

# *Cultural Inheritance and Innovation: A New Mechanism for Cooperation between "Intangible Cultural Heritage" and Fashion Design Platform from the Perspective of Co-Creation*

Tian Lan<sup>1,2,a</sup>, Yujia Han<sup>3,b,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Art and Design, Changchun University of Technology, Changchun, Jilin, China

<sup>2</sup>College of Management, Taiwang Shih Chien University, Changchun, Jilin, China

<sup>3</sup>School of Social Welfare, Changchun Humanities and Sciences College, Changchun, Jilin, 130117, China

<sup>a</sup>16617636@qq.com, <sup>b</sup>182400394@qq.com

\*Corresponding author

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**Abstract:** As modern fashion continues to internationalize, the decline of traditional "intangible cultural heritage" (ICH) starkly contrasts with the diversification of fashion. This study explores modern development methods that integrate traditional ICH with fashion, aiming to create platforms that promote ICH's reentry into the market. The reasons for the decline of ICH are analyzed, and the challenges encountered are addressed through the innovative ideas of fashion designers. A new cooperative mechanism of maintaining integrity while innovating is formed. In response to policies and considering practical issues, the platform facilitates the interaction and matching between ICH and fashion designers, solving market development problems collaboratively. The current state and needs of ICH are revealed, reminding us to adopt a proactive approach to seek solutions and changes for sustainable development. This ensures that ICH can adapt to the times, continue to be passed down, and enhance cultural confidence.

## 1. Introduction

In August 2021, the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council issued the *Opinions on Further Strengthening the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage*. This document emphasizes the importance of protecting, inheriting, and utilizing intangible cultural heritage, advocating for its creative transformation and innovative development, and improving the protection and inheritance system of intangible cultural heritage<sup>[1]</sup>. Similarly, the report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in October 2022 highlighted the need to promote cultural confidence and strength on the new journey, and to stimulate the cultural innovation consciousness and creative vitality of the entire nation.

Integrating traditional craftsmanship with modern art can yield new achievements. The

promulgation of protection plans and requirements further promotes the innovation of traditional ICH and other crafts. Hofman believes that the government and public sectors play an important role by issuing relevant measures and managing corresponding affairs, thereby promoting market development and maintaining market balance <sup>[2]</sup>. Similarly, Liebl and Roy argue that the application of traditional craftsmanship techniques in fashion product design can enable traditional crafts to adapt to the diverse and changing demands of the modern market <sup>[3]</sup>. However, Chinese traditional ICH craftsmen, having accomplished the task of "maintaining integrity," are uncertain about how to innovate and capture the market and consumers' attention, which has become a pressing issue <sup>[4]</sup>. The relevant regulations to promote the protection and transmission of "intangible cultural heritage" is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: China has implemented corresponding policies and regulations to promote the protection and inheritance of "intangible cultural heritage" (ICH)

Policies and Regulations	Date of Issuance	Key Requirements
<i>Opinions on Strengthening the Protection of China's Intangible Cultural Heritage</i>	March 26, 2005	Launch nationwide protection work for intangible cultural heritage.
<i>Notice on Strengthening Cultural Heritage Protection</i>	December 22, 2005	Actively promote the protection of intangible cultural heritage, establish the "ICH" list system, and strengthen the protection of ethnic minority "ICH" cultures.
Intangible Cultural Heritage Law of the People's Republic of China	February 25, 2011	Formulate specific legal provisions to promote the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation and strengthen the protection and preservation of "ICH".
14th Five-Year Plan for Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection	May 25, 2021	Improve the protection level of "ICH," enhance the dissemination and popularization of "ICH," scientifically protect it, adhere to the principles of maintaining integrity and innovation, and enrich the forms of protection.
Opinions on Further Strengthening the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage	August 12, 2021	Improve the "ICH" protection and inheritance system, ensure that representative "ICH" projects receive effective protection within the target timeframe, and enhance the public's sense of participation and recognition in "ICH" protection.

