

A STUDY ON THE SHORT VIDEO COMMUNICATION PATHS AND STRATEGIES OF MIANYANG PAPER-CUTTING

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ABSTRACT

Under the impact of globalization and modernization, regional intangible cultural heritage generally faces challenges such as transmission gaps and audience stagnation. Short videos have become an innovative medium for the living transmission of intangible cultural heritage. This study takes Mianyang paper-cutting, a provincial-level intangible cultural heritage in Sichuan Province, as its research object. It employs literature review, questionnaire surveys, in-depth interviews, and case studies, combining five core theories including uses and gratifications and agenda-setting, to analyze the pain points in the transmission of Mianyang paper-cutting and the current state of its short video dissemination, and to construct a short video dissemination strategy adapted to its cultural characteristics. The study finds that the single offline dissemination model is the core constraint on the transmission of Mianyang paper-cutting, while content homogenization, imbalance of subject capabilities, and platform mismatch are the main problems in its short video dissemination. Based on empirical analysis, this study proposes three content prototypes: visualization of techniques, story-based scenarios, and interactive participation, clarifying differentiated dissemination paths on platforms and providing practical solutions for the living transmission of Mianyang paper-cutting.

Keywords: Intangible cultural heritage; Mianyang paper-cutting; short video dissemination; living heritage; dissemination strategies

INTRODUCTION

Intangible cultural heritage is a core carrier of national cultural confidence, and its transformation towards living transmission in the digital age has become a core direction for its protection and development (Chen et al., 2024). Short videos, with their inherent fragmented, visual, and social attributes, have become a key medium for establishing effective connections between intangible cultural heritage and the public due to their low dissemination costs and wide audience reach, providing an innovative path for regional intangible cultural heritage to overcome geographical and cognitive barriers (Li, 2023).

Mianyang paper-cutting, as a representative provincial-level intangible cultural heritage of northwestern Sichuan, integrates Bashu folk customs with the cultural characteristics of the Qiang and Tibetan ethnic groups. Its style combines boldness and delicacy, carrying regional historical memories and folk customs. Although it has carried out offline dissemination practices such as "entering schools and communities," it still faces common challenges such as a small number of inheritors, insufficient

youth participation, and a core audience limited to local middle-aged and elderly groups. Furthermore, its dissemination relies heavily on offline scenarios, lacking timeliness and interactivity (Wang & Zhang, 2022). The integration of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) with short videos has become a trend, with Generation Z showing a high acceptance of digital ICH content. However, the dissemination of regional ICH short videos generally suffers from problems such as content homogenization, insufficient matching between channels and user profiles, and a lack of innovative presentation styles, preventing the full realization of the advantages of short video dissemination.

Existing research largely focuses on the macro-level dissemination of ICH through short videos, with relatively few studies on personalized dissemination strategies for regional ICH. Research on the short video dissemination of Mianyang paper-cutting, in particular, suffers from a gap in its approach, with more qualitative descriptions than empirical analysis, and more technical research than practical dissemination studies. Against this backdrop, this study focuses on Mianyang paper-cutting, delving into its inheritance challenges and the current state of its short video dissemination, and constructing a suitable short video dissemination strategy, possessing both theoretical and practical value.

OBJECTIVE

1. To sort out the existing problems of short video dissemination, optimize strategies, expand audience coverage, focus on attracting Generation Z, and solve the problems of small inheritors and solidified audience;
2. To clarify the core content, suitable channels and presentation forms of paper-cutting short videos, strengthen dissemination appeal and expand cultural influence;
3. To construct a short video dissemination strategy that fits Mianyang paper-cutting and provide guidance for its dissemination practice.

1.Theoretical Foundation and Current Research Status

1.1 Core Theoretical Support

Combining the challenges of preserving Mianyang paper-cutting with the characteristics of short video dissemination, this study selects five core theories to provide support for the construction of dissemination strategies from multiple dimensions, achieving a high degree of alignment between theory and research objectives.

1.1.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory:

This theory breaks away from the passive acceptance of information by the audience, emphasizing that audiences actively select media content based on their personalized needs, and the effectiveness of communication depends on the degree to which the content meets the audience's needs (Katz et al., 1974). This theory guides this study in accurately analyzing the differences in needs among four core audience groups: inheritors, Generation Z youth, local middle-aged and elderly people, and short video practitioners, providing a basis for targeted content creation.

1.1.2 Agenda-Setting Theory:

This theory points out that mass communication can influence the public's cognitive ranking through the degree of emphasis on issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Based on this theory, this study

defines core communication issues for Mianyang paper-cutting, including technical details, stories of inheritors, and contemporary innovations. It guides public attention through topic operation on short video platforms, overcoming the predicament of low awareness.

