

Research on the Economic Development Model of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County under the Background of Rural Revitalization

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of the rural revitalization strategy, intangible cultural heritage, as a crucial cultural resource and economic engine in rural areas, holds special significance for the development of ethnic minority regions. This paper takes Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County in Guangxi as the research object. Based on the realistic conditions of Jinxiu's intangible cultural heritage economy development, it points out the challenges faced by Jinxiu's intangible cultural heritage economy, such as funding shortages, talent gaps, weak brand marketing, and limited sales channels. Based on this, the study proposes optimization strategies including strengthening policy and financial support, improving talent training systems, innovating brand marketing, and expanding diversified market channels. the aim is to promote rural industrial revitalization in ethnic minority areas and achieve coordinated cultural and economic development.

Keywords: Intangible Cultural Heritage; Policy Support; Brand Marketing

1. Introduction

Under the comprehensive advancement of China's rural revitalization strategy, intangible cultural heritage (ICH), a unique cultural resource and economic growth engine for rural areas, is playing an increasingly important role while carrying national memory and regional characteristics. ICH is not only the essence of traditional culture but has also become a key force in promoting rural industrial development, cultural prosperity, ecological conservation, and social governance.

Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County (hereinafter referred to as "Jinxiu") in Guangxi is home to the largest number of Yao ethnic subgroups

globally and serves as a major settlement for the Yao people. It encompasses five Yao subgroups: Pan Yao, Chashan Yao, Hualan Yao, Shanzi Yao, and Ao Yao. [1] Over centuries of production and daily life, these subgroups have both integrated and preserved their distinct languages, customs, religious beliefs, and artistic expressions, collectively constructing a rich and profound Yao cultural system. Currently, numerous and diverse ICH projects with unique charm have become the characteristic foundation and advantageous resource for local economic development.

This paper aims to analyze the current status of ICH development in Jinxiu County, explore the economic potential of ICH resources in promoting employment, increasing income, and revitalizing the rural economy, and identify models through which Jinxiu's ICH economy can contribute to rural revitalization.

2. Realistic Conditions for Developing the ICH Economy in Jinxiu

2.1 Policy Support and Safeguards

As early as 2005, China issued the *Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Strengthening the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage*, which emphasized the importance and urgency of ICH protection and proposed the guiding principle of preservation first, rescue-oriented, rational utilization, and inherited development. the *Implementation Opinions on Further Strengthening the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region*, jointly issued by the Guangxi Party Committee and the Regional Government, highlighted the role of ICH in consolidating poverty alleviation achievements, promoting industrial and rural revitalization, and building a culturally and tourism-strong region.

In 2023, the *Opinions of the Laibin Municipal People's Government Office on Supporting the Accelerated Development of Cultural and Tourism Industries in Jinxiu Yao Autonomous County* proposed initiatives to establish a national-level Yao Cultural Ecological (Jinxiu) Protection Experimental Zone and develop the World Yao Capital Cultural Industrial Park. Projects such as the Heng Village and Shangxia Guchen Yao ICH Experience Bases were launched to create participatory, locally distinctive tourism+rural demonstration zones, fostering the protection and inheritance of Jinxiu's ICH resources through integrated cultural and tourism development.

2.2 Rich ICH Resource Reserves

As a globally renowned Yao settlement, Jinxiu possesses a profound historical and cultural heritage. In recent years, Jinxiu has developed distinctive ICH projects in dance, craftsmanship, medicine, and folklore, which collectively form its unique cultural landscape and lay a solid foundation for its ICH economy. Key projects include dance forms such as Huangni Drum Dance and Yao Farming Dance; craftsmanship such as Yao Eight Immortals Dance Mask Making and Jinxiu Oil Tea Making; medical practices such as Yao Bone Injury Therapy and Yao Medicinal Thread Moxibustion; and folk customs such as Yao Hongmen Rituals and Youmian Wedding Ceremonies. Additionally, festivals like the Yao Panwang Festival and the Zhuang March Third Festival further enrich its cultural offerings.

2.3 Superior Natural Ecological Environment

Located in the heart of the Dayao Mountains in central Guangxi, Jinxiu boasts a forest coverage rate of 87.91%^[2], the highest in Guangxi. Its mountainous terrain, crisscrossed valleys, abundant water resources, and thriving Yao medicinal herb plantations create a unique geographical advantage. Scenic areas like Sheng Tang Mountain integrate natural landscapes, Yao medicine industries, and ICH resources, providing ideal conditions for cultural-tourism integration and robust support for ICH economic development.

