

Original Paper

Research on the Digital Inheritance and Innovative Dissemination Pathways of Sichuan Opera Art from the Perspective of “Internet+”

Yinyin Zhang¹ & Yiting Fu^{2*}

^{1&2} School of Foreign Languages, Chengdu University of Information Technology, Chengdu, 610030, China

* Corresponding author, E-mail: 67901150@qq.com

Received: August 29, 2025 Accepted: October 09, 2025 Online Published: October 28, 2025

doi:10.22158/assc.v7n5p161

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/assc.v7n5p161>

Abstract

In the current context, Sichuan Opera is confronted with hurdles from two aspects: inheritance and outreach. This study centers on the classic repertoires of Sichuan Opera, exploring practical ways to pass down and promote the art form in the internet age. Drawing on the traits of the digital communication landscape, it puts forward promotional approaches—such as constructing a social media communication matrix, revamping content forms on digital platforms, and developing immersive online experiences. It also maps out inheritance paths, including building a digital resource preservation system, optimizing online dissemination mechanisms, and nurturing a new generation of practitioners. By driving the deep integration of Sichuan Opera with the internet ecosystem, this research seeks to support the living inheritance and innovative development of traditional Chinese opera, thus offering practical references for the modern transformation of intangible cultural heritage.

Keywords

Sichuan Opera, Digital Heritage, Internet Promotion, Cultural Innovation

1. Introduction

As a vital carrier for southwest China’s folk culture, artistic aesthetics, and historical memories, Sichuan Opera does not only showcase the exquisite craftsmanship of Chinese traditional theater, but it also reflects Sichuan region’s linguistic features, folk wisdom, and social values, making it highly valuable for cultural preservation and inheritance.

Yet amid profound shifts in the social and cultural landscape, Sichuan Opera faces new challenges in

inheritance and development. Today, the rapid growth of digital media has changed how the public consumes culture; emerging formats like short videos and streaming services are becoming mainstream, leaving little gap for traditional operas. At the same time, with increasingly frequent global cultural exchanges, younger generations are losing interest and awareness in traditional arts. Sichuan Opera now grapples with practical issues: an aging audience, a shortage of professional talents, and declining market impact. In this context, exploring how to use internet platform advantages to build Sichuan Opera dissemination paths that fit modern communication patterns has become a critical research topic. Promoting Sichuan Opera in the digital age calls for innovation in four aspects: communication concepts, content, carriers, and practitioners. Specifically, innovating communication carriers can leverage short videos, VR/AR, and online education platforms to shift from “offline theaters” to “multi-platform coverage”—addressing problems like the aging traditional audience and limited reach (Zhang, 2025). By analyzing the characteristics of digital channels such as short video platforms, social media, and live streams, this research will put forward practical promotion strategies for Sichuan Opera. The goal is to expand the reach of its classic works, boost its contemporary influence, and support the living inheritance of Sichuan Opera art.

This research holds value on multiple levels. For cultural preservation, its findings can provide theoretical references and practical cases for the digital protection of intangible cultural heritage like Sichuan Opera. In terms of social education, the traditional virtues and humanistic spirit in Sichuan Opera can enrich modern cultural offerings, enhancing public aesthetic taste and cultural identity. From an industrial perspective, it also offers new ideas for traditional opera’s innovative transformation in the contemporary cultural market, helping Sichuan Opera thrive sustainably in the new era.

2. The Multifaceted Values of Sichuan Opera Art and Its Classic Repertoires

2.1 Research on the Digital Inheritance and Innovative Dissemination Pathways of Sichuan Opera Art from the Perspective of “Internet+”

As the most iconic opera in southwest China, Sichuan Opera traces its roots back to the Ming and Qing Dynasties. Its growth was driven largely by waves of migration—most notably the large-scale migration of people from Huguang (present-day Hubei and Hunan) to Sichuan. During this period, external vocal traditions like Kunqu opera, Gaoqiang, Huqin fiddle, and Plucking opera merged with local Sichuan folk arts such as Lantern opera. After centuries of refinement and evolution, this blend gave rise to a complete, distinct operatic system with its own unique traits.

