

Intangible Cultural Heritage and Social Media Research: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

With the development of digital technologies, mobile Internet, and platform-based media, social media has become an important space for the dissemination, presentation, interaction, and revitalisation of intangible cultural heritage. Although existing studies have continued to increase, their research themes, methodological approaches, and knowledge structures remain relatively fragmented, with limited systematic integration. This paper adopts a systematic literature review method, using Web of Science as the core database to screen and analyse English empirical studies related to intangible cultural heritage and social media published between 2017 and 2026. A total of 172 publications were initially retrieved. After screening by publication year, subject category, thematic relevance, language, full-text availability, and document type, 29 empirical research articles were finally included. The findings show that five core themes have mainly emerged in this field: the dissemination and presentation of intangible cultural heritage on social media, user participation and interactive behaviour, platform narratives and digital expression, the construction of authenticity and cultural identity, and intangible cultural heritage dissemination and sustainable development. In terms of research methods, the included studies demonstrate the coexistence of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research. Quantitative studies mainly focus on dissemination effects, user behaviour, and platform data; qualitative studies emphasise cultural meanings, authenticity, and community experiences; and mixed-methods studies are used to explain the complex relationships among technology, platforms, users, and culture. This paper further indicates that future research can be further deepened in terms of theoretical integration, cross-platform comparison, community-based perspectives, platform algorithm mechanisms, and longitudinal research. This paper contributes to mapping the knowledge structure of intangible cultural heritage and social media research and provides a systematic reference for future studies.

Keywords: intangible cultural heritage, social media; systematic literature review, digital communication, research methods.

INTRODUCTION

With the development of digital technologies and social media, the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage is undergoing transformation. Intangible cultural heritage has long relied on community practices, oral traditions, festival performances, and skills transmission, while social media enables it to enter the everyday lives of the public through short videos, live streaming, images and texts, online comments, and user-generated content. Li (2022) pointed out that practitioners of handicraft-related intangible cultural heritage have begun to use platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Sina Microblog, and TikTok for skills demonstration, community interaction, and market connection. Social media has not only enhanced the visibility of intangible cultural heritage, but also changed the ways in which the public understands and participates in it. Wang et al. (2025) found that the dissemination effectiveness of official intangible cultural heritage accounts on Douyin is jointly influenced by platform features, content features, and user interaction. Based on Weibo data, Qiu and Zhang (2021) indicated that social media can reflect the public's cognitive structure regarding intangible cultural heritage tourism, inheritors, festival activities, and regional images.

Research on intangible cultural heritage and social media has expanded across multiple themes, including dissemination, user participation, platform narratives, and cultural identity. However, existing studies remain fragmented, with limited cross-platform comparison and insufficient integration of methodological perspectives. Therefore, a systematic literature review is needed to synthesise current knowledge and clarify research directions. This paper proposes the following research questions:

What core themes are mainly addressed in research on intangible cultural heritage and social media?

What research methods are mainly adopted in this field?

What characteristics are presented by qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies respectively?

What limitations exist in current research, and in which directions can future research be further developed?

METHODOLOGY

Review Design

This study adopts a systematic literature review (SLR) to examine empirical research on intangible cultural heritage and social media. The SLR approach ensures a transparent process through defined search strategies, inclusion criteria, and structured analysis, enabling the integration of fragmented studies across disciplines. In terms of literature screening, this paper refers to the PRISMA 2020 reporting principles to organise the process of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion. The formation process of the sample literature is presented through a PRISMA-style flow diagram and a literature screening table, so as to enhance the transparency and traceability of the research (Page et al., 2021). In terms of data extraction and analysis, this paper establishes a unified literature coding table to extract information such as authors, publication year, research object, social media platform, type of intangible cultural heritage, research theme, research method, data source, and main findings. The analysis is then conducted from two dimensions: thematic synthesis and methodological classification. Snyder (2019) noted that a literature review needs to transform existing studies into an organised knowledge synthesis through a clear process of data extraction and analysis. Based on this, this paper aims to identify the core issues, methodological distribution, and future research directions in research on intangible cultural heritage and social media.

