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Brand Persona Shaping and Cross-Media Communication for Intangible Cultural Heritage Tourism in Xianyang

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Abstract: The intangible cultural heritage of Xianyang spans four types of practice: traditional opera, folk art, food-making crafts, and tea-culture skills, each rooted in its own sensory symbols and scene settings. Taking Qinqiang, Xunyi colored paper-cutting, the craft practices behind the Four Treasures of Qianzhou, and Xianyang Fucha-related skills as cases, this study compares them through multi-case mechanism analysis. The comparison yields an analytical framework with five links: resource-value anchoring, brand-persona development, cross-media task allocation, scene-based interactive conversion, and collaborative governance. The results point to a simple pattern. These quite different resources can sit in one brand architecture because shared city-level value themes hold them together, while their own sensory cues keep each project recognizable. Whether the arrangement lasts, however, depends on content rules. Authenticity boundaries, the rights and interests of heritage bearers, and scene compatibility have to be written into those rules from the start, as they are what sustain recognition and keep communication coordinated.

Keywords: Intangible cultural heritage; Cultural tourism branding; Brand persona; Cross-media communication; Xianyang

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1. Introduction

In Xianyang, intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is still encountered in concrete settings: traditional opera performances, folk art, food production, and tea-related experiences. Digital storytelling research shows that marketing heritage destinations depends heavily on narrative context and media experience [1]. Presentation choices matter here. When the form of ICH expression changes, tourists' approach to destination culture changes with it [2], and image-oriented presentation can carry over to the destination image as a whole [3].

Existing research explains ICH tourism communication from the perspectives of stakeholders, digital experience, and audience participation. Systematic review research shows that alignment of objectives among heritage bearers, communities, business operators, tourists, and managers affects the quality of development [4]. User-generated content on social media can reshape young tourists' understanding of ICH preservation

and their interest in heritage tourism [5]. Studies of destination digitalization show that technology-destination fit and tourists' construction of authenticity jointly influence attitude formation [6]. Research on destination brands' tone of voice shows that the tone used on social platforms affects perceived closeness and consistency in communication [7].

Within urban cultural tourism communication in China, short-form video amplifies the immediate appeal of local symbols. Research on Yongxing Square in Xi'an shows that the digital footprint generated by short-video marketing can continue to shape attention to offline places and imagined visitation [8]. Research on the sustainability of cultural-heritage tourism places examines resource conservation, tourist behavior, community benefits, governance structures, and experience design within an integrated relationship [9].

This study therefore treats resource identification, brand-persona development, cross-media task allocation, and scene-based conversion as one connected chain rather than separate topics. Four cases—Qinqiang, Xunyi colored paper-cutting, craft practices associated with the Four Treasures of Qianzhou, and Xianyang Fucha-related skills—are compared through multi-case mechanism analysis.

2. ICH resources and brand identification

2.1. Resource typology and value anchors

Brand identification requires the four resource types to be placed on a common comparative scale. Heritage tourism has a complex relationship with local prosperity, and cultural attractiveness must be considered together with local life, spatial order, and carrying capacity if stable long-term value is to be established [10]. **Table 1** presents the Xianyang ICH IP asset mapping matrix.

Table 1. Xianyang ICH IP asset mapping matrix

Case	Heritage foundation		IP asset		Tourism scene	Cross-media	Governance boundary
	Official / type	Living form	Narrative anchor	Sensory code			
Qinqiang	National / Opera	role, vocality, gesture	storyteller	voice + costume	performance, guided viewing	short video + live show	repertoire, performance norms
Xunyi Colored Paper-cutting	National / Folk art	cut, paste, mount	visual recorder	color + motif	workshop, folk-art display	visual posts + tutorials	motif meaning, attribution
Qianzhou Four Treasures	Provincial / Food craft	make, cook, taste	taste guide	shape + process	food route, shop, festival	process video + product	craft claims, recipe boundary
Xianyang Fucha	National / Tea craft	make, brew, share	host	brick + tea ritual	tea space, leisure stop	ritual video + offline event	craft source, benefit sharing

2.2. Scene nodes and audience touchpoints

Once ICH resources are absorbed into cultural tourism brands, they must be positioned at scene nodes where tourists can encounter them in person. Studies of destination social-responsibility communication report that tourists' social engagement, emotions, and citizenship behaviors are closely interrelated, and that whether engagement leads to further action depends on how participation mechanisms are designed [11]. Travel-video research likewise finds that a viewer becomes a prospective tourist only after accumulating cognitive involvement, emotional engagement, and destination imagination [12].

Figure 1 shows the Xianyang ICH Tourism Resource–Scene Network. Motivation research identifies novelty, learning, social interaction, and identity expression as the main drivers of ICH tourism among

young tourists [13]. Studies of cultural routes find that destination attributes shape visitation choices as tourists process online information [14], while research on urban cultural clusters cautions that tourism use there must balance residents' daily lives, spatial use, and tourist consumption [15].