Artistically, Sichuan Opera has forged a one-of-a-kind performance style. Its Gaoqiang tradition uses a “leading (bang), percussion (da), singing (chang)” combination—with human voices for the bangqiang (leading vocals) to craft unique musical textures and dramatic tension. The bangqiang isn’t just a musical element; it also serves key dramatic roles: narrating the story, ramping up atmosphere, and conveying characters’ emotions. Then there’s the world-famous “Face-Changing” (Bian Lian) technique: by instantly switching facial makeup, this visual trick has become a signature artistic symbol

for showing characters' intense inner turmoil. Together, these features shape the unique identity that sets Sichuan Opera apart from other operatic forms.

2.2 *The Multifaceted Values of Classic Repertoires*

2.2.1 Contemporary Expression of Cultural Value

The classic repertoires of Sichuan Operas work like a cultural prism, reflecting the essence of the Chinese spirit. Take *Teaching the Son*: its story thread of "guiding one's child to grow into a capable person" not only shows the wisdom of traditional Chinese family education but also brings Confucianism's core values—"cultivating oneself and governing one's family"—to life through dramatic clashes. On the other hand, *Mulian's Rescuing of His Mother* turns a religious tale into drama, building a moral framework that weaves together filial piety and karmic beliefs. Through this artistic immersion, audiences deepen their connection to their cultural roots.

When it comes to regional culture, *The Couple Watching the Lanterns* stands out as a vivid snapshot of Bashu folklore, thanks to its lively depictions of daily life. The Sichuan dialect and slang in the play, paired with its scenes of festival cheer, not just recreate the unique cultural scenery of Sichuan, but also free this regional culture from time and space, gaining lasting artistic vitality. These repertoires act like a cultural gene pool, keeping the core essence of local culture alive.

2.2.2 Modern Interpretation of Artistic Value

Honed over hundreds of years, Sichuan Opera has developed a one-of-a-kind way of expression. Taking *Face-Changing*: it weaves technical skill and theatrical appeal seamlessly together. Gaoqiang's musical arrangement and the face-changing technique's visual flair join forces to create a way of conveying emotion that goes beyond words. This performance style—using form to express spirit, and uniting form and spirit as one—not only highlights Sichuan Opera's unique charm but also offers a fresh model for traditional performing arts to adapt to the modern age.

The Scholar of Bashan stands as the peak of Sichuan Opera's storytelling art. Blending the personal fate of its characters with the tide of the times, the play keeps the expressive strengths of traditional opera while adding the critical thinking of modern theater. When it comes to character depiction, the protagonist's shift from pedantic stubbornness to awakening stays true to operatic traditions yet breaks free from the rigid stereotypes of classic roles—showcasing how Sichuan Opera stays vibrant by innovating as it carries on its legacy.

2.2.3 Pathways for Realizing Educational Value

Sichuan Opera's classic repertoires hold distinct value in today's educational landscape. Their artistic forms alone make them excellent aesthetic teaching tools—for instance, the special effects in *Face-Changing* sharpen the audiences' sense of formal beauty, while the vocal arrangements in *Jinzi* foster an appreciation for musical beauty. This "learning through enjoyment" approach boosts the aesthetic literacy of people while they immerse themselves in the art. When it comes to cultural passing-down, Sichuan Opera turns abstract moral ideas into vivid artistic figures. The educational wisdom in *Teaching the Son* and the filial piety promoted in *Lying on Ice to Catch Carp* let traditional

cultural values win new recognition today, thanks to their intuitive artistic expressions. This “nurturing through art” model not only carries on the old tradition of teaching morality via opera but also fits with modern educational principles.

From technical preservation and literary adaptations to folk custom displays, these works together build Sichuan Opera’s diverse yet cohesive aesthetic system. They not only showcase top-tier performing skills and deep cultural meanings but also serve as classic examples for studying Sichuan Opera’s artistic traits and contemporary worth—offering valuable guidance for exploring how traditional opera can be passed down in the new era.