3. Achievements of Jinxiu's ICH Economy in Promoting Rural Revitalization

3.1 Industrial Integration and Development

Jinxiu County has developed multiple themed tourism routes by leveraging its ICH resources. Through the ICH+Tourism model, cultural experiences such as folk custom tours are deeply integrated with tourism. the ICH+Agriculture model combines specialty agricultural products with branding, promoting the fusion of Yao medicinal herb cultivation and processing with ecological and economic development.

3.2 Dual-Driven Employment and Entrepreneurship

Jinxiu supports ICH workshops through preferential policies and talent training programs. ICH inheritors utilize their skills to create social value by selling artworks at cultural exhibitions and teaching techniques like Yao embroidery and medicine. These initiatives have nurtured small and micro-enterprises, generated employment opportunities, and improved livelihoods while preserving traditional skills.

3.3 Rural Cultural Revitalization

Cultural performances, ICH skill training, and ICH education in schools have rooted intangible culture deeply within the county. the integration of ICH projects with tourism and industries has enhanced villagers' cultural awareness, confidence, and pride as they witness external admiration for Yao culture.

4. Challenges Facing Jinxiu's ICH Economic Development

4.1 Funding Shortages

4.1.1 Insufficient Project Funding

The 2024 budget funds of Jinxiu County primarily consist of the general public budget and government fund budget, totaling 294, 428 million yuan. Among these, approximately 20 million yuan from the county-level fiscal funds is allocated to support industrial development, with only a small portion indirectly directed toward intangible cultural heritage (ICH)-related industries. This insufficient funding has made it difficult for many urgently needed ICH projects to secure adequate financial support. In 2024, Jinxiu County added 43 items to the eighth batch of county-level ICH projects, 34 items to the ninth batch, and 27 items to the tenth batch of municipal-level ICH projects. Based on an average of 1-2 workshops per county-level or higher ICH project, the 104 newly added projects in 2024 may correspond to 100-200

workshops. A multi-dimensional analysis considering the number of ICH projects, policy support, industrial development, and training activities suggests that Jinxiu County's ICH workshops in 2024 should number between 100 and 300, predominantly in fields such as Yao medicine, Yao embroidery, and traditional crafts. Most of these workshops are small-scale, low-impact, and in the growth stage, making it challenging for them to obtain government subsidies, expand operations, or achieve mass production, severely constraining their development.

4.1.2 Low Social Capital Participation

The intangible cultural heritage (ICH) projects have relatively low attractiveness to social capital, primarily because of their cultural attributes, which lead to long investment return cycles and high risks for related projects. First, there is a high difficulty in inheriting ICH techniques, as cultivating inheritors of ICH requires a long training period, substantial financial investment, and yields limited returns—take Yao embroidery as an example. Second, the market recognition of ICH products improves slowly, and brand building remains challenging. the early stage of market development requires significant upfront investment but hardly yields visible results—such as in the case of Yao medicine.

4.2 Talent Gap Crisis

4.2.1 Severe Aging of Inheritors

At present, the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in Jinxiu County still mainly relies on generational transmission, especially for folk cultures. Despite the impact of multiculturalism, although 82.9% of young people under 30 are willing to learn and inherit ICH techniques, the average age of the 18 autonomous region-level representative inheritors of ICH projects in Jinxiu County is 50.3 years. This indicates that while young people in Jinxiu County are willing to learn ICH techniques, the aging problem of inheritors remains prominent due to the long learning cycle and high difficulty. Many inheritors are farmers working at home and can only practice their skills during non-farming seasons, posing severe challenges to the continuity of many ICH projects.

4.2.2 Incomplete Talent Training Systems

Currently, ICH talent training in Jinxiu County primarily relies on short-term training courses

and vocational education in schools. the county's ICH training consists mostly of short-term, temporary courses, lacking long-term practice venues and on-the-job guidance. This makes it difficult for trainees to deeply master the essence of complex techniques, with a lack of systematicness and continuity. Take the Yao weaving and embroidery training courses as an example: over the past three years, Jinxiu County has held an average of over 50 such courses annually, with 4, 000+ participants per year. However, over the years, the county has only trained more than 1, 000 professional embroiderers. Due to imperfect mechanisms, some trainees lack pathways to convert their skills into economic benefits after training, and most abandon employment, leading to the gradual loss of these techniques. Vocational education in schools tends to emphasize theory over practice, with low compatibility between curriculum content and ICH industry job requirements. Graduates struggle to integrate into ICH enterprises or workshops, leaving talent training in a deadlock -- learning without application, applying without foundation, which severely restricts the growth of Jinxiu County's ICH industry.