Database and Search Strategy

This study used Web of Science as the core database. This database was selected as the main source of literature because it has strong advantages in academic standardisation, search accuracy, and literature quality control, which can provide a relatively reliable data foundation for a systematic literature review (Pranckutė, 2021). The literature search was limited to the period from 2017 to 2026 in order to focus on the main developments in intangible cultural heritage research in the context of the rapid growth of social media in recent years. The search topic centred on intangible cultural heritage and social media. The search process comprehensively considered titles, abstracts, keywords, and thematic relevance to ensure that the retrieved literature was highly aligned with the research questions. The initial search results are further explained in the subsequent literature screening process.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure a high level of alignment between the literature sample and the research topic, this paper established clear inclusion and exclusion criteria before the formal screening process (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

In terms of inclusion criteria, this paper mainly selected studies that met the following conditions. First, the research topic had to be directly related to intangible cultural heritage and social media. The studies needed to involve the dissemination, presentation, participation, interaction, digital storytelling, dissemination effects, or related digital communication issues of intangible cultural heritage on social media. Second, the document type was limited to academic journal articles. Third, the publication period was limited to 2017 to 2026. Fourth, only English-language literature was included. Fifth, the full text of the literature had to be accessible. Sixth, the

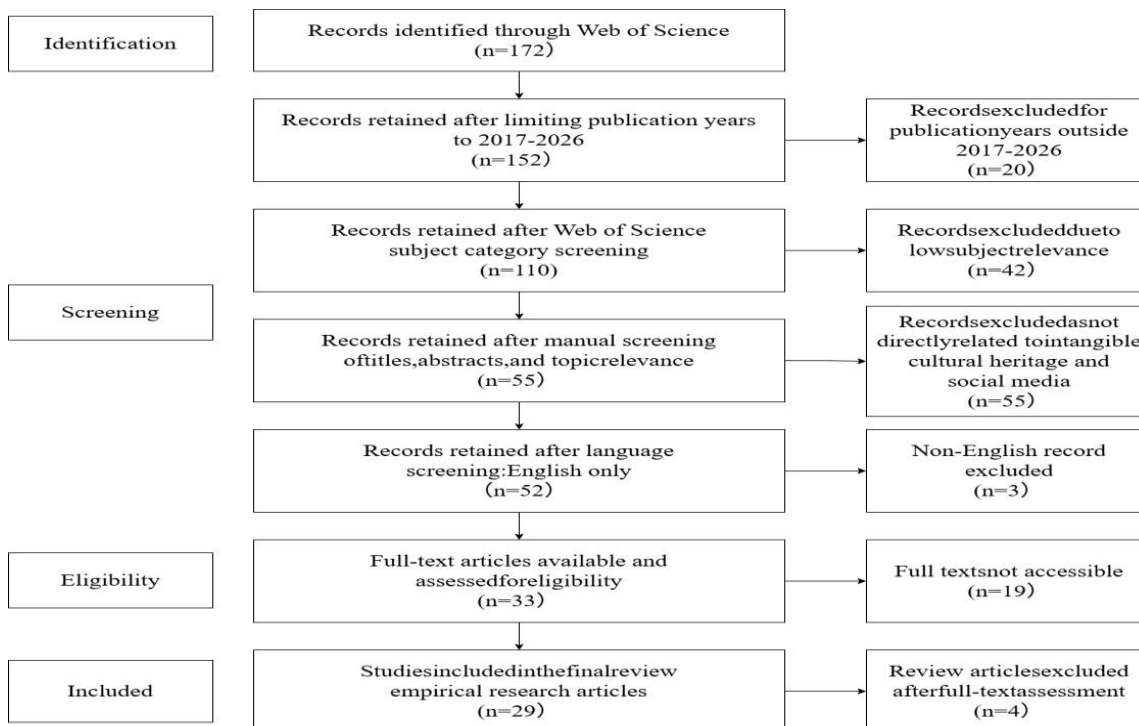
finally included literature had to be empirical research with a clear research object, data source, research method, or analytical process.

In terms of exclusion criteria, this paper excluded the following types of literature. First, studies that only involved general cultural heritage, cultural tourism, or digital communication without directly discussing the relationship between intangible cultural heritage and social media were excluded. Second, studies that contained relevant keywords but had low thematic relevance were excluded. Third, non-English literature was excluded. Fourth, studies whose full texts could not be accessed were excluded. Fifth, literature reviews, book reviews, conference abstracts, editorials, and other non-empirical studies were excluded. Sixth, duplicate records or records with highly overlapping information were excluded.

