

# A probe into the commercial value of the non-heritage project of small dragon performing

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**Abstract:** *The cultural impact of modern society has gradually reduced the vitality of some traditional non-heritage cultures in China. Although many non-heritage cultures have been protected in recent years, non-heritage cultures with low popularity, such as the Small Dragon Performing, still need to maintain their development and inheritance through new promotional methods. This paper takes the Small Dragon Performing as an example, focuses on the innovative inheritance and commercial promotion of the less well-known non-heritage cultures, explores the historical and cultural background of the Small Dragon Performing, conducts social research from qualitative and quantitative perspectives, analyses the problems in the process of promotion from the public's point of view, and provides feasible solutions to this end.*

**Keywords:** *Small Dragon Performing, non-heritage culture, Innovative heritage, Commercialized Promotion*

## 1. Introduction

The dragon is the totem of the Chinese nation and a symbol of the millennia-old heritage of Chinese culture. Dragon dance performance is one of the important manifestations of Chinese dragon culture. As early as the Han Dynasty, there were detailed records of dragon dance in "Chunqiu Fanlu" written by Dong Zhongshu. People in different regions created dragon dance performances with distinctive features based on their own living environment and interactions with the outside world. Jiangjin District of Chongqing Municipality is a cultural center in the eastern part of Sichuan and Chongqing. The representative project of intangible cultural heritage in Chongqing Municipality, "Xiaocailong Dance," was born here[1].

In 1946, Luo Rongguang, a dragon dancer from Longchang County, met dragon dancers from Jiangjin during leisure time and often exchanged skills with them. Through continuous adjustment and communication, the dragon head of the dragon dance was enlarged from the original 12 centimeters to 50 centimeters, and the length of the dragon robe increased from the original 3 meters to 6 meters, with a width from the original 20 centimeters to 25 centimeters. Thus, the "Xiaocailong" of Jiangjin took shape. Its biggest feature lies in its small size. It is often performed by three people, but can also be performed by two or one person, with typical regional representativeness and diverse and lively forms, making it highly popular in folk performances. "Xiaocailong Dance" is active among the people. With its small and flexible characteristics, it adapts to various occasions and seasons. Its small and tumbling flexible performances often receive warm applause from the public[2].

As a performance form with a long history and cultural connotations, Xiaocailong Dance has significant social significance. When traditional cultures such as Xiaocailong Dance reappear in front of the public, the spiritual totem and beliefs of the Chinese nation take on tangible forms, driving the revival of more traditional intangible cultural heritages and rejuvenating in the new era, enhancing cultural confidence.

Intangible cultural heritage such as Jiangjin Xiaocailong Dance is not only an expression of visual

arts, but often contains rich historical, philosophical, and sociological knowledge[3]. By studying these cultural heritages, we can gain education and inspiration, understand traditional values, and ways of life. They allow us to review the wisdom of our ancestors, understand the historical context, and strengthen our identification with our cultural roots. For the new generation, intangible cultural heritage education is an important process for understanding and respecting their own culture[4].

## **2. Preliminary Research**

### **2.1 Research Questions and Subjects of Investigation**

#### **2.1.1 Research Questions**

The focus of our research is on the inheritance and innovative development of Xiaocailong Dance. In order to better promote the inheritance and development of this intangible cultural heritage of Shancheng Xiaocailong Dance, we conducted targeted interviews based on the effectiveness of the social research questionnaire we prepared.

#### **2.1.2 Subjects of Investigation**

The interview subjects mostly come from Chongqing Municipality, with the majority falling between the ages of 17 and 44. Our focus is primarily on young people from across China, enabling us to more effectively analyze whether the promotion of Xiaocailong Dance is widely accepted among the general public and the younger generation nationwide, and whether it can be successfully implemented.

### **2.2 Quantitative Research Question Design and Analysis Discussion**

In the preliminary quantitative research questionnaire, we included questions regarding participants' level of familiarity with Xiaocailong Dance and their willingness to learn more about it, leading to the following conclusions.

#### **2.2.1 Have you ever heard or seen Xiaocailong Dance through any means?**

Based on the data obtained from the question "Have you ever heard or seen Xiaocailong Dance through any means?" in the survey, only 35.8% of respondents answered affirmatively, while 64.12% answered negatively. From this, it can be concluded that Xiaocailong Dance, as an intangible cultural heritage, is known to only a minority of people. This indicates insufficient promotion and publicity for Xiaocailong Dance, highlighting the necessity for research and commercial development efforts in this area.