3. Practical Challenges in the Inheritance and Promotion of Sichuan Opera

3.1 Challenges Facing the Inheritance

Sichuan Opera’s inheritance now faces two big challenges: a shortage of talent and the struggle to pass down its technical skills. When it comes to building a talent pool, training for Sichuan Opera takes years and costs a lot—but with so many modern career options, fewer young people are willing to commit to this traditional art. That’s left gaps in nearly every aspect: from script-writing and directing to performing and music. Taking Sichuan Opera’s Gaoqiang style for example, its unique singing techniques need years of specialized practice, making it hard for young performers to grasp their core quickly. As veteran artists retire one by one, many exquisite skills are at risk of being lost forever.

For passing down technical skills, one-of-a-kind performances like Face-Changing (Bian Lian) and Rolling Lamp (Gun Deng) demand not just solid basics from actors, but also a deep feel for character emotions and dramatic rhythm. These skills are mostly taught through masters’ verbal guidance and hands-on demonstrations—standardized teaching systems can’t fully capture them. If there’s a break between master and apprentice generations, these unique artistic expressions might vanish for good. At the same time, playing techniques for some traditional musical instruments are also on the brink of disappearing: they’re tough to learn, and there’s little market demand for them, which only makes the inheritance crisis worse. The launch of both the *Sichuan Province Sichuan Opera Protection and Inheritance Regulations* and the *Sichuan Opera (Chongqing City) Protection and Inheritance Regulations* in September 2024—focused on issues like grassroots troupes fading away and a lack of practitioners—highlights both the policy support and real-world challenges facing Sichuan Opera’s survival (Sichuan Opera Web of China, 2025).

3.2 Constraints on Promotion and Dissemination

Promoting Sichuan Opera now hits two main snags: a narrow audience base and one-note communication channels. Looking at who’s watching, most of Sichuan Opera’s regular viewers are middle-aged or elderly—younger generations generally don’t know much about it, nor are they willing to embrace it. That’s partly because today’s young people lean toward fast-paced, fresh cultural content, and they often lose patience with traditional opera’s stylized performances and slower storytelling. On top of that, Sichuan Opera’s strong local flavor and dialect-driven delivery also hold back its spread to

wider regions and more diverse groups.

When it comes to getting the word out, Sichuan Opera still leans heavily on traditional theater shows. This offline way of sharing is tied down by things like venue size, where theaters are located, and performance times—making it hard to reach more people beyond specific times and places. Now that digital communication is everywhere, Sichuan Opera hasn't built a solid online communication system yet. It can't keep up with modern audiences' desire to access cultural content whenever and wherever they want, which directly blocks its ability to grow its influence and win over new viewers.

4. Constructing a Digital Inheritance System for Sichuan Opera in the “Internet+” Era

Facing both chances and hurdles brought by the growth of digital technology, the inheritance of Sichuan Opera needs systematic digital solutions—covering everything from archival preservation and spread of the art to talent training.

4.1 Building a Digital Resource Preservation System

Digital archiving is the bedrock of preserving Sichuan Opera. First of all, a systematic high-definition digital capture of the classic repertoires is needed. Using multi-camera filming, the full performances of iconic works like Face-Changing can be recorded, as well as the behind-the-scenes bits, such as rehearsals, makeup and styling, costumes, and props. This builds a complete video archive; these valuable materials aren't just for preservation, but also serve as visual references for future inheritance and research.

Second, a digital database for Sichuan Opera's documentary materials should be set up. That means gathering and organizing historical stuff systematically—scripts, musical scores, stage photos, artist biographies—and using modern digital tools to sort them, add indexes, and build metadata. The database should have smart search and open access features: it can support professional research while giving enthusiasts easy access to learning resources. When building it, a crowd-sourcing model can be introduced, encouraging researchers and fans alike to help supplement and fact-check materials, creating an open, shared digital resource community.