Literature Screening Process

The literature screening process in this paper was organised according to the PRISMA style in order to enhance the transparency and traceability of the research process (Page et al., 2021). First, a total of 172 publications were initially retrieved from Web of Science. Subsequently, according to the time range set for this study, the literature was limited to publications from 2017 to 2026, and 152 publications were retained. Second, based on the Web of Science subject categories, publications with low relevance to the research topic were removed, leaving 110 publications after screening. Third, manual screening was conducted based on the title, abstract, and research topic. Studies that were not directly related to the relationship between intangible cultural heritage and social media were excluded, and 55 publications were retained for the next stage. During the language screening stage, only English-language literature was retained, leaving 52 publications. After entering the full-text assessment stage, this paper further checked the accessibility of full texts, and 33 papers were finally found to have accessible full texts. Finally, based on full-text reading and eligibility assessment, review articles were excluded, and 29 empirical research articles were finally included as the analytical sample of this study. The above screening process has been organised into a PRISMA-style flow diagram and is further presented through a literature screening table to enhance the standardisation, transparency, and traceability of the research process.

Figure 1. PRISMA-Style Flow Diagram



To further enhance the clarity and readability of the literature screening process, this paper presents the changes in the number of publications and the screening criteria at each stage in tabular form based on the PRISMA-style flow diagram. The flow diagram is mainly used to visually present the overall pathway from initial retrieval to final inclusion, while the literature screening process table further explains the screening criteria, retained

records, and exclusion status at each stage. Through the combined use of figures and tables, the standardisation, transparency, and traceability of the literature screening process in this study can be more clearly demonstrated.

Table 1. Literature Screening Process Table

Stage	Screening Procedure	Records Retained(n)	Records Excluded (n)	Reason for Exclusion
Identification	Records identified through Web of Science search	172		
Screening	Limited to publication years 2017 to 2026	152	20	Records published outside 2017 to 2026 were excluded
Screening	Screened by Web of Science subject categories	110	42	Records with low relevance to the research topic were excluded
Screening	Manual screening based on titles, abstracts, and topic relevance	55	55	Records not directly related to intangible cultural heritage and social media were excluded
Eligibility	Language screening, English only	52	3	Non-English records were excluded
Eligibility	Full-text articles available and assessed for eligibility	33	19	Records without accessible full text were excluded
Included	Final studies included after full-text assessment	29	4	Review articles were excluded, and only empirical studies were retained

Data Extraction and Analysis

A unified coding framework was developed to systematically extract key information from the included studies, including authors, publication year, research object, social media platform, type of intangible cultural heritage, research theme, research method, data source, and main findings. This structured approach ensures consistency and comparability across the sample. Based on the extracted data, the analysis was conducted from two main dimensions: thematic synthesis and methodological classification. Thematic synthesis was used to identify the core research themes, while methodological classification enabled a comparative analysis of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies in terms of research focus, data sources, and analytical approaches. (Cao, 2025).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Results of Literature Screening and Sample Composition

After systematic retrieval and multi-stage screening, 29 empirical studies were included as the analytical sample. Although the initial search yielded a considerable number of publications, strict filtering based on publication year, subject category, thematic relevance, language, full-text availability, and document type significantly reduced the sample to studies closely aligned with the research focus.

Table 2 summarises the basic characteristics of the included studies, covering authors and year, article title, journal source, research method, platform or data source, and core themes. The results indicate that existing

studies span multiple social media platforms, including Weibo, Douyin, Bilibili, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram, and address topics such as intangible cultural heritage dissemination, digital storytelling, user participation, cultural identity, tourism experience, place branding, and sustainable development.

Overall, the field has attracted increasing attention in recent years but remains characterised by fragmented themes, methodological diversity, and limited empirical accumulation. The selected studies provide a representative foundation for subsequent thematic synthesis, methodological classification, and analysis of research gaps.

