

Inheritance and Innovation of Lanjiefu Culture in the Age of Digital Economy

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Abstract

This research focuses on Lanjiefu, a significant Han folk cultural activity in Wenzhou with a history of nearly a thousand years. The importance lies in its status as an important part of Zhejiang Province's intangible cultural heritage and its core values of harmonious coexistence, respect for heaven and ancestors, and humanistic care, along with multiple social functions. The research adopts a cultural heritage protection and inheritance approach. There are no specific respondents mentioned. The scope covers the evolution, values, functions, challenges, and solutions related to Lanjiefu culture. The methodology involves analyzing the historical development and current situation of Lanjiefu, and exploring the impact of digital technologies. Key findings indicate that Lanjiefu has transitioned from a traditional praying ritual to a multifaceted celebration, facing both risks and opportunities within the context of the digital economy. The study suggests that digital strategies, such as establishing an official platform, leveraging social media for promotion, and applying virtual reality technology, should be employed. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of innovative thinking to integrate traditional culture with modern life, ensuring its inheritance and vitality in the contemporary era.

Keywords: Lanjiefu, digital economy, cultural heritage, virtual reality, community cohesion

1. INTRODUCTION

Lanjiefu, a quintessential traditional Han folk cultural activity originating from Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, has traversed an extensive and storied history, accumulating profound cultural significance and value. Rooted in antiquity, Lanjiefu initially emerged as a ritual imbued with religious elements, deeply embedded within the local folkloric context. Over centuries, it has undergone significant transformation, evolving from a rudimentary ceremony focused on supplication and sacrifice to a sophisticated and multifaceted folk festival. This evolution has incorporated a rich array of cultural, artistic, recreational, and commercial components, thereby cementing its status as an integral part of the intangible cultural heritage of not only Wenzhou but also the broader Zhejiang Province.

However, in the contemporary era of the digital economy, Lanjiefu faces a pivotal juncture, encountering a myriad of substantial challenges. The swift pace of globalization and the exponential advancement of information technology have induced significant changes in the cultural and social landscapes where such traditional practices have historically flourished. Notably, the younger generation has experienced a marked shift in daily lifestyle and value systems, resulting in a concerning decline in active participation and genuine appreciation for traditional cultural activities like Lanjiefu. This diminishing interest among the youth has raised serious concerns about the seamless intergenerational transmission of this ancient custom, potentially leading to cultural discontinuity.

In this context, the present study assumes critical and timely importance. It aims to meticulously analyze the challenge of preserving and perpetuating Lanjiefu culture within the digital age. The

primary objective is to delineate feasible strategies that skillfully integrate the enduring core values and traditions of Lanjiefu with the innovative capabilities of digital technologies. By doing so, the research seeks not only to halt the decline but also to facilitate the sustainable development and continuous rejuvenation of this invaluable cultural heritage. Thus, this study serves as a beacon of hope, striving to ensure that Lanjiefu remains a dynamic and cherished cultural entity, bridging the past and future, and engaging the hearts and minds of generations to come.

1.2 Research background

Lanjiefu, a traditional folk activity carrying rich historical and cultural information, originated in Wenzhou during the Southern Song Dynasty, with a history of nearly 1,000 years. According to historical records, Lanjiefu was initially a folk ritual of praying for Lanjiefu in response to the frequent occurrence of plague at that time, and people believed that by sacrificing to the God of Heaven, they could drive away evils and avoid calamities, and bless the party with peace and security. With the changes of the times, Lanjiefu gradually transcended the original religious colours and incorporated more cultural elements and social functions (Chen, 2011).

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Lanjiefu activities began to adopt a more structured scale and process. Every year, on the 15th day of the first month of the Lunar Calendar, around the time of the Lantern Festival, grand Lanjiefu celebrations were held in Wenzhou. The streets were adorned with lanterns, every house hung lanterns and placed offerings, and rituals were conducted to welcome the gods, praying for favorable weather and a bountiful harvest in the coming year. By the end of the Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China, the influence of Lanjiefu expanded further. It not only attracted participants from neighboring areas but also became an important platform for showcasing local characteristics and fostering cultural exchanges.

After the founding of New China, Lanjiefu activities were interrupted for various reasons. However, following the reform and opening-up period, with the state's increased focus on intangible cultural heritage and enhanced protection efforts, Lanjiefu was revitalized. In recent years, Lanjiefu has been designated as a national intangible cultural heritage, and governments along with social organizations at all levels have invested significant resources to support its inheritance and development. This has made Lanjiefu an important vehicle for promoting China's rich traditional culture, fostering national unity, and advancing social harmony.