4.3 Market Expansion Difficulties

4.3.1 Weak Brand Marketing

the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) brands in Jinxiu County have low visibility in market competition and struggle to stand out. From the demand perspective, the promotion methods for ICH products are relatively simplistic, relying mainly on traditional offline exhibitions, festival event performances, and other means. There is a lack of systematic and sustained online-offline integrated marketing, failing to fully leverage new media channels such as social media and short-video platforms for comprehensive dissemination. This results in limited awareness of these products in national and even global cultural consumption markets. [3] From the supply perspective, the branding and product innovation of ICH products lack guidance from professional marketing concepts. ICH product design fails to precisely align with modern consumption trends and aesthetic preferences, and brand images suffer from severe homogenization. the inability to tap into unique selling points hinders brand premium formation and market expansion, weakening the market competitiveness of the ICH economy.

4.3.2. Restricted Sales Channels

Currently, the sales of ICH products in Jinxiu County mainly rely on cultural exhibitions, folk tourism festival fairs, and physical stores in scenic areas or ICH workshops. These channels have narrow coverage and unstable customer flow, easily constrained by factors such as geography, seasonality, and festivals. Some ICH inheritors and workshops have started online sales, but their operational capabilities are weak. Lacking professional e-commerce teams, their online store pages are crudely designed, making it difficult to effectively showcase the cultural connotations and craft values of ICH products. They also lack advanced online marketing skills and underutilize search engine optimization (SEO) techniques, failing to reach target customers accurately. Additionally, due to Jinxiu County's mountainous terrain, poor basic road transportation conditions lead to high logistics costs and low delivery efficiency. the underdeveloped after-sales service system for online sales negatively impacts the consumer experience and restricts the growth of online sales for ICH products.

5. Optimization Strategies for Jinxiu's ICH Economy in Rural Revitalization

5.1 Strengthening Policy Support and Funding

5.1.1 Increase government funding investment and support efforts

The government assumes a leading role in industrial layout. For the Jinxiu County Government, there is significant potential to act in the inheritance, innovation, and promotion of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) projects. It is recommended that the government establish a special fund for ICH projects to provide dedicated financial support, which may include subsidizing ICH artisans to motivate their enthusiasm for inheritance, funding ICH product innovation, and expanding ICH projects' participation in trade fairs. Meanwhile, the government should collaborate with financial institutions to establish a special fund for loan interest subsidies for ICH projects, aiming to alleviate capital flow pressures for ICH enterprises, activate endogenous driving forces for industry development, and enable government funds to serve as a solid foundation for the robust development of the ICH economy. A certain proportion of interest subsidies should

be provided for loans related to ICH technique research and development (R&D), equipment procurement, venue expansion, etc., with the interest subsidy period extended to three years.

5.1.2 Attracting Social Capital to Participate in ICH Projects

The participation of social capital can inject vitality into the development of the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) economy. For the government, first, it can introduce tax incentive policies and land lease subsidy policies for enterprises investing in the ICH industry to reduce their tax burdens and land rent costs. Second, it can establish an official industrial investment matching platform, regularly hold investment promotion conferences for ICH projects, and build a resource database for ICH projects open to the national and even global markets, striving to facilitate cooperation between ICH projects and social capital.

5.2 Enhancing Talent Cultivation and Inheritance Systems

5.2.1 Incentivizing Young People to Inherit ICH Techniques

Governments and enterprises should jointly establish an ICH inheritance incentive fund to annually commend and reward young groups that adhere to inheriting and innovatively developing intangible cultural heritage (ICH), thereby stimulating young people's enthusiasm for inheritance. In terms of schools, learning ICH techniques should be integrated into the comprehensive quality evaluation system, with preferential treatment in student evaluation and college entrance to encourage adolescents to engage in ICH and master its techniques proficiently. Additionally, to showcase the younger generation's commitment to preserving cultural heritage, media platforms should be leveraged to publicize the inspirational stories of ICH inheritors. Through honor-based incentives and role-model guidance, the "ICH Youth Elegance" campaign can be held to reverse the talent gap and ensure the sustainable development of the ICH economy. This campaign will select new generations of ICH inheritors, cultivating them as representatives among young people and making ICH a highlight of youth engagement.