Table 2. **Basic Information of the Included Literature**

No.	Author(s) and Year	Title	Journal	Method	Platform or Data Source	Main Focus
1	Marjerison et al. (2024)	A Cross Generational Exploration of Motivations for Traditional Ethnic Costume Photography Tourism in China	Sustainability	Quantitative	Online survey, WeChat, Questionnaire Star	Ethnic costume photography tourism, ICH, generational motivation
2	Xu et al. (2024)	Analysis of Contemporary Value and Influence of Intangible Cultural Heritage Based on Online Review Mining	PLOS ONE	Quantitative	Bilibili online reviews	ICH value perception, UGC, online review mining
3	Wang et al. (2025)	Configuring Factors for Effective Dissemination of Intangible Cultural Heritage on Douyin	Humanities and Social Sciences Communications	Quantitative	Official ICH accounts on Douyin	ICH dissemination, platform features, user engagement
4	Cheng and Chen (2025)	Cultural Perception of Tourism Heritage Landscapes via Multi-Label Deep Learning	Land	Quantitative	Social media image data	Cultural perception, deep learning, Jingdezhen heritage landscape
5	Li et al. (2024)	Digital Footprint as a Public Participatory Tool	Land	Mixed	Ctrip, Weibo, Meituan UGC	Digital footprints, public participation, industrial heritage landscape
6	Jeljeli et al. (2025)	Examining the Effects of Social Media Storytelling on Gen Z Supporting Cultural Heritage and Sustainability in the UAE	Frontiers in Sociology	Quantitative	Survey of social media users	Social media storytelling, Gen Z, cultural sustainability
7	Lai et al. (2026)	The Impact of Visual Emotional Cues in Cultural Heritage on Public Sentiment and Behavioral Intention	npj Heritage Science	Quantitative	Rednote and Instagram images and comments	Visual emotion, public sentiment, behavioural intention

8	Sančanin and Penjišević (2023)	The Importance of the Digitization Process for the Promotion of Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Serbia	IJCRSEE	Quantitative	Google Forms survey	Heritage digitization, social networks, national identity
9	Barattin and Latusi (2026)	The Role of Tone of Voice in Tourism Destination Brands' Social Media Communication	Tourism Review	Quantitative	Instagram experimental stimuli	Destination branding, tone of voice, sharing behaviour
10	Jiang et al. (2024)	Unpacking Generation Z Tourists' Motivation for Intangible Cultural Heritage Tourism	Tourism Recreation Research	Quantitative	Survey data	Gen Z, ICH tourism, social media engagement
11	Wang (2025)	Using Masao Facial Makeup in Software Interface Interaction Design from the Perspective of Digital Communication	Scientific Reports	Mixed	APP design, survey, usability test	Masao facial makeup, ICH APP, digital communication
12	Reid et al. (2024)	"Telling the Story of Telling the Story"	Journal of Documentation	Qualitative	Expert testimony, workshops, transcripts	Heritage storytelling, local memory, heritage curation
13	Yıldırım and Kaya (2024)	Experiences, Expectations and Suggestions of Digital Nomads Towards an Intangible Cultural Heritage	Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes	Qualitative	Online interviews and social media monitoring	Digital nomads, ICH experience, digital sharing
14	Li (2022)	Grounded Theory-Based Model of the Influence of Digital Communication on Handicraft Intangible Cultural Heritage	Heritage Science	Qualitative	Interviews and textual analysis	Handicraft ICH, digital communication, grounded theory
15	Pietrobruno (2018)	YouTube Flow and the Transmission of Heritage	Convergence	Qualitative	YouTube videos and platform content	YouTube, algorithms, ICH narratives
16	Buchanan (2025)	Port Eliot Festival: A Crucible of Creativity	International Journal of Intangible Heritage	Qualitative	Case study and critical heritage analysis	ICH festivals, performativity, cultural space
17	Khalid and Chowdhury (2018)	Representation of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Bangladesh Through Social Media	Anatolia	Qualitative	Facebook page content	Bangladesh ICH, Facebook, social media representation