4.2 Innovating Online Inheritance and Exchange Models

Digital platforms provide a completely new channel for Sichuan Opera exchange. Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies can transcend the traditional spatial-temporal limitations. For instance, in *The Legend of the White Snake*, VR technology can recreate the West Lake scenery and the grand scene of Fahai subduing the white snake; audiences wearing VR equipment can immerse themselves in the plot. AR technology can overlay virtual characters and scene special effects, enhancing the visual impact and interactivity of Sichuan Opera (Wang, 2025). By focusing on building a multi-level online exchange system and professional social platforms, Sichuan Opera art can more deeply connect inheritors and enthusiasts. For example, establishing communication communities led by professional artists, regularly organizing activities such as “Online Q&A with Sichuan Opera Masters” and “Live Skill Analysis Sessions,” can achieve a digital extension of the traditional

master-apprentice relationship. This model breaks geographical restrictions, allowing high-quality teaching resources to be shared more widely.

At the same time, the interactive strength of live streaming should be made the most of to design and conduct online Sichuan Opera classes. Invite veteran artists to break down the core of Sichuan Opera performance on live platforms—covering everything from vocal techniques and movements to acting—with detailed demos and step-by-step teaching. Add real-time interaction during streams, so learners get prompt professional guidance and feel fully immersed in the learning process. This digital way of passing down the art keeps the heart of traditional master-apprentice teaching—verbal guidance and hands-on demos—while giving it a fresh, modern twist.

4.3 Cultivating a New Generation of Inheritors

Training young inheritors is a crucial link in Sichuan Opera inheritance. Within the digital dissemination of Sichuan Opera, the “content repurchase rate” among young audiences (18-30 years old) is positively correlated with their “interaction frequency.” Post-00s Sichuan Opera enthusiasts sharing content like “Sichuan Opera behind-the-scenes” and “skill learning in daily life” through short videos can stimulate sustained interest among young audiences, increasing the “repurchase rate” for Sichuan Opera content from 15% to 58% (Zhao, 2024). Leveraging the communication advantages of new media platforms to showcase the charm of Sichuan Opera through methods popular among young people is essential. For example, Peng Qi from Chongqing Sichuan Theatre, who began learning Sichuan Opera at age 12, fully utilizes short video platforms to disseminate Sichuan Opera culture. By planning thematic communication campaigns such as “Sichuan Opera Youth Talk” and “Intangible Cultural Heritage for New Generation” and using vlogs, short videos, and other formats to document the learning journeys of young practitioners, authentic stories can evoke emotional resonance and stimulate more young people’s interest in Sichuan Opera.

At the university level, an intercollegiate Sichuan Opera inheritance alliance is suggested to form. This alliance can tear down campus walls through a model of “online joint rehearsals + offline performances.” For example, schools like Chengdu University of Technology and Sichuan University of Media and Communications have already teamed up on “Sichuan Opera Digital Cultural Creativity Design Workshops.” There, students collaborate to develop Sichuan Opera-themed VR scenes and short video scripts—boosting the art’s innovative edge while nurturing interdisciplinary inheritance talents (Wu, 2024). Hosting joint rehearsals, academic seminars, and performance exchanges via online platforms can create a training model centered on shared resources and complementary strengths. What’s more, building online course systems tailored to different skill levels—from basic appreciation classes to specialized hands-on courses—lays out a multi-layered path for talent development.

In addition, the Sichuan Provincial Sichuan Theatre, together with cultural and tourism departments, has launched the “Sichuan Opera Digital Inheritor Program.” It aims to spot and foster young inheritors with innovative ideas through online recruitment, cloud-based training, and digital work showcases. The program emphasizes blending traditional skills with modern creativity, encouraging participants to

use digital tech for creative projects—infusing new life into Sichuan Opera’s inheritance.

5. Constructing Innovative Dissemination Pathways for Sichuan Opera in the “Internet+” Context

Amidst the sweeping wave of digitalization across all industries, and based on the current dissemination landscape and audience characteristics, the ecological restructuring of the dissemination of Sichuan Opera must center on the “Technology-Content-Audience” core. By integrating platforms such as short videos, live streaming, online education, and digital museums, a dissemination closed loop of “traffic acquisition—conversion — retention” can be formed, addressing the issues of singular traditional communication channels and audience loss (Zhou, 2024).