The core values of Lanjiefu culture are embodied in the pursuit of harmonious coexistence, respect for heaven and ancestors and humanistic care. Firstly, harmonious coexistence is the cornerstone of Lanjiefu culture. Whether it is the respect for the natural environment or the maintenance of social relations, it embodies the concept of harmonious coexistence between human beings and nature, and between human beings. Secondly, honouring the gods and ancestors is the spiritual pillar of Lanjiefu culture. By worshipping the gods of heaven and earth and the ancestors, it expresses the reverence for the laws of the universe and the inheritance of the wisdom of the forefathers. Finally, humanistic care is the social responsibility of Lanjiefu culture. During the activity, both the care for the disadvantaged groups and the participation in public affairs highlight the humanistic spirit and social responsibility of Lanjiefu culture (Jun-qiang, 2008).

The social function of Lanjiefu is reflected in multiple aspects. First, cultural heritage: through the organization of Lanjiefu activities, the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation is preserved and promoted, enhancing national pride and cultural confidence. Second, community cohesion: Lanjiefu activities provide a platform for interaction and exchange among community members, strengthening community cohesion and fostering a sense of belonging. Third, economic development: Lanjiefu activities attract a significant number of tourists, thereby promoting the growth of local tourism and related industries, which positively impacts the local economy.

Fourth, educational significance: Lanjiefu activities, with their diverse performances and displays, not only enrich people's cultural lives but also hold significant educational value. For young people in particular, they offer an effective way to understand and learn about traditional culture.

Lanjiefu culture is not only a cultural card of Wenzhou and even Zhejiang, but also an important part of the excellent traditional Chinese culture. It not only carries deep historical memory and cultural value, but also plays an irreplaceable role in modern society, contributing to the construction of a harmonious society and the promotion of cultural diversity (Jianmin, 2010).

The preparation and implementation of traditional Lanjiefu activities is a complex and delicate process, involving many links and many participants (Chen, 2011). Usually, the preparatory stage starts months or even a year in advance, with local community organisations or specialised organising committees responsible for overall planning and coordination. Preparation work includes fundraising, venue set-up, programme planning, procurement of materials and publicity and promotion, each of which needs to be carefully arranged to ensure the event runs smoothly.

On the day of the event, the whole neighbourhood will be decorated with red lanterns and colourful flags on both sides of the street, and a variety of offerings will be placed in front of every house, creating a strong festive atmosphere (Qiang, 2001). At the beginning of the event, there is a solemn worship ceremony, in which people express their deepest respect and gratitude to the gods of heaven and earth and their ancestors. Afterward, a series of folk performances and games are staged, including dragon and lion dances, opera singing, and acrobatic shows, attracting a large audience who stop to watch. The scene is filled with laughter and joy.

Lanjiefu has a far-reaching cultural impact, which is not only the inheritance and promotion of traditional culture, but also a concentrated expression of community spirit and local characteristics. Through the activity, the connection between community members is deepened, strengthening community cohesion. Additionally, it provides foreign tourists with an opportunity

to learn more about local cultural traditions and folk customs, thereby promoting cultural exchange and dissemination.

The Lanjiefu event also had a positive impact on the local economy (Li-fan, 2010). During the event, a large number of tourists come in, driving the development of related industries such as catering, accommodation and tourist souvenirs, creating considerable economic benefits for the local community. At the same time, the event also provides local craftsmen with opportunities to display and sell their works, which helps protect and pass on traditional crafts.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Cultural Ecological Transformation in the Digital Economy

The arrival of the digital economy era has profoundly transformed the operational modes of human society, with its impact on the cultural field being particularly significant (Lazzeretti, 2020). Digital transformation has not only reshaped cultural production and consumption but has also given rise to new cultural forms and modes of communication. On the one hand, digital technologies such as the Internet, social media, and virtual reality have accelerated and broadened the scope of cultural dissemination to unprecedented levels, enabling people from any corner of the world to access cultural content instantly, thereby greatly enriching their cultural horizons. On the other hand, digital tools have unlocked endless possibilities for cultural creation. Artists and creators can leverage digital technology to produce more diverse and interactive artworks, transcending the boundaries of traditional art forms.