Young designers interested in traditional crafts are actively attempting to integrate traditional craftsmanship into their designs, continuously elevating Chinese design to new heights <sup>[5]</sup>. However, due to the marginalization of traditional ICH craftsmen, many designers know very little about genuine traditional craftsmanship and can only achieve superficial resemblance. Fashion designers face the challenge of systematically understanding traditional ICH craftsmanship, which could potentially save crafts facing market loss or lack of successors. Therefore, this study explores how these two groups can quickly understand and establish connections, constructing a cooperative mechanism between fashion and traditional ICH crafts. This mechanism of value co-creation not only benefits both parties but also better preserves and inherits traditional ICH crafts <sup>[6]</sup>. By utilizing value co-creation theory, the study investigates the potential development of new cooperative mechanisms within the framework of maintaining integrity and innovation. This collaboration opens up new markets and provides feasible new ideas for the modern development of traditional ICH <sup>[7]</sup>.

## 2. New Innovations Between ICH and Designers

Table 2: Data Analysis Sheet for Dialogue with ICH and Fashion Designers

Visitor	Profession	Address	Co-Creation Experience or Needs	Visit Duration
Zhang Turan	Fashion Designer (Founder of Three Inches of Shengjing)	Shenyang	Founder of the brand Three Inches of Shengjing, dedicated to promoting traditional culture and skillfully using embroidery. Combines traditional stories to create trends, participated in New York Fashion Week in 2019. In 2022, he delved into Yunnan to incorporate ICH techniques such as handmade weaving and tea dyeing into new product development. Hopes to learn more about integrating ICH crafts with fashion in future designs.	2 hours
An Ning	ICH Inheritor (Suzhou Embroidery)	Tianjin	An Ning, an inheritor of Suzhou embroidery, notes that embroidery is time-consuming and tends to be more of an art piece in the fast-paced modern life. However, as purely an art piece, it loses many market opportunities. Therefore, she prefers to find suitable collaborative designers through cooperative projects to continuously enhance the recognition of Suzhou embroidery.	1 hour
Wen Qianlin	ICH Inheritor (Wuqiang New Year Paintings)	Beijing	Wen Qianlin, an inheritor of Wuqiang New Year paintings, faces internal issues of inheritance gaps and external market demand crises. If Wuqiang New Year paintings do not actively seek change, they will disappear from the public eye. Hopes for a platform to preserve the woodblock printing skills of Wuqiang New Year paintings and provide projects for collaboration with designers, whether for cultural and creative products or clothing, to open a path for innovation.	1.5 hours
Li Wei	Fashion Designer (Founder of Awaylee)	Beijing	Founder of the Awaylee clothing brand, constantly exploring the possibilities of ICH in textiles. From "Li Brocade" to "plant dyeing," she has been researching innovative applications of ICH for decades. She has collaborated multiple times with Huang Ronghua, an inheritor of plant dyeing, evolving from simple dyeing to painting with plant dyes. Their work has received unanimous praise within and outside the industry and has been featured in many fashion weeks and major exhibitions.	35 minutes
Huang Ronghua	ICH Inheritor (Plant Dyeing)	Beijing	Huang Ronghua, an inheritor of plant dyeing, continuously integrates plant dyeing with other products. Collaborates with designer Li Wei on design creations. Additionally, by participating in markets, he actively showcases the innovative development of plant dyeing with items such as furniture lampshades, coasters, and tea mats, garnering many orders and collaboration invitations.	2 hours
Zhong Xueping	ICH Inheritor (Qipao and Pan Buckles)	Changsha	Zhong Xueping, a traditional qipao and pan buckle inheritor, closely follows current fashion trends and modernizes traditional pan buckle designs to make them more flexible and adaptable to various garments. She also hopes to collaborate uniquely with designer Zhang Turan and wishes to connect through relevant platforms.	45 min

Data from conversations with ICH and fashion designers is shown in Table 2. To facilitate collaborative creation between inheritors of ICH and fashion designers, it is necessary for both parties to exchange information and engage in a continuous interactive process. This process of transmission and reception is crucial for achieving effective communication between both sides [8]. Saari, Järvi, Kannan, and Kuusela have proposed that each category of value, co-creation, and other aspects are independent variables. Through a platform, different projects and processes can interact with participants to present different value creations [9]. Alstyne suggested the creation of connections, linking stakeholders' issues, and utilizing the integration of resources from all parties through platform interactions to generate new value [10]. Integrating issues and resources with platform interactions and effectively using resources to innovate solutions is a well-known approach to achieving value co-creation [11].