18	Larsson and Ouattara (2024)	Taken from the Spirits and Given to the People	Sustainability	Qualitative	Fieldwork, interviews, Facebook groups	Performing arts, authenticity, tourism commercialization
19	Sunarti et al. (2023)	Travelling Songs: Heritage and Popular Culture in Contemporary ASEAN	Cogent Arts & Humanities	Qualitative	Cultural historical materials and case analysis	Songs, popular culture, ASEAN cultural identity
20	Amer et al. (2023)	Civita di Bagnoregio, Italy: Towards a People-Centred Heritage Branding Approach	Journal of Heritage Tourism	Mixed	Interviews and over 7000 social media posts	Heritage branding, place identity, cultural landscape
21	Longhi-Heredia et al. (2022)	Cultural Press in Spain. The Uses of Cultural Heritage	Doxa Comunicación	Mixed	Digital newspapers, Twitter, Instagram	Cultural journalism, social networks, heritage communication
22	Podara et al. (2021)	Digital Storytelling in Cultural Heritage	Sustainability	Quantitative	Google Analytics web data	Digital storytelling, interactive documentary, audience engagement
23	Zardini Lacedelli et al. (2023)	From “Exhibition” to “Laboratory”	Herança	Mixed	Digital experimental project and participatory archive	Digital curation, community stories, digital heritage
24	Lin et al. (2025)	Integrating Fuzzy Delphi and Rough Set Analysis for ICH Festival Planning and Urban Place Branding	Urban Science	Mixed	Expert survey, multimodal data, social media data	ICH festivals, urban branding, digital communication
25	Morales-i-Gras et al. (2021)	Networks and Stories	Big Data and Cognitive Computing	Mixed	Twitter data	Feminist ICH, social network analysis, machine learning
26	Liu et al. (2025)	Preserving China’s Intangible Cultural Heritage Through AR/VR Storytelling, Social Media, and AI Narratives	npj Heritage Science	Mixed	Survey, interviews, digital ICH experiences	AR/VR, social media, AI narratives
27	Zhao and Zhou (2018)	Social Network and Place	Sustainability	Mixed	Interviews, survey, Sina Weibo data	Beijing crosstalk, social networks, ICH transmission
28	Csesznek et al. (2024)	The Potential for Sustainable Local Development Through Digital Communication and	Sustainability	Mixed	Official websites, social media	ICH digital communication, local development, community identity

		Digitization of ICH Resources			accounts, case studies	
29	Qiu and Zhang (2021)	Using Content Analysis to Probe the Cognitive Image of Intangible Cultural Heritage Tourism	ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information	Quantitative	Weibo blog data	ICH tourism, cognitive image, semantic network analysis

Analysis of Core Research Themes

After conducting a thematic synthesis of the 29 included studies, this paper found that research on intangible cultural heritage and social media mainly focuses on the following five aspects.

Dissemination and Presentation of Intangible Cultural Heritage on Social Media

This theme is the most fundamental aspect of existing research. It mainly focuses on how intangible cultural heritage achieves digital dissemination through social media. Relevant studies discuss the forms of presentation, information organisation, dissemination pathways, and digital representation strategies of intangible cultural heritage content on social media platforms. Social media has expanded the dissemination space of intangible cultural heritage, enabling it to enter public visibility through images and texts, short videos, live streaming, online comments, and user-generated content. Wang et al. (2025), in their study of official intangible cultural heritage accounts on Douyin, showed that platform features, content features, and user interaction jointly influence the dissemination effectiveness of intangible cultural heritage. This theme indicates that social media has become an important channel for enhancing the visibility and public dissemination of intangible cultural heritage.

User Participation and Interactive Behaviour

This theme focuses on how users access, respond to, and participate in intangible cultural heritage content in the social media environment. Relevant studies mainly analyse users' browsing, commenting, liking, reposting, sharing, and dissemination intentions, emphasising the influence of user interaction on the dissemination effectiveness of intangible cultural heritage. Based on Weibo data, Qiu and Zhang (2021) found that social media can present the public's cognitive structure regarding intangible cultural heritage tourism, inheritors, festival activities, and regional images. This shows that the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage has gradually shifted from one-way presentation to an interactive process involving platforms, content producers, and users.

Platform Narratives and Digital Expression

This theme focuses on narrative forms and digital expression mechanisms on social media platforms. Relevant studies examine how intangible cultural heritage is reorganised and narrated through short videos, images, live streaming, platform texts, and algorithmic recommendations. Taking YouTube as an example, Pietrobruno (2018) analysed the relationship among user-generated content, platform algorithms, and official heritage narratives, demonstrating that platform mechanisms influence the ways in which intangible cultural heritage content is presented and meanings are produced. This theme suggests that social media platforms deeply participate in the reorganisation, re-expression, and re-dissemination of intangible cultural heritage content.

Authenticity, Cultural Identity, and the Construction of Locality

This theme focuses on the cultural meanings generated during the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage on social media. It mainly involves the negotiation of authenticity, the construction of cultural identity, the expression of locality, and the reproduction of community cultural values. Social media improves the dissemination efficiency of intangible cultural heritage, but it may also lead to tendencies of symbolisation, performativity, and commercialisation, thereby generating discussions on authenticity and the right to interpret culture. Larsson and Ouattara's (2024) study of the Boloye dance in Côte d'Ivoire showed that intangible cultural

heritage continuously adjusts its expressive boundaries in tourism and public dissemination while maintaining connections with community identity and cultural integrity.