However, digital transformation has also brought about the phenomenon of cultural fragmentation and homogenisation (Bourreau & Moreau, 2021). Under the impact of massive amounts of information, in-depth reading and thinking have become scarce, and fast-food cultural consumption is prevalent, which may lead to the shallowness of cultural connotations. In addition,

the existence of the digital divide makes it difficult for some people to enjoy the convenience brought by digital culture, which exacerbates social inequality.

In the context of the digital economy, traditional culture faces unprecedented protection and inheritance challenges (Wu et al.,2021). On the one hand, digital technology provides new ways for the preservation and dissemination of traditional culture. For example, through high-precision scanning and 3D modelling technologies, monuments and cultural relics can be digitally restored so that precious cultural heritage can be permanently preserved and presented to the public in a virtual form, thus realising the "cloud" inheritance of culture. On the other hand, social media and online platforms have provided a stage for the display of traditional culture, and many traditional arts and craftsmen have gained a new lease of life through webcasting, short videos and other forms, attracting the attention and participation of more young people and stimulating their interest in traditional culture.

But at the same time, digitalisation has also challenged the originality of traditional culture (Burri, 2010). In the pursuit of rapid dissemination and wide acceptance, traditional culture may be simplified or misinterpreted, losing its original depth and flavour. In addition, excessive commercialisation and entertainment tendencies may erode the core values of traditional culture and reduce it to superficial pop symbols.

In the face of the cultural ecological changes brought about by the digital economic era, innovative thinking has become the key. Innovation is not only limited to technological innovation, but more importantly, the innovation of thinking and concepts. While protecting traditional culture, it is necessary to explore how to combine it with modern life, so that it can be revitalised in the new cultural environment. Innovative thinking is the key to the transformation of the cultural ecology in the era of the digital economy, which helps us to preserve traditional culture while opening up a path of cultural development into the future, so that culture can both preserve and innovate and continue to flourish in the wave of digitisation (Jin-Lia, 2014).

2.2 Inheritance Strategy of Lanjiefu Culture in the Digital Economy Era

In the era of digital economy, digital means provide unprecedented opportunities for the dissemination of traditional culture. For Lanjiefu culture, the use of digital technology can achieve multi-dimensional and three-dimensional dissemination of its content, thus expanding its influence and coverage. Specific strategies include, but are not limited to, the establishment of official digital platforms, such as official websites and mobile apps, to provide the historical background, details of activities and cultural interpretation of Lanjiefu culture, and the use of various media forms, such as graphics, videos and animations, to enhance the attractiveness and dissemination of the information. In addition, the construction of digital archives is also a key part. By digitising and archiving documents, images and objects related to Lanjiefu culture, the loss of cultural heritage can be effectively prevented, and at the same time, it is easy for the public to refer to and learn from them at any time (Xiaojuan, 2023).

As one of the most influential communication tools in the era of digital economy, social media and network platforms have inestimable value for promoting Lanjiefu culture. By opening official accounts on microblogging, WeChat public number, Jitterbug, Shutterbug and other platforms, releasing the latest news, wonderful moments, behind-the-scenes stories and other contents of Lanjiefu culture, it can quickly attract the attention of netizens and increase the popularity of Lanjiefu. At the same time, using the interactive functions of these platforms, such as commenting, liking, sharing, etc., can enhance the public's sense of participation and form a good word-of-mouth effect. In addition, carrying out online thematic activities, such as Lanjiefu cultural knowledge contests and collection of creative works, can not only stimulate the creative enthusiasm of netizens, but also deepen their understanding and emotional connection to Lanjiefu culture.

Virtual Reality (VR) technology provides a new experience mode for the inheritance of Lanjiefu

culture. Through VR technology, realistic Lanjiefu activity scenes can be created, so that even if the user is in any corner of the world, he or she can feel the lively atmosphere and cultural essence of Lanjiefu. This immersive experience can transcend geographical limitations, allowing more people to engage with and experience Lanjiefu culture. It also conveys the profound meaning of Lanjiefu culture in an intuitive and vivid way, enhancing its impact and appeal. Additionally, VR technology can be employed to recreate historical scenes of Lanjiefu activities, enabling modern audiences to "travel" back in time, personally experiencing the historical evolution of Lanjiefu culture and thereby deepening their understanding of its historical significance.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Lanjiefu, a unique and time-honored traditional Han folk cultural activity from Wenzhou City in Zhejiang Province, carries profound historical significance and immense cultural value (Dabing, 2011). Its origins can be traced back to ancient times when it emerged as a simple ritual rooted in religious folklore. People in the region conducted sacrificial ceremonies as a way to pray for blessings, expressing both their reverence and fear of the gods, while simultaneously conveying their deepest wishes for a prosperous life. Over the centuries, however, Lanjiefu has undergone significant evolution. What began as a singular religious event centered around faith and ritual has gradually transformed into a multifaceted folk festival that now encompasses a wide range of elements, including culture, art, entertainment, and commerce. This transformation has allowed Lanjiefu to become an integral part of the intangible cultural heritage not only in Wenzhou but throughout Zhejiang Province as well.