1.1.3 Visual Semiotics Theory:

This theory focuses on the meaning generation logic of visual symbols, emphasizing that cultural information is transmitted through symbol encoding and decoding (Barthes, 2012). Mianyang paper-cutting, as a typical visual cultural symbol, can have its cultural connotations—including patterns, lines, and colors—systematically analyzed using this theory to guide short videos in optimizing visual presentation and improving the accuracy of cultural dissemination. Figure 1

Figure 1

Traditional paper-cut graphic symbols



1.1.4 Living Heritage Theory:

A core theory of intangible cultural heritage protection, emphasizing that the vitality of intangible cultural heritage lies in its dynamic transmission, requiring a balance between historical authenticity and modern adaptability (UNESCO, 2003). This theory guides short videos to move beyond simply showcasing finished products and instead present the complete creation and transmission process of Mianyang paper-cutting, demonstrating its integration with modern life.

1.1.5 Media Context Theory:

Proposes that media context determines the form and effect of communication content, and that communication must adapt to media characteristics (Meyrowitz, 2002). Addressing the fragmented nature of short videos, this theory guides this study to break down Mianyang paper-cutting techniques into short-duration knowledge points, adapting to the user habits and algorithmic logic of different platforms.

1.2 Research Frontiers at Home and Abroad

International academic research on the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) through short videos focuses on three main areas: cross-cultural communication, technological ethics, and youth participation. Studies have found that a multimodal approach, with visual dominance supplemented by language, is an effective path for the cross-cultural dissemination of ICH. Furthermore, the application of AI technology requires careful consideration of the boundaries of cultural authenticity, and short videos on ICH created by young creators have a significantly higher reach among younger audiences (Baran & Dennis, 2020). Figure 2

Figure 2

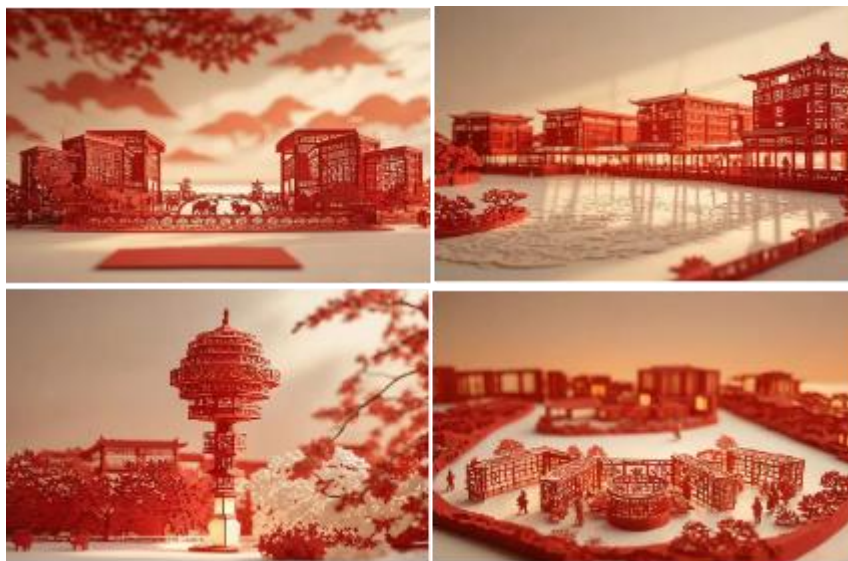
Juxtaposition of Mianyang paper-cutting and European silhouette art



Domestic research focuses on the precise dissemination of regional intangible cultural heritage, youth empowerment, and differentiated platform utilization. Research on intangible cultural heritage in northwestern Sichuan suggests that the triple superposition of regional symbols can enhance the regional recognition of short videos (Cai Fengming, 2023); a communication matrix involving inheritors, young influencers, and university teams can effectively compensate for the shortcomings of inheritors' insufficient media literacy; and different short video platforms need to adapt to differentiated content formats, such as TikTok being suitable for short and fast-paced skill content, while Bilibili is suitable for in-depth skill tutorials (Duncan et al., 2022).Figure 3

Figure 3

“Paper-cut Campus Landmarks” series of short videos



1.3 Research Gaps in the Dissemination of Mianyang Paper-cutting

Existing research on Mianyang paper-cutting largely focuses on the analysis of its techniques and cultural connotations, and the summarization of traditional inheritance models. However, research on its short video dissemination still has significant gaps:

1. Macro-level research on intangible cultural heritage short videos has not fully integrated the regional characteristics of Mianyang paper-cutting's integration with the cultures of the Bashu, Qiang, and Tibetan ethnic groups;
2. Key issues such as audience profiling, content suitability, and platform selection for its short video dissemination are lacking discussion;
3. Most studies are qualitative descriptions, lacking empirical data to support effect evaluation and strategy optimization.