Intangible Cultural Heritage Dissemination and Sustainable Development

This theme focuses on the relationship between the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage on social media and local development, cultural revitalisation, community participation, and sustainable communication. Relevant studies suggest that social media can expand the influence of intangible cultural heritage, promote the digitisation of local cultural resources, and provide new communication pathways for community development. Czesznek et al. (2024), in their study of Făgăraş Land in Romania, showed that the digitisation of intangible cultural heritage and social media dissemination can support the construction of local community identity and sustainable development. This theme indicates that research on intangible cultural heritage and social media has further extended from the discussion of dissemination effects to the levels of cultural sustainability and local development.

Characteristics of Research Method Distribution

In terms of research methods, the 29 included studies demonstrate a developmental pattern in which quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research coexist. To present the numerical distribution, representative studies, and main methodological characteristics of different research method types more clearly, this paper organises the methodological classification results as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Classification of Research Methods

Research Method Type	Number of Studies (n)	Percentage (%)	Representative Studies	Main Methodological Features
Quantitative Research	11	37.9	Xu et al. (2024); Wang et al. (2025); Qiu and Zhang (2021)	Mainly employs surveys, content analysis, semantic network analysis, structural equation modelling, fsQCA, deep learning, and platform-based data analysis, focusing on dissemination effects, user behaviour, and variable relationships
Qualitative Research	8	27.6	Li (2022); Pietrobruno (2018); Khalid and Chowdhury (2018)	Mainly adopts interviews, ethnography, case studies, grounded theory, textual analysis, and thematic analysis, focusing on ICH narratives, cultural meaning, authenticity, and community experience
Mixed Methods Research	10	34.5	Liu et al. (2025); Morales-i-Gras et al. (2021); Czesznek et al. (2024)	Combines surveys, interviews, social media data, platform metrics, and case analysis, focusing on the integrated interpretation of relationships among technology, platforms, culture, and community
Total	29	100.0		

Characteristics of Qualitative Studies

The core advantage of qualitative studies lies in their ability to explain the cultural contexts behind the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage. These studies usually focus on issues such as platform narratives, authenticity negotiation, local identity, and community participation. They are able to reveal how different communication actors jointly participate in the meaning construction of intangible cultural heritage. Li (2022)

analysed the influencing factors of the digital communication of handicraft-related intangible cultural heritage through grounded theory, demonstrating the value of qualitative research in theory construction and cultural interpretation.

Characteristics of Quantitative Studies

Quantitative studies place greater emphasis on the measurement of dissemination effects, user behaviour, platform interaction, and relationships between variables. They are suitable for dealing with large-scale social media data and quantifiable issues. Wang et al. (2025) used fsQCA to analyse the dissemination pathways of official intangible cultural heritage accounts on Douyin, reflecting the advantages of quantitative research in explaining platform dissemination effects and configurations of conditions.

Characteristics of Mixed-Methods Studies

Mixed-methods studies can present both data trends and cultural contexts, making them suitable for analysing the complex relationships among technology, platforms, culture, communities, and user behaviour in research on intangible cultural heritage and social media. Csesznek et al. (2024) combined official websites, content analysis of social media accounts, and case study methods, demonstrating the advantages of mixed-methods research in integrating multiple data sources.

Overall Characteristics of Methodological Distribution

Overall, research on intangible cultural heritage and social media has formed a methodological pattern in which quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies coexist. Quantitative studies focus on measuring dissemination effects and user behaviour; qualitative studies emphasise the interpretation of cultural meanings and platform contexts; and mixed-methods studies enhance the explanatory power of complex communication phenomena through the integration of multiple data sources. Future research may further strengthen cross-platform comparison, multi-source data analysis, and cross-method integration in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the dissemination mechanisms and cultural impacts of intangible cultural heritage in the social media environment.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Main Research Findings

This study synthesises existing research on intangible cultural heritage and social media and finds that social media has become a crucial space for the dissemination and transformation of intangible cultural heritage, extending it from traditional community-based practices to the digital public sphere. User participation and platform mechanisms play a key role in the production, negotiation, and circulation of cultural meanings.

Meanwhile, the coexistence of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods approaches reflects the complexity of this research field. Quantitative studies provide measurable evidence of dissemination effects, qualitative studies reveal issues related to cultural meaning and authenticity, and mixed-methods research offers more comprehensive explanations by integrating multiple data sources.

