and materials provided by cultural institutions.

The purpose of this preparation is not to include every available detail. Instead, it is to identify the information that audiences need in order to understand the central cultural meaning of the subject.

Feng, Fu, and Huang's discussion of cultural narrative construction in Douyin communication provides a relevant reference for understanding the relationship between short-video content and the communication of intangible cultural heritage products (Feng et al.). However, narrative design should not be determined entirely by marketing objectives. Cultural accuracy and the experiences of practitioners should remain central considerations.

6.2 Strengthening the Connection Between Characters, Events, and Cultural Meaning

A clear narrative requires meaningful connections between its different elements. Characters, events, and cultural information should not appear as unrelated segments.

Inheritors can provide the central human perspective, while traditional practices and related events form the main narrative content. Cultural explanations can then connect individual experiences with broader historical and social meanings.

For example, a short video about a traditional craft may begin with the introduction of a practitioner and the reason they continue working with the craft. It can then show the preparation of materials, the completion of important procedures, and the difficulties involved in producing the finished work. The final part can explain the cultural meaning of the product and its place in contemporary life.

This structure gives audiences a clear path through the content. It also helps prevent videos from becoming collections of unrelated images.

The narrative should have a central focus. If a video attempts to introduce the history, techniques, tourism value, commercial products, and cultural policies associated with a tradition at the same time, the amount of information may become excessive. Selecting one central issue for each video can improve clarity and make the narrative more effective.

For complex cultural subjects, a series of related videos can provide additional explanations. Each video can focus on a different aspect while maintaining a consistent overall theme.

6.3 Combining Visual Presentation with Clear Cultural Explanation

Visual presentation is one of the main advantages of short-video communication, but images alone cannot communicate every cultural meaning. Creators should therefore combine visual materials with concise and accurate explanations.

Close-up shots can show technical details, while wider images can present the cultural environment. Subtitles can explain specialized terms, and spoken narration can introduce historical background or personal experiences. Original sounds and traditional music can help preserve the sensory characteristics of cultural practices.

The combination of different audiovisual elements should be based on their communicative functions. Images should allow audiences to observe the practice, sound should communicate its auditory

characteristics, and language should explain information that cannot be easily understood through images alone.

The presentation should also consider differences in audience knowledge. Some viewers may already be familiar with a particular tradition, while others may encounter it for the first time. Basic explanations should therefore be sufficiently clear without becoming unnecessarily repetitive.

Dong's discussion of accessibility in digital heritage applications offers useful guidance in this respect. The organization of digital cultural content should consider the needs of different users and make important information easier to locate and understand (Dong). In short-video communication, this principle can be reflected in readable subtitles, understandable explanations, and a clear sequence of information.

Accessibility also requires attention to older audiences and people with different levels of digital literacy. Clear language, appropriate subtitle design, and a moderate presentation speed can make cultural content available to a wider public.

6.4 Presenting Cultural Heritage Through Everyday Experiences

To improve the connection between traditional culture and contemporary audiences, short-video storytelling should include more everyday experiences.

Traditional practices should not be presented only as formal performances or historical exhibitions. Their relationship with family life, local occupations, community activities, and contemporary cultural needs can provide more meaningful narrative content.

A video about traditional food, for example, can explain how the food is prepared during particular festivals, how its production methods are maintained within families, and what local memories are associated with it. A video about traditional music can show the relationship between musical performance and community celebrations. Such narratives make cultural practices easier to understand because they connect unfamiliar traditions with recognizable social experiences.

At the same time, everyday-life presentation should not reduce cultural heritage to a collection of lifestyle images. The narrative needs to explain why a particular activity is culturally significant and how it relates to the community that maintains it.

Zhang's discussion of the relationship between digital preservation, communication, and creative transformation provides a useful perspective on the contemporary presentation of traditional crafts (Zhang). Short-video storytelling can similarly connect traditional knowledge with current social life while retaining the cultural characteristics of the original practice.

6.5 Strengthening the Participation of Inheritors and Local Communities

Cultural inheritors and local communities should participate actively in the production of short-video content. Their involvement can improve the accuracy of cultural explanations and help ensure that narratives reflect actual cultural practices.

Creators should communicate with practitioners before filming and clarify the meaning of the activities being presented. When traditional techniques or cultural symbols require specialized explanation, practitioners should have opportunities to provide relevant information.

Community participation is equally important when a tradition involves collective activities. A festival, ritual, or local performance may contain social rules and cultural meanings that cannot be fully understood through the perspective of an individual creator. In such cases, cooperation with community members can help present the tradition more comprehensively.

Nualnoom et al. emphasize the value of co-production in supporting endangered craft traditions and mobilizing resources through cooperation among different participants (Nualnoom et al.). Their discussion suggests that cultural protection and communication should

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involve the people who maintain the heritage rather than relying entirely on external institutions.

In short-video production, participation can take different forms. Inheritors may serve as narrators, demonstrators, or content consultants. Community members may introduce local customs and provide historical information. Cultural institutions may assist with the verification and organization of relevant materials.