Currently, the dissemination of short videos on Mianyang paper-cutting faces three core challenges: homogenization and superficiality of content, imbalance in the capabilities of disseminators, and mismatch between platform mechanisms. A systematic dissemination strategy is urgently needed.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a hybrid research approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative research. It is based on literature review and uses questionnaires, in-depth interviews, case studies, and field surveys to collect data, ensuring the scientific validity and relevance of the research conclusions.

2.1 Research Subjects and Sampling

This study identified four core research subjects and selected samples using a combination of stratified and typical sampling methods, adhering to the principles of randomness, representativeness, relevance, and feasibility:

1. Core Inheritance-Related Audience: 2 provincial and municipal-level inheritors + 2 senior folk artists;
2. Core Attracted Audience of Generation Z Youth: 200 viewers aged 18-26 who watch intangible cultural heritage videos for more than 2 hours per day on average;
3. Existing Core Audience: 50 urban and rural residents of Mianyang aged 40 and above;
4. Short Video Dissemination Practitioners: 5 intangible cultural heritage short video practitioners + 3 platform cultural operation specialists.

2.2 Core Research Tools

2.2.1 Questionnaire Survey Method:

An online questionnaire was distributed through Wenjuanxing (a survey platform), and 350 valid samples were collected. The questionnaire covered four dimensions: basic information, cultural awareness, communication preferences, and evaluation of communication effects. It included 30 closed-ended questions and 1 open-ended question. The reliability and validity were verified through pre-survey and Cronbach's α coefficient test ($\alpha=0.81$). The system collected data on audience behavior and needs.

2.2.2 In-depth interview method:

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 5 typical interviewees, including 2 inheritors of Mianyang paper-cutting, 2 staff members of cultural centers, and 1 short video practitioner. The interviews focused on topics such as the difficulties in content creation, platform algorithm adaptation, and pain points in practical dissemination, totaling more than 5 hours and obtaining high-quality qualitative data. From Table 1.

Table 1

Specific interviewee information

No.	Name	Position	Field of Expertise
1	Chengfei Xie	Provincial-level inheritor of Mianyang paper-cutting intangible cultural heritage	Mianyang Paper-cutting
2	Chuanhao Xie	Provincial-level inheritor of Mianyang paper-cutting intangible cultural heritage	Mianyang Paper-cutting
3	Erjun Zhang	Director of Mianyang City Library; Master's Supervisor at Southwest University of Science and Technology	Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection and Inheritance, Public Library and Cultural Information Resource Construction, Local Traditional Culture Research.
4	Wenlong Cao	Staff member of Mianyang City Cultural Center; Deputy Director of the Expert Committee of Mianyang Folk Artists Association	Mass Culture and Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection and Inheritance
5	Hai Tu	Founder of Sichuan Boying Culture Communication Co., Ltd.; Short video practitioner	Digital Media Art, Short Video Production, Short Video Promotion

2.2.3 Literature Review Method:

A systematic review of literature on three main categories—living heritage transmission of intangible cultural heritage, short video dissemination, and case studies of intangible cultural heritage short videos—provides theoretical support and practical reference for the research.

2.2.4 Case Study Method:

Thirty short video accounts focusing on paper-cutting and regional intangible cultural heritage from northwestern Sichuan, published on platforms such as TikTok, Rednote, and Bilibili, were selected as samples. Analysis was conducted from three dimensions: content, platform, and impact, extracting the core dissemination logic of visualizing techniques, creating story scenarios, and establishing a dissemination matrix.

Core content and platform adaptation for the dissemination of Mianyang paper-cutting short videos

3.1 Prototypes of the Three Core Contents

Combining the cultural characteristics of Mianyang paper-cutting with the needs of its audience, this study constructs content prototypes that adhere to the principles of authenticity as the bottom line and innovation as the core, achieving an organic integration of skill demonstration, cultural dissemination, and audience preferences.

3.1.1 Visual Prototype of Skills:

Focusing on the core techniques of Mianyang paper-cutting—intaglio, relief carving, and layered openwork—a 4K macro lens is used to track the creative process. Key steps such as the initial cut positioning and the transition between intaglio and relief carving are slowed down at 0.5x speed with dynamic annotations. The background incorporates montage shots of Mianyang regional scenes such as Yue Wang Tower and Qijiang Ancient Town, addressing the pain point of unintuitive skill demonstration and adapting to a 1.5 minute in-depth tutorial format.