As a vital cultural event, Lanjiefu plays a key role in both preserving and advancing the region's local traditions. It serves as a dynamic platform that facilitates the inheritance and innovation of local customs while simultaneously fostering a deeper sense of community cohesion. For the people of Wenzhou, the festival offers more than just entertainment—it provides spiritual support

and strengthens their cultural identity. The event is celebrated with a vivid display of tradition, from the intricate exhibitions of ancient craftsmanship to the tantalizing variety of local snacks. Participation in an array of folk activities—ranging from performances to games—adds vibrancy and color to the festivities. Together, these elements illustrate the enduring vitality and unique charm of Lanjiefu, transforming it into a vibrant window that showcases the distinct cultural landscape of Wenzhou and the broader Zhejiang region. As a traditional festival, Lanjiefu reflects the cultural richness and diverse heritage of the area, making it a vital expression of local identity and pride.

In recent years, as we enter the era of the digital economy, traditional cultural practices such as Lanjiefu have encountered unprecedented challenges, as well as newfound opportunities for growth and preservation (Lazzeretti, 2020). On the one hand, the forces of globalization and the rapid advancements in information technology have significantly impacted the cultural and social spaces in which these traditions once thrived. The daily lifestyles and values of the younger generations have shifted considerably, which has led to a decline in their engagement with, and appreciation for, traditional cultural practices. As a result, there is a growing concern about the potential discontinuity in the transmission of these long-standing customs to future generations.

On the other hand, however, the advent and widespread use of digital technologies offer promising new avenues for the dissemination and revitalization of traditional culture. The reach of Lanjiefu, for instance, can now extend far beyond the borders of Wenzhou, transcending geographic limitations to engage with audiences on a global scale, thanks to platforms such as the Internet and social media. These technologies make it possible to share the rich cultural significance of Lanjiefu with diverse communities around the world. Additionally, the application of emerging technologies, such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), has the potential to create immersive cultural experiences. This allows individuals, regardless of their physical location, to fully immerse themselves in the vibrant and celebratory atmosphere of Lanjiefu, as if they were physically present in Wenzhou. These innovations open up new

possibilities for engaging people with traditional culture in ways that were previously unimaginable.

Moreover, e-commerce platforms present an exciting opportunity for traditional craftsmen to reach broader markets, showcasing and selling their handmade creations to customers worldwide. This not only aids in the commercial viability of traditional skills, ensuring they remain relevant in a modern market economy, but also helps to preserve these ancient techniques by providing financial incentives to continue practicing and developing them. In turn, this market expansion of cultural products contributes to the preservation and growth of intangible cultural heritage.

Therefore, in order to maintain its vitality in the digital era, Lanjiefu must actively explore pathways for integration with digital technology. While it is crucial to maintain and uphold the core values and traditions that are at the heart of Lanjiefu, it is equally important to embrace innovation with an open mind. By doing so, the sustainable development and continuous revitalization of this treasured cultural tradition can be achieved in the modern era (Vacchio & Bifulco, 2022). In this way, Lanjiefu can thrive, bridging the past and the future while remaining relevant and cherished by future generations.

The study of Lanjiefu reveals its remarkable transformation from a religious ritual to a comprehensive folk festival over time. In the digital economy, it faces challenges due to generational shifts but also gains opportunities from digital technologies. The key findings include the dual impact of globalization and digitalization on Lanjiefu's transmission and the potential of digital platforms like the Internet, social media, VR, AR, and e-commerce to revitalize and expand its reach. These findings contribute to understanding how traditional cultural activities can adapt and survive in the digital age. Future research could focus on optimizing the specific digital integration strategies, exploring the long-term effects of digital engagement on cultural preservation, and investigating how to enhance the interaction between Lanjiefu and different

global cultures to further promote its internationalization and sustainable development.

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