The key questions this research aims to answer include how inheritors of ICH and fashion designers can establish collaborative relationships, how they can achieve co-creation by integrating resources through platform establishment, and how the interaction process can leverage the innovative capabilities of fashion designers to promote the modernization of traditional ICH crafts. The goal is to combine ICH craft culture with modern trends, revitalizing traditional innovations within contemporary life. To summarize, this research synthesizes existing literature on co-creation theories and processes, analyzing specific issues faced by ICH inheritors and fashion designers to develop practical methods for co-creation and interaction. Finally, using co-creation theory, this study will explore the process and essence of a new collaborative mechanism for ICH inheritors and fashion designers, aiming to achieve innovative preservation and to address the questions posed in the research.

### **3. Co-Creation Platform: Establishing Connections between ICH and Fashion**

#### **3.1 Digital Archives**

The ICH and Fashion Co-Creation Platform serves as a bridge for communication and collaboration between inheritors and designers. By establishing a digital archive upon joining the platform, the needs and strengths of both parties can be understood. This allows the platform to recommend suitable partners based on the requirements of both sides. The platform's detailed categorization by craft type and the location of inheritors or designers forms a matrix that efficiently matches potential collaborators and provides visitors with a clear regional division to quickly browse crafts of interest.

Inheritors and designers can use the platform to create opportunities for understanding and communication, fostering the initial stages of co-creation through in-depth interactions. Additionally, for each craft entered into the platform, a digital archive is created and managed privately. Digital imaging technology records and backs up traditional craft processes, while complex and fragile crafts can be replicated and displayed using 3D printing technology.

#### **3.2 Co-Creation and Shared Prosperity**

Project collaborations open up new avenues for co-creation, providing an open space for crafts in need of innovative revitalization, especially those hindered by geographical constraints. For instance, consider a potential collaboration between Wuqiang New Year paintings and fashion design. The development crisis of Wuqiang New Year paintings is due not only to the decline of traditional customs but also to the stagnation in design innovation. Traditionally printed on paper, innovation would require experimenting with printing on fabrics or other materials. The proposed solution in this research involves fashion designers using their design skills to modernize traditional

New Year painting patterns. Inheritors of Wuqiang New Year paintings would then complete the carving. Both parties would collaboratively select fabrics, test prints, and make adjustments. The newly produced fabrics could be further developed into garments or cultural products through collaboration with other designers. These products could then be sold both online and offline, creating an internal network of stakeholders to achieve value co-creation. This collaboration would enhance each party's commercial value and revenue, resulting in a win-win situation (Figure 1).

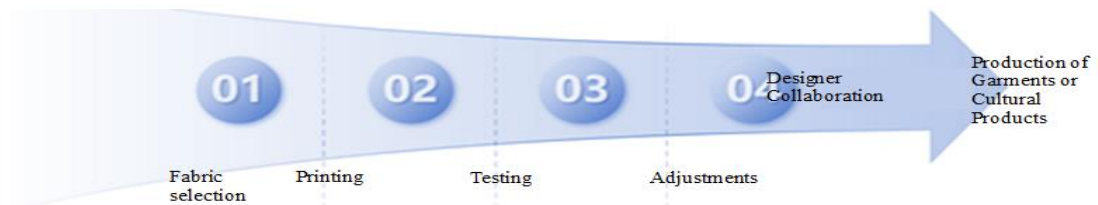


Figure 1: Wuqiang Year Paintings Inheritor's Creation

### 3.3 Dual Approach

Through the platform, both online and offline activities can be promoted simultaneously to enhance public understanding of traditional crafts. Offline courses and experiential weeks can be organized to raise the visibility of ICH in various regions. Under the management and support of the platform, a comprehensive ICH cultural experience industry system can be developed. This system would boost local tourism, stimulate the craft market, and drive the development of the traditional ICH market.