5.2.2. Improving the ICH Talent Training Mechanism

First, for ICH practitioners with a certain foundation, educational departments may pilot

programs to integrate skill training with academic education. These practitioners will be guided to participate in county-level or above ICH training and assessments. Upon passing, training courses can replace part of the practical curricula in vocational colleges, granting them academic certification from vocational colleges. This enhances practitioners' cultural literacy and academic qualifications, providing intellectual support for ICH economic development. Second, vocational colleges should set up majors precisely according to the market demands of the ICH industry, offering targeted training for ICH professionals. Meanwhile, colleges should collaborate with ICH inheritors to develop teaching materials that meet industry job requirements, add practical ICH courses, and utilize ICH workshops as internship sites for students. Through work-study alternation, this approach cultivates outstanding ICH talent.

5.3 Innovating Brand Marketing and Market Expansion Strategies

5.3.1. Building Characteristic ICH Brands in Jinxiu County

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) products embody rich cultural connotations and reflect the historical origins of their place of origin. With its diverse ICH resources, Jinxiu County urgently needs to tap into the deep cultural meanings of ICH products and shape unique, charming brand images for its ICH offerings. First, Jinxiu should renew its existing ICH products. Take Yao embroidery as an example: while it records the migration, beliefs, and aesthetic evolution of the Yao people, telling the Yao story as a product must also keep pace with the times. The Jinxiu government should officially invite cultural experts, folklore scholars, and designers to collaborate in deeply analyzing the stories behind Yao embroidery patterns, colors, and styles, extracting core cultural elements to integrate into products, so they retain historical charm while aligning with modern aesthetics. Second, it is advocated that all ICH products in Jinxiu design exclusive brand logos by artisticizing symbolic motifs such as the outline of the Huangni drum and Yao brocade textures, forming highly recognizable visual imprints for widespread use in product packaging, store signage, promotional posters, etc. Third, expand product categories: beyond traditional clothing, accessories, and crafts, experiment with designing cultural and creative

products and digital products. Integrate ICH products with modern digital technologies—develop interactive APPs using AR/VR technologies to enable creative experiences of ICH products, catering to the digital consumption preferences of young groups and comprehensively enhancing the visibility and reputation of Jinxiu's ICH brands. Fourth, establish a professional operations team to launch brand official accounts, regularly publish posts, or shoot video series. Use new media platforms to tell the brand stories of ICH products, share creative inspirations and processes of ICH techniques, and showcase the inheritance, perseverance, and innovative journey of ICH inheritors, narrowing the emotional distance between inheritors and consumers through emotional bonds.

5.3.2. Expanding Diverse Sales Channels

Currently, it is imperative for Jinxiu's ICH products to embrace e-commerce. It is recommended to join mainstream e-commerce platforms such as Taobao, JD.com, and Douyin Shop, creating official flagship stores with refined optimization of store pages. Display the production processes and cultural heritage of ICH products through high-definition images and vivid videos; when introducing medicinal products, detail the inheritance of ancient recipes for herb picking and processing, enriching product details with historical origins, inheritors' stories, and usage scenarios.

Live-streaming commerce has become a powerful tool for ICH marketing. Invite influencers and ICH inheritors to collaborate: the former attracts audiences through traffic, while the latter addresses professional queries. During regular livestreams, influencers can demonstrate embroidery styling and matching skills, while inheritors explain needlework techniques and creative concepts on-site to stimulate purchasing desire. Publish product catalogs, buyer showcases, and creative short videos, leveraging social sharing to guide user dissemination and expand customer bases through social platforms like WeChat, Weibo, and Xiaohongshu.

Strengthen collaboration with travel agencies and scenic areas to develop ICH-themed tourism souvenirs, integrating small Yao embroidery pendants, portable Yao medicine sachets, etc., allowing tourists to carry cultural memories while sightseeing. Set up special ICH exhibition and sales zones in scenic areas and host on-site

production experiences—for example, inviting visitors to participate in Huangni drum painting at Shengtang Mountain Scenic Area—to boost on-site consumption through hands-on experiences.

Actively organize ICH enterprises and inheritors to participate in domestic and international cultural industry exhibitions and tourism expos, such as the China International Cultural Industry Expo and ASEAN Tourism Exhibition. Create exquisite booths to demonstrate techniques and sell products, establishing partnerships with domestic and foreign purchasers and distributors to expand overseas markets, enabling Jinxiu's ICH to emerge from the mountains and embark on a new journey of global market expansion.

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