These findings indicate that research on intangible cultural heritage and social media has gradually shifted from a focus on communication channels to a more integrated analysis of platform mechanisms, user participation, cultural meaning, and sustainable value.

Theoretical Implications

In terms of theoretical implications, this paper systematically integrates research on intangible cultural heritage and social media and summarises the core themes, methodological types, and research characteristics of this field. This helps to clarify the relatively fragmented knowledge structure of existing studies (Snyder, 2019). At the same time, by comparing the applicable directions of different research methods, this paper reveals the

research pathways of this field in terms of dissemination effect measurement, cultural meaning interpretation, and multi-source data integration.

This paper also points out that there is still room for improvement in theoretical integration in existing studies. In particular, a more explanatory and comprehensive analytical framework still needs to be established among platform mechanisms, cultural identity, community actors, digital power, and dissemination effects.

Practical Implications

In terms of practical implications, the findings of this paper provide reference value for intangible cultural heritage safeguarding, social media communication, and local cultural governance. First, social media has become an important space for the presentation, dissemination, and revitalisation of intangible cultural heritage. Cultural institutions, local governments, and intangible cultural heritage safeguarding organisations can further use social media to enhance the visibility of intangible cultural heritage and public participation (Wang et al., 2025).

Second, intangible cultural heritage content producers should pay attention to visual expression, digital storytelling, interactive mechanisms, and platform adaptability in order to enhance the attractiveness and continuous dissemination capacity of intangible cultural heritage content (Yi et al., 2025). Finally, the digital communication of intangible cultural heritage should place greater emphasis on the roles of inheritors, community members, and local cultural actors, so that social media communication can better reflect locality, participation, and cultural continuity (Csesznek et al., 2024).

Future Research Directions

Future research can be further deepened from five aspects. First, theoretical integration should be strengthened. Existing studies involve multiple fields, including communication studies, cultural heritage studies, tourism research, platform studies, and technology acceptance research, but their theoretical frameworks remain relatively fragmented. Future studies may construct a more comprehensive analytical framework that is more suitable for explaining the platform-based communication of intangible cultural heritage.

Second, cross-platform comparison should be strengthened. Existing studies mostly focus on a single platform, while discussions on the differences among platforms in content forms, interaction mechanisms, algorithmic logic, and user participation remain insufficient. Future studies may compare the different roles of Weibo, Douyin, Bilibili, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok in the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage.

Third, the perspectives of community actors and inheritors should be deepened. The core of intangible cultural heritage lies in community practice and intergenerational transmission. Future research needs to pay more attention to how inheritors, local communities, cultural institutions, and grassroots organisations use social media for cultural expression, resource negotiation, and identity construction (Li, 2022).

Fourth, research on platform algorithms and digital power should be strengthened. Existing studies pay more attention to content presentation and user behaviour, while discussions on platform recommendation mechanisms, traffic distribution, commercialisation logic, and visibility control remain insufficient. Future research may further analyse how platform rules influence the dissemination scope, cultural interpretation rights, and value transformation process of intangible cultural heritage.

Fifth, more longitudinal studies should be conducted. Most existing studies focus on communication phenomena within a specific period, platform, or case, while limited attention has been paid to the long-term changes in the social media communication of intangible cultural heritage. Future studies may use long-term tracking to observe how social media influences the revitalisation of intangible cultural heritage, public participation, and cultural transmission (Csesznek et al., 2024).

Overall, research on intangible cultural heritage and social media is at an important stage of transformation from thematic expansion to systematic integration. By integrating the thematic structure and methodological

characteristics of 29 empirical studies, this paper reveals that this field is forming a research pattern that takes digital platforms as communication spaces, user participation as an interactive pathway, and cultural identity and sustainable development as value orientations. This trend provides theoretical reference for the dissemination, revitalisation, and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in the digital era. It also provides further directions for future research on digital governance, platform communication optimisation, and community participation mechanisms in intangible cultural heritage.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a systematic synthesis of research on intangible cultural heritage and social media and identifies key thematic and methodological patterns in the field. The findings show that social media is reshaping the dissemination, participation, and meaning construction of intangible cultural heritage.

By integrating existing studies, this paper clarifies the knowledge structure of the field and highlights the need for more theoretically integrated and methodologically diverse research. Future studies should further explore cross-platform dynamics, community-based perspectives, and algorithmic mechanisms to better understand cultural transmission in digital environments.

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