Additionally, regular synchronized online and offline events can be held. Participants who are geographically restricted can access online exhibitions via the platform's virtual gallery, allowing them to visit exhibitions anytime, anywhere. In the future, AR or VR technology could be integrated, enabling virtual interactive cultural experiences from home. People could engage in various projects and interactive teaching activities through motion-sensing games. Moreover, the platform could collaborate with schools to introduce traditional ICH and modern fashion culture into the classroom. This would help students understand tradition, develop aesthetic awareness, and form a clear perception of ICH and design beyond theoretical knowledge (Figure 2).

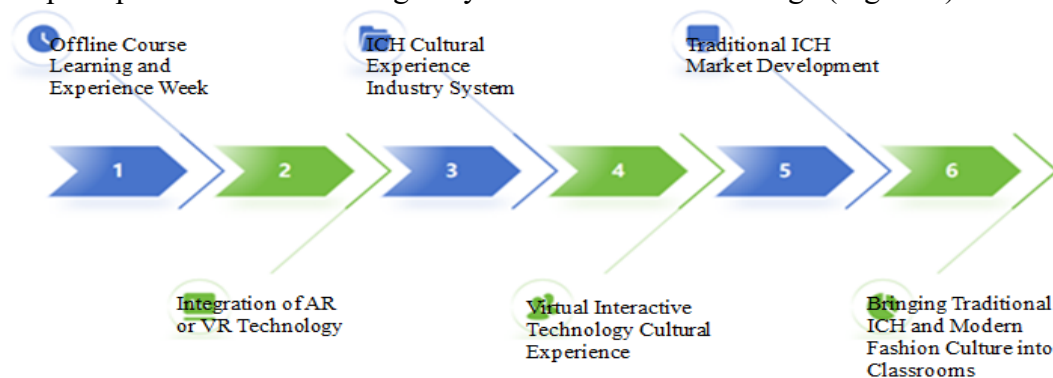


Figure 2: Dual Approach: Synchronized Online and Offline ICH Fashion Cultural Activities

## 4. Co-Creation Process: Upholding Tradition, Innovating Development

### 4.1 Innovation with Integrity: Creating New Ideas

Innovation does not mean creating something entirely new out of nothing, but rather leveraging existing expertise and capabilities through diverse combinations and reconceptualizations to produce new products [12]. Traditional ICH crafts demonstrate techniques and processes through hands-on practice, showing and explaining them to designers. Designers, using their creativity, redefine traditions, allowing breakthroughs in traditional crafts while preserving their cultural foundations [13]. Achieving a balance between preservation and innovation, and establishing new ideas to generate new value for mutual benefit, is key to sustained value creation, forming a closed-loop process of value creation [14].

The platform's invitation for ICH inheritors and fashion designers to establish "digital archives" aims to break down barriers between tradition and modern design. This fosters mutual understanding and closeness, as cultural differences can be a double-edged sword in innovation, being one of the critical factors influencing collaboration [15]. By creating digital archives, online communication and understanding are enhanced, leading to immersive insights into each other's strengths, promoting cultural recognition, and facilitating subsequent collaboration. For example, fashion designer Zhang Turan, who self-identifies as a "tailor" with a fondness for traditional crafts like embroidery and qipao, learns from ICH crafts that align with his design philosophy, combining his ideas to bring "Chinese fashion" to the international stage.

### 4.2 Creating New Value: Facilitating Collaboration

Collaborative co-creation fosters communication between ICH inheritors and fashion designers. When innovative ideas are shared, a relationship with common goals is established, encouraging both parties to showcase their unique skills, laying a solid foundation for professional knowledge in co-creation [16]. Diverse thoughts and cultural backgrounds add interest to co-creation. During "matching cooperation projects," the partners, as internal stakeholders, through continuous interaction and thought integration, can produce items with economic, social, cultural, and personalized value [17]. In the process of achieving value co-creation, "co-production" and "value-in-use" are crucial. Co-production involves stakeholders and clients collaborating on the development of new products, learning from each other, sharing resources, and ensuring equal participation rights to maintain fair and orderly cooperation, along with effective interaction. These three dimensions determine the success of the collaboration. Value-in-use refers to the end product's ability to attract consumers and the quality of the service experience [18].