In the data regarding the question "Do you understand the historical origin and cultural characteristics of dragon dance?" it can be inferred that only 25% of respondents have knowledge about this issue, while the majority, accounting for seventy percent of the total population, do not. This indicates that beyond merely hearing or seeing Xiaocailong Dance, there is a significant lack of promotion and dissemination of its cultural background. Understanding the historical context and cultural significance is crucial for the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, focusing on how to convey the spiritual essence of Xiaocailong Dance through dragon dance, as a form of expression, should be the focal point of its commercial promotion efforts.

#### **2.2.2 Are you willing to learn more about Xiaocailong Dance?**

When asked 'Are you willing to learn more about Xiaocailong Dance?' 85% of respondents indicated 'Yes'." This suggests that perhaps it is driven by a desire for new experiences, coupled with the current trend of promoting intangible cultural heritage, leading people to naturally hold an optimistic and accepting attitude towards it.

#### **2.2.3 How would you prefer to learn more about Xiaocailong Dance?**

Respondents indicated a 70.14% willingness to learn about Xiaocailong Dance through live performances and social media platforms. Additionally, it is apparent that the promotion channels for Xiaocailong Dance are limited, with social media and the inherent charm of Xiaocailong Dance being the primary avenues for promotion.

Drawing from this data, we plan to implement the following innovative approaches:

Organizing promotional events such as lectures or experiential sessions to promote Xiaocailong

Dance on-site.

Establishing a public WeChat account for knowledge sharing and explanations to promote Xiaocailong Dance.

#### ***2.2.4 Which element of Xiaocailong Dance would be more appealing to you?***

With all aspects including visuals, style, and music showing high attraction to people, it is evident that Xiaocailong Dance, as a unique traditional cultural style, is readily accepted by modern audiences. Moreover, these three elements are integral components of Xiaocailong Dance, indicating its distinctive charm. It remains popular and embraced by people in contemporary society, underscoring key areas for our promotional efforts.

#### ***2.2.5 Xiaocailong Dance has numerous points of convergence with modern culture.***

Most of the survey participants agreed with this, demonstrating promising prospects for the commercial promotion of Xiaocailong Dance. This indicates that the vast majority of people hold an optimistic and inclusive attitude towards the development of Xiaocailong Dance and the integration of intangible cultural heritage with modern culture.

#### ***2.2.6 In what form are you willing to support the commercial promotion of Xiaocailong Dance?***

According to our data, more than 80% of people are willing to watch Xiaocailong Dance live, indicating that the appeal of Xiaocailong Dance is recognized even today.

Over 40% of participants are willing to purchase merchandise, and some are also willing to donate to Xiaocailong Dance. This indicates that the majority of people are genuinely concerned about the cultural inheritance and innovation of Xiaocailong Dance and are willing to contribute to its progress, highlighting its promising prospects.

### ***2.3 Analysis and Discussion of Qualitative Research Results***

Over half of the respondents agree that commercial promotion can influence the popularity of Xiaocailong Dance, with nearly 40% strongly agreeing and less than 10% expressing opposition. This indicates that for the majority of people, commercialization is viewed as a reliable means to drive the resurgence of intangible cultural heritage, aligning with current societal trends. While agreement with combining it with trendy clothing exceeds half. Conversely, the number of respondents in favor of collaborations with celebrities or internet celebrities, as well as other forms of integration, is relatively small. This suggests that combining Xiaocailong Dance with modern dance and trendy clothing, reflecting a composite trend, is more widely accepted by the public.

When talk about the balance between modern culture and traditional culture, nearly 90% of respondents believe that intangible cultural heritage should be preserved, with only a small minority advocating for the preservation of modern culture. This underscores the belief held by the majority that traditional culture holds an unshakeable position and is more important compared to modern cultural trends.

More than half are unwilling due to other reasons, ultimately stemming from a lack of initiative among modern people to explore intangible cultural heritage, especially for relatively obscure forms like Xiaocailong Dance.

26% respondents believe that combining trendy clothing can spark interest, 30% respondents believe that combining modern dance can do so, 20% respondents support collaborations with celebrities or internet celebrities, and 40% respondents believe other methods can pique their interest. However, 20% respondents are unwilling to learn under any circumstances. This suggests that the majority believe that various types of promotion can generate interest in Xiaocailong Dance, affirming the feasibility of promoting Xiaocailong Dance through modern means.

### ***2.4 Qualitative Interview Conclusions***

To provide a reasoned analysis of the data, on December 26th, we interviewed Mr. Zhong Jie, the curator of the Cultural Center in Jiangjin District, Chongqing. Mr. Zhong is also one of the official inheritors of Xiaocailong Dance. Through this interview, we aimed to gain a better understanding of the views of intangible cultural heritage inheritors regarding the challenges of dissemination, low visibility, and succession issues. Additionally, we sought to further understand the characteristics of Xiaocailong

Dance from the performers themselves, aiming to find more suitable and effective methods for innovation and promotion.