3.1.2 Story-Based Prototype:

A narrative framework is built around the inheritors' creative inspiration, folk application scenarios, and historical evolution. It employs a dual-scene narrative of "ancient and modern contrast," with traditional scenes recreating folk activities such as Spring Festival window decorations and wedding decorations, while modern scenes showcase the integration of paper-cutting with cultural and creative products and decorations. This is accompanied by Sichuan dialect narration and traditional folk music, incorporating ambient sounds such as burning firewood and the friction of paper cutting, replacing dry, scientific explanations with storytelling to enhance emotional resonance.

3.1.3 Interactive Prototype:

A low-barrier "1-Minute Paper-Cutting Challenge" is designed, providing a simplified Mianyang paper-cutting template. Users are guided through three steps: cutting the outline, refining details, and displaying the finished product. Users are encouraged to post their work with the hashtag #MianyangPaperCuttingChallenge. Simultaneously, high-quality UGC works are periodically selected, reviewed by inheritors, and compiled into video compilations, creating a closed loop of "professional creation - user participation - content re-dissemination" to enhance user engagement.

3.2 Content Prototype Design and Validation

Based on survey data and theoretical framework, this study transforms the technical characteristics and cultural connotations of Mianyang paper-cutting into three categories of short video content prototypes. These prototypes are then optimized and validated through small-scale testing: 50 core audience members (30 from Generation Z and 20 from middle-aged and elderly individuals) are selected to watch the prototype videos. Evaluation is based on three dimensions: dissemination effect indicators such as completion rate and like rate; inheritance and transformation indicators such as participation willingness and cognitive improvement; and qualitative feedback. Prototype details are adjusted according to the results, resulting in a mature content prototype library.

3.3 Platform Differentiation Adaptation Strategy

Based on media context theory and platform characteristic analysis, this study matches differentiated platform dissemination paths for three content prototypes to achieve precise content-platform adaptation and improve dissemination efficiency:

3.3.1 TikTok:

Adapting to short clips and interactive prototypes based on the visual art prototype, focusing on 15-60 second high-energy content and topic challenges, leveraging the platform's algorithm to amplify traffic and attract Generation Z, thus expanding dissemination reach.

3.3.2 Rednote:

Adapting to story-based and interactive prototypes, focusing on the integration of paper-cutting with everyday life, publishing practical content such as paper-cutting home decoration and journaling, and leveraging the platform's social sharing attributes to strengthen communication and dissemination among users.

3.3.3 Bilibili:

Adapting to in-depth tutorials based on the visual art prototype, publishing 5-10 minute systematic art explanation videos, including pattern design logic, tool selection, and other knowledge points, meeting users' in-depth learning needs and creating a professional content platform for Mianyang paper-cutting.

3.3.4 WeChat Video Channel:

Adapt to story-based scenarios, focus on local cultural dissemination, and publish content combining Mianyang paper-cutting with local folk customs and cultural tourism scenes to reach the middle-aged and elderly population in Mianyang, while also catering to the needs of the existing core audience.

CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Core Research Conclusions

This study, through empirical analysis, draws three core conclusions:

1. The challenges in the inheritance of Mianyang paper-cutting are significantly correlated. The singular offline dissemination model is the core constraint, directly leading to problems such as a small scale of inheritors, insufficient youth participation, and a fixed audience;
2. Combining the fragmented, visual, and social characteristics of short videos, focusing on the core content of Northwest Sichuan folk customs, practical skills, and the stories of inheritors, and pairing them with differentiated presentation formats and dissemination paths on the platform, can significantly improve the dissemination effectiveness of Mianyang paper-cutting short videos and enhance their appeal and conversion power among young people;
3. A dissemination strategy based on three content prototypes—visualized skills, scenario-based storytelling, and interactive participation—can effectively solve the challenges in the inheritance and dissemination of Mianyang paper-cutting.

4.2 Theoretical and Practical Significance

4.2.1 Theoretical Significance:

This study focuses on regional intangible cultural heritage (ICH) short video dissemination strategies, addressing the shortcomings of existing research on ICH short video dissemination that focuses on macro-level approaches. By integrating five core theories, it enriches the theoretical system

of ICH living heritage transmission and new media integration, providing a targeted and practical theoretical reference for the dissemination research of Mianyang paper-cutting short videos.

4.2.2 Practical Significance:

This study addresses the core issues in the dissemination of Mianyang paper-cutting short videos, constructs a feasible dissemination operation plan, clarifies the core shooting content and platform adaptation path, and provides direct assistance for the practice of Mianyang paper-cutting short video dissemination.

4.2.3 Social Significance:

The results of this study help strengthen the effectiveness of cultural dissemination of Mianyang paper-cutting, explore the cultural and ethnic value of regional ICH, attract young people to participate in ICH inheritance, promote the popularization of Mianyang paper-cutting culture, enhance national cultural confidence, and contribute to the innovative development of traditional culture.

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