### 4.3 Platform Role: Bridging the Market

The platform acts as a bridge between ICH inheritors and fashion designers, facilitating market entry and exposing collaborative outcomes to consumers. By empowering ICH and fashion collaboration projects, the platform offers products imbued with historical significance and stories, thereby promoting ICH crafts through the products themselves. Consumer satisfaction and interest are tracked and feedback is provided to the co-creators, enabling continuous adjustments and the timely release of new products. This approach helps consumers break their preconceptions about traditional crafts, enhancing the market acceptance of modernized traditional crafts [19].

During interactions between traditional ICH inheritors and fashion designers, sharing stories and experiences through products showcases the beauty of traditional crafts and attracts consumers to the charm of handmade art. The platform's promotions encourage consumers and interested



individuals to explore traditional ICH projects, whether through digital museums or immersive offline experiences. This exposure helps more people appreciate the diversity of ICH, bolstering cultural confidence and recognition, and aligning traditional culture with the pace of the modern market.

## 5. Co-Creation Mechanism: The Modern Path for Traditional ICH

The platform promotes the development of both traditional ICH and fashion designers through their collaboration, aiming to achieve a value co-creation goal through three key stages: "Innovative Ideas," "Collaborative Assistance," and "Market Expansion." These stages progressively build on one another, tightly linking ICH and fashion, and establishing a new cooperative mechanism for traditional ICH and fashion design. Digital archives are created to document ICH and fashion design, facilitating the integration of tradition and fashion. This allows for mutual understanding of each other's circumstances and cultural backgrounds and the implementation of "project cooperation" according to the needs of all parties. Internal stakeholders in the cooperation are granted equal voice, using their professional knowledge to offer new ideas and perspectives. These concepts are then transformed into products, with the platform promoting the dissemination of content and culture. Ultimately, the platform "opens" the market door for cooperative projects. Market acceptance of products provides feedback to stakeholders, guiding future collaboration in market direction and considerations, and promptly alerting partners to adjust product market suitability.

The new cooperation mechanism between traditional ICH and fashion design proposed in this study adheres to the principle of "innovative integrity" to achieve value co-creation. It does not simply combine ICH and fashion but requires a deep understanding between the two. With respect for traditional craftsmanship, it aims to bring ICH, which is increasingly marginalized by the market, back to the center stage. Consumers are encouraged to learn about ICH through co-created products, promoting the development of related industries and fostering a positive development outlook in collaboration with fashion designers (Figure 3).

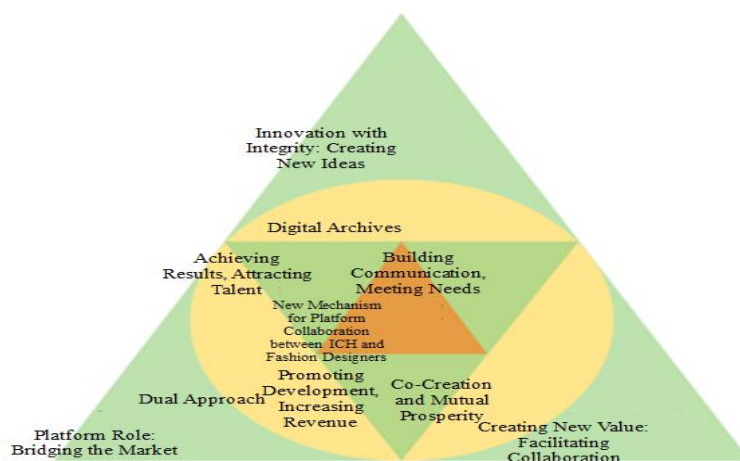


Figure 3: Platform Mechanism for Collaboration between ICH and Fashion Design

## 6. Conclusions

In summary, in the rapidly evolving field of modern fashion, traditional ICH craftsmanship should leverage external forces to seek innovative development and open up the current market. This study provides traditional ICH artisans and fashion designers with a unique research approach

that adheres to innovative integrity and sustainable development, offering theoretical reference value and practical significance. It highlights the importance of the platform in facilitating cooperation between the two parties, outlines feasible practice processes and mechanisms, helps address the challenges and difficulties encountered by both sides, establishes cooperative projects to achieve value co-creation, enhances the dissemination and influence of national culture, reinforces cultural confidence, and realizes the mutual elevation of traditional and modern design.

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