Question 1: When and under what circumstances did you decide to become an inheritor of Xiaocailong Dance?

As a cultural worker who loves traditional culture, I wanted to pass down Chinese traditional culture better through my own skills.

Question 2: What attracted you to Xiaocailong Dance at that time?

Xiaocailong Dance is a typical representative of folk Xiaolong in the western part of Chongqing. It is a traditional folk dance active in festival activities. Often performed by three people, or can be performed by two or one person, it has typical regional characteristics and diverse forms. It not only inherits excellent traditional Chinese culture but also has superb skills and exquisite interpretation, which deeply attracted me.

Question 3: Was the inheritance process difficult? What made you persevere and willing to inherit Xiaocailong Dance?

The protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage are arduous tasks. As a crystallization of the wisdom of all ethnic groups, protecting and inheriting intangible cultural heritage is conducive to the condensation and continuation of the national spirit, and has immeasurable significance and role in realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Question 4: What do you think is the main challenge facing the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage?

Chinese civilization continues our country and nation's spiritual bloodline, which requires both passing on the torch from generation to generation and advancing with the times, innovating and rejuvenating. In the context of the new era, how can intangible cultural heritage survive and develop? This is a universal issue. First, it discusses how to enter the audience among the citizens so that the people can see, hear, and feel. Second, it discusses how to change technology through reasonable transformation, make industrial development through certain adjustments, and integrate into modern life. Third, it invites cooperating units such as museums, enterprises, schools, etc., to participate together, with diverse perspectives, and do a good job in industrial integration and ride the wave of development.

Question 5: What measures have been taken? What is the effect of promoting Xiaocailong Dance? Has its popularity increased?

Empower artistic dissemination with new media. Participate in the shooting of short videos with themes such as the municipal-level intangible cultural heritage representative projects "Xiaocailong Dance," "Shima Variety Show," and "Baisha Acrobatics." These videos were selected for two consecutive years from 2021 to 2022 as part of the "Celebrating the Chinese New Year with Intangible Cultural Heritage, Bringing Culture to Every Household" live streaming event organized by the National Ministry of Culture and Tourism, with a Weibo topic reading volume exceeding 200 million and discussion volume reaching 100,000.

Question 6: When taking measures and promoting, what are the key points?

First, the scope of promotion should be wide, providing diversified intangible cultural heritage inheritance activities and cultural services to the public, allowing more people to understand, pay attention to, and inherit intangible cultural heritage, forming a good social atmosphere for intangible cultural heritage protection. Second, use new media and combine online and offline methods to expand the channels of intangible cultural heritage promotion. Third, choose forms of display that are popular among the people, such as creating high-quality cultural programs, allowing intangible cultural heritage projects to be presented and disseminated in a stage performance format that is closer to real life.

Question 7: Nowadays, with the rapid changes in youth trend culture, what needs to be done to keep Xiaocailong Dance vibrant in the new era?

First, inheritance and promotion. We should be good at organically combining the promotion of excellent traditional culture with the new era, developing in the process of inheritance, and inheriting in the process of development, striving to achieve innovative development and creative transformation of traditional culture. Second, create new cultural trends. While emphasizing the inheritance of traditional culture, we should enhance cultural confidence, maintain national characteristics, give full play to the advantages of traditional culture, achieve a combination of ancient and modern, and create new trends in

contemporary culture.

### **3. Problem Analysis of Xiaocailong Dance**

#### ***3.1 Insufficient Promotion Efforts***

Xiaocailong Dance is only disseminated within the Sichuan-Chongqing region, lacking widespread dissemination channels such as social media platforms [5]. This prevents many people from understanding its cultural existence and value. There may be deficiencies in the promotion of intangible cultural heritage by government and social organizations. Without sufficient attention, it is difficult for the general public to understand the existence and value of such intangible cultural heritage.

#### ***3.2 Limited Public Awareness***

Due to limited awareness of intangible cultural heritage among many people, they are not clear about the specific content and value of intangible cultural heritage. Additionally, with the spread and development of modern culture, people's values are influenced by mass internet culture, making it difficult for them to psychologically identify with the core of intangible traditional culture, leading to a lack of resonance. Moreover, due to the lack of effective measures and channels, there are not many people willing to understand intangible cultural heritage like Xiaocailong Dance, ultimately resulting in limited public awareness of Xiaocailong Dance.