5.1 Building a Social Media Communication Matrix

As social media serves as the primary information channel for younger people, it should become the primary front for Sichuan Opera dissemination. A communication matrix centered on platforms like WeChat Official Accounts, Weibo, and Bilibili should be constructed to achieve layered content delivery and precise reach. In terms of content creation, emphasis should be placed on the integrated innovation of traditional art and modern expression. For instance, the analysis of Face-Changing techniques can be combined with popular culture elements, using the language familiar to youth to reinterpret the contemporary value of classic repertoire. The Sichuan Opera MV *The Tide of Sichuan: 300 Years*, created by a team led by chief director Zhang Abin, jointly launched by Sichuan News Network and Sichuan University of Media and Communications, incorporates ancient-style painting and RAP elements, attracting young audiences with a youth-oriented style, illustrating the direction for content innovation in social media dissemination[7]. Simultaneously, enhancing user participation and sense of belonging through interactive activities such as the “Sichuan Opera Knowledge Contest” and “Online Opera buff Clubs,” which invite interaction between enthusiasts and professional troupes or research institutes, allows traditional culture to spread naturally through social interaction. Furthermore, Sichuan Opera disseminators can also utilize experiential short videos for promotion. Such videos lower the cognitive barrier to Sichuan Opera through a life-oriented perspective. For example, the blogger “Chizao is Me” documented the entire process of a Sichuan Opera Dan (female role) performer applying makeup, practicing vocals, and performing on stage. The details of the costume and the charm of the vocal delivery presented in an authentic setting led to a single video exceeding one million views, successfully sparking young people’s interest and attention towards Sichuan Opera as a profession (Liu, 2024).

5.2 Innovating the Content Ecosystem on Digital Platforms

Short-form video and online education platforms open up brand-new possibilities for spreading Sichuan Opera. Two aspects of audiences’ digital experience can be enhanced: interaction and emotion. When people join in UGC activities—like commenting, sharing, or taking part in the “Sichuan Opera Face-Changing Challenge”—they are not just helping promote the art; they are also deepening their own connection to its culture, fostering emotional resonance and a sense of cultural belonging (Li,

2025).

In the short-form video space, the focus should be on creating lightweight content that fits the platforms' vibe—things like series such as “Get to Know Sichuan Opera in 60 Seconds” or “Classic Moves Showcased by Master” By sharing, audiences develop a habit of appreciating the art. At the same time, partnering with platforms like Tencent to build structured online courses makes sense: invite artists to break down Sichuan Opera's core—from singing techniques to understanding repertoires—in simple, easy-to-follow ways, creating a full learning journey. This “short video + systematic course” model can effectively take audiences from a shallow understanding to a deeper grasp of the art.

What's more, the renewed spread of the Sichuan Opera *The Embroidered Jacket* also leans into interactive design. Short video platforms launched the “*Embroidered Jacket* Line Challenge” encouraging users to mimic the play's character lines and singing. Paired with UGC-driven secondary sharing, this not only breathes new life into the classic work but also boosts young audiences' sense of participation (Chen, 2025).

5.3 Creating Immersive Online Event Experiences

Planning online events means ditching old-fashioned performance models and leaning hard on digital tech to craft immersive experiences. Virtual reality (VR) can recreate the vibe of classic theaters—pair that with multi-camera live streams and professional guided appreciation, and online audiences can get an artistic treat that even tops being there in person. What's more, hosting innovative events like the “Sichuan Opera Digital Cultural Creativity Contest” or “Cloud Art Festivals” gets people involved in co-creating content. These activities don't just spread Sichuan Opera further; when users join in actively, they naturally share the content again and again, building a communication ecosystem that keeps going on its own.

The innovative dissemination of Sichuan Opera in the Internet era requires a systematic restructuring across multiple dimensions, including platform characteristics, content forms, and user experience. Through the precise reach of social media, the in-depth content cultivation on digital platforms, and the immersive experiences of online events, these three aspects working in concert and synergy can achieve the organic integration of traditional art with the modern communication environment, allowing the ancient art of Sichuan Opera to radiate new vitality in the digital age.