Such cooperation can also improve the relationship between digital communication and actual cultural transmission. Short videos can introduce audiences to practitioners and cultural activities, while community-based learning opportunities can provide further experiences beyond online viewing.

6.6 Balancing Platform Characteristics with Cultural Communication Objectives

Short-video creators need to consider the characteristics of digital platforms, including video duration, viewing habits, information presentation, and audience interaction. However, platform preferences should not determine every aspect of cultural content.

An effective video needs an engaging beginning, a clear central theme, and an understandable narrative sequence. Important information should be presented at appropriate points, and the ending should provide a meaningful conclusion rather than simply repeat general statements about cultural preservation.

Creators can also use platform functions to connect individual videos with related content. Topic labels, account introductions, playlists, and comment sections can help audiences locate additional information. A series of videos can gradually introduce different aspects of a tradition and encourage viewers to explore the subject further.

However, the pursuit of platform popularity should remain secondary to cultural communication. Creators should not exaggerate cultural differences, simplify historical information, or change traditional practices merely to attract attention.

The effectiveness of short-video communication depends on the relationship between content quality and cultural meaning. Platform functions can increase the accessibility of information, but the actual value of communication comes from the accuracy, clarity, and depth of the content.

A balanced strategy should therefore combine appropriate platform presentation with a stable commitment to cultural authenticity. The aim is to make traditional culture accessible without allowing platform trends to determine its meaning.

6.7 Establishing a Connection Between Online Communication and Continued Cultural Learning

Short-video communication should not be treated as the final stage of cultural transmission. It can serve as an entry point through which audiences encounter unfamiliar traditions and develop an interest in learning more.

Creators and cultural institutions can provide information about workshops, exhibitions, public performances, educational activities, and opportunities to communicate with practitioners. These activities can help viewers move from online observation to more direct cultural experiences.

For traditional crafts, short videos can introduce basic techniques and guide interested viewers toward formal learning activities. For traditional music, videos can present performances and introduce relevant cultural organizations or teaching resources. For local customs, online content can provide information about public cultural activities and their historical backgrounds.

Wang and You's discussion of digital experience service design for the Hezhen Yimakan emphasizes the relationship between interactive experience, cultural understanding, and sustained interest (Wang and You). This perspective highlights the importance of connecting digital presentation with further cultural experiences.

The relationship between short-video communication and cultural learning should also be continuous. A viewer may first encounter a tradition through a short video, then explore related content, participate in an activity, and gradually develop a deeper understanding. Such a process provides a

broader perspective on the role of digital media in cultural transmission.

Ultimately, the value of short-video storytelling lies not only in attracting attention but also in creating opportunities for continued cultural engagement.

7. Conclusion

The development of short-video platforms has expanded the communication channels available for intangible cultural heritage and created new opportunities for presenting traditional culture to contemporary audiences. Through the combination of images, sounds, subtitles, and narrative structures, short videos can make cultural practices more visible and accessible. However, visual exposure alone cannot guarantee meaningful cultural understanding. The communication of intangible cultural heritage requires attention to the people, knowledge, social relationships, and cultural values that sustain traditional practices.

Storytelling provides an effective approach by organizing cultural information around inheritors, traditional techniques, everyday experiences, and community activities. Inheritor-centered narratives reveal the human experiences behind cultural transmission. Process-based narratives make traditional skills easier to understand. Everyday-life narratives connect cultural practices with contemporary social environments, while audiovisual expression helps communicate their sensory and artistic characteristics. Series-based communication can further improve narrative continuity and provide opportunities for more detailed cultural explanation.

At the same time, storytelling in short-video communication faces several challenges. Excessive attention to entertainment and visual effects may weaken cultural explanation. Fragmented narratives can separate traditional practices from their historical and social contexts. Inappropriate creative intervention may affect cultural authenticity, while repetitive presentation styles can reduce the distinctiveness of different traditions. Most importantly, high levels of online visibility should not be confused with effective cultural transmission.

Improving the communication of intangible cultural heritage requires a balance between platform characteristics and cultural responsibilities. Creators should develop narratives according to the actual characteristics of each tradition, establish clear connections between characters and cultural events, and combine audiovisual presentation with accurate explanations. The participation of inheritors and local communities should be strengthened to ensure that cultural representations reflect the knowledge and experiences of those who maintain the traditions. Digital communication should also be connected with cultural learning and community activities so that online attention can develop into more sustained engagement.

The purpose of storytelling is not to transform every traditional practice into an entertaining online product. Rather, it is to establish meaningful connections between cultural heritage and contemporary audiences. When short videos present not only the visible forms of traditional practices but also the people, memories, knowledge, and values behind them, digital communication can contribute more effectively to cultural understanding and intergenerational transmission. In this sense, storytelling is not merely a technique for improving video presentation. It is an important approach to communicating the living character of intangible cultural heritage in the digital media environment.

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