#### ***3.3 Low Visibility***

Fundamentally, Xiaocailong Dance is not as famous as Jingdezhen ceramic craftsmanship or Chuanjiang folk songs, which are already well-known intangible cultural heritage. Xiaocailong Dance originated in districts and counties and has not been widely popularized and promoted. It has not received effective television or newspaper promotion in the traditional media era and lacks promotion in the current internet era. Factors such as insufficient promotion efforts, low momentum, and limited promotion channels contribute to its low visibility, becoming a significant obstacle to its large-scale commercial promotion [6].

#### ***3.4 Lack of Inheritance and Protection***

There is a serious lack of continuity among inheritors, with traditional skills of Xiaocailong Dance being mastered by the older generation of inheritors. The younger generation lacks interest and understanding of these memories, resulting in a phenomenon of inheritor discontinuity. Additionally, legal regulations and protection mechanisms are imperfect, as current laws and regulations concerning intangible cultural heritage are inadequate. Many intangible cultural heritage projects lack legal protection, making them susceptible to damage and loss.

#### ***3.5 Lack of Funding***

The government's investment in the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage is relatively low, with no stable financial support provided for intangible heritage projects. This is especially true for lesser-known intangible cultural heritage like Xiaocailong Dance, making it difficult for these projects to obtain economic security. Many inheritors cannot sustain their livelihoods, leading to the abandonment of inheritance. Furthermore, the economic value of intangible heritage projects in the market is not fully realized, as the market mechanism fails to provide effective financial support for heritage inheritance. For example, sales channels for heritage products are limited, and the consumer base is small, making it difficult for heritage projects to generate economic benefits.

### **4. Innovation Solutions**

Social media plays a crucial role in disseminating information and culture. In order to more effectively promote Xiaocailong Dance and raise awareness about the importance of intangible cultural heritage, we propose the following innovative promotion solutions combining TikTok and WeChat official accounts.

#### ***4.1 TikTok Promotion Plan***

Short Video Production: TikTok, as the largest short video social platform in China, influences the values and lifestyles of countless people and brings unprecedented traffic. We will produce a series of short videos showcasing the unique charm of Xiaocailong Dance. Since the textual content of short videos is limited, we will also create some introduction or catchy videos about Xiaocailong Dance to attract audience attention within a short time [7]. TikTok is highly interactive and convenient, allowing us to gauge the popularity of content through likes and receive feedback and suggestions from users in the comments section and direct messages.

Advertisement Placement: Based on user interests and behavioral data, we will place advertisements for Xiaocailong Dance among relevant user groups to increase exposure.

#### ***4.2 WeChat Official Account Promotion Plan***

Unlike short videos, WeChat official accounts can contain more content and deeper articles, providing a platform to introduce the historical background, cultural connotations, and performance features of Xiaocailong Dance in a more intuitive manner. We can also incorporate hot topics to attract more readers' attention. Since official accounts are less likely to receive feedback or comments from users due to being diverted, feedback will primarily come from browsing data. We will improve our content based on the browsing volume when traffic is low.

#### ***4.3 Fusion of Xiaocailong Dance and Modern Dance Promotion Plan***

The fusion of Xiaocailong Dance with modern dance is inspired by many examples of lesser-known intangible heritage instruments combined with modern popular songs. We believe that by combining traditional and modern elements, we can create more innovation and help people better remember the profound impact of intangible cultural heritage. Modern dance features diverse movements and expressive techniques, free from the constraints of traditional dance norms, resulting in a unique form of expression.

### **5. Results Analysis**

#### ***5.1 TikTok Promotion Plan Results and Analysis***

Through the dissemination of TikTok videos, more people have come to know about Xiaocailong Dance, which was previously only known by people in the Sichuan-Chongqing region. The use of music has attracted the interest of many young people [8]. Additionally, TikTok's large user base allows us to clearly understand user feedback.

#### ***5.2 WeChat Official Account Promotion Plan Results and Analysis***

Through the official account, we can tell more stories about the background and culture, targeting middle-aged and elderly users who predominantly use WeChat. We will improve our articles based on user browsing data.

#### ***5.3 Fusion of Xiaocailong Dance and Modern Dance Promotion Plan Results and Analysis***

The fusion of Xiaocailong Dance with modern dance has enriched the performance content and helped inherit and promote traditional culture. It has also promoted the development and progress of dance art by injecting new inspiration and creativity.

### **6. Conclusion**

To ensure the sustainability of the project, we will continue to innovate our promotion strategies, including conducting live broadcasts of Xiaocailong Dance rehearsals in Jiangjin, the birthplace of Xiaocailong Dance. Our target audience for the live broadcast is over 1000 people. If the live broadcast is successful, we will expand our influence and continue operating platforms such as TikTok, WeChat official accounts, and Weibo to promote not only Xiaocailong Dance but also other lesser-known

intangible cultural heritage, contributing to the inheritance of Chinese intangible cultural heritage.

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