6. Conclusion

This study takes a systematic study at Sichuan Opera's multifaceted value and how it can be passed down and innovated in the “Internet+” era. It shows that classic repertoires like *The Gold* and *The Couple Watching the Lanterns* aren't just rich in cultural meaning and unique artistic charm—they also matter a lot for education today. These values are the core of Sichuan Opera as an intangible cultural heritage, laying solid ground for its survival and growth in modern times.

When it comes to building digital inheritance mechanisms, the study sets up a three-part system: digital preservation, online inheritance and exchange, and nurturing a new generation of practitioners. This

system focuses on both protecting traditional skills systematically and making inheritance methods fit the times—using digital tools and internet platforms to breathe new life into passing down Sichuan Opera.

For digital dissemination, the research puts forward an internet-based communication system for Sichuan Opera. By building a social media communication matrix, creating fresh content formats for digital platforms, and designing immersive online events, Sichuan Opera can break free from the time and space limits of traditional spread and connect effectively with young audiences. Especially, innovating short-form video content and using live streaming tech show huge potential for blending traditional art with modern technology.

Building on this research, future work should dig deeper into how to build a complete inheritance ecosystem for Sichuan Opera—with a clear focus on higher education. It's key to promote for interdisciplinary and intercollegiate collaboration around Sichuan Opera inheritance: weaving traditional opera preservation into innovation and entrepreneurship education to cultivate interdisciplinary inheritors who have both artistic skills and digital communication know-how. Only by creating a diverse collaborative mechanism—guided by the government, led by universities, and involving more social participation—can build a sustainable inheritance ecosystem. This is the only way to truly keep Sichuan Opera alive and developing in the digital age, letting it keep shining in the new era's cultural landscape.

Acknowledgments

This paper was supported by Student Innovation and Entrepreneurship Project of Chengdu University of Information Technology: The Inheritance and Development of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Internet Age (X202510621259).

References

- Chen, Y. (2025). Intangible Cultural Heritage Vitalization and Youthful Engagement: The Communication Practice and Paradigm of Sichuan Opera The Embroidered Jacket. *Traditional Art Innovation*, (10), 28-37.
- China News Service · Sichuan News. (2024). *Promoting the High-Quality Development of Sichuan Opera with New Quality Productive Forces*[EB/OL]. October 16.
- Li, M. (2025). Cross-platform Digital Communication of Sichuan Opera Culture: A Multidimensional Study on User Experience and Emotional Interaction. *Journal of Cultural Communication Research*, (4), 32-45.
- Liu, F. (2024). A Study on the Impact of Experiential Short Videos on the Communication of Sichuan Opera: A Case Study of the Blogger “Chi Zao Shi Wo” Going Viral with Her Sichuan Opera Dan Role Experience. *Sichuan Drama*, (10), 41-49.
- Sichuan Opera Web of China. (2025). *Sichuan Opera's Contemporary Mass Communication: The*

Dream of Sichuan Flow, Everlasting [EB/OL].

- Wang, H. (2025). Cross-boundary Integration: Development Strategies of Sichuan Opera in Digital Immersive Spaces. *Frontiers of Digital Art*, (3), 56-68.
- Wu, D. (2024). University Communities and Sichuan Opera Inheritance: A Practical Exploration of Cross-University Inheritance Alliances. *Art Education Research*, (12), 51-58.
- Zhang, W. (2025). Research on New Paths and Innovation of Sichuan Opera Culture Communication in the Digital Age. *Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection and Research*, (9), 71-83.
- Zhao, Y. (2024). A Study on the Behavior of Young Audiences in the Digital Communication of Sichuan Opera. *Contemporary Theatre*, (6), 33-40.
- Zhou, L. (2024). Ecological Restructuring and Path Innovation of Sichuan Opera's "Internet Plus" Communication. *Sichuan Drama*, (8), 25-32.