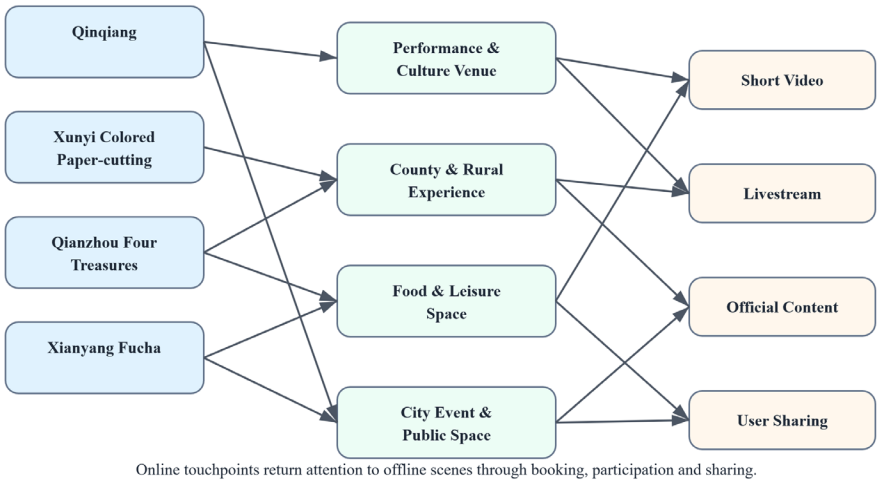


Figure 1. Xianyang ICH tourism resource–scene network

3. Brand IP development mechanism

3.1. Narrative themes and role design

The first step in brand-persona development is to extract durable narrative themes from resource values and then translate those themes into role relationships that tourists can remember. Research on heritage-site branding shows that myths, identity connections, and symbolic narratives can strengthen the personal meanings linking tourists and places [16].

Figure 2 shows the IP formation mechanism for Xianyang ICH tourism brands. What makes an experience meaningful? The two studies cited here answer in much the same way. Pilgrimage tourists describe their most meaningful moments as combinations of place, ritual, social interaction, and personal reflection [17]. In Chinese ICH tourism, profound experiences call for cultural understanding, emotional involvement, and participation at the same time [18].

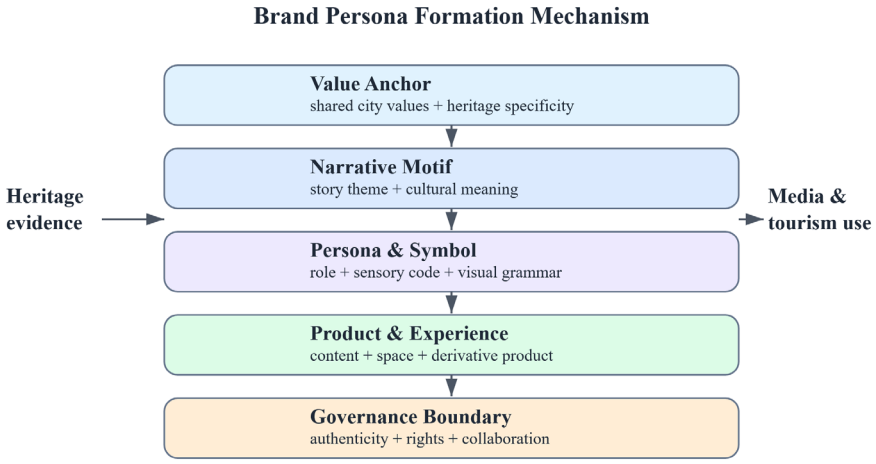


Figure 2. IP formation mechanism for Xianyang ICH tourism brands

3.2. Visual symbols and product extension

Visual-symbol translation requires a sensory lexicon with traceable sources. Tourists' attention to and preferences for visual ICH elements affect recognition of project characteristics [19]; priority should therefore be given to symbols with stable cultural origins that can be reused across media. Research on ICH-based brand building in Guangzhou shows that ICH resources can influence place-brand evaluations through dimensions of brand equity [20].

Product extension should be organized across three levels: experiential, portable, and retellable.

3.3. Inheritance boundaries and collaborative governance

The effectiveness of brand development depends on whether authenticity boundaries are embedded in content production from the outset. Research on authenticity in ICH tourism shows that tourists' understanding of authenticity is jointly influenced by the commercial environment, experience design, and modes of cultural expression, and that alienation may weaken acceptance of heritage meanings [21]. Meaning-making at heritage places is also closely tied to community history, spatial narratives, and tourism use [22].

Collaborative governance can involve heritage bearers, cultural-tourism operators, design and communication teams, and scene operators. Place-first research on heritage governance emphasizes that conservation and use need to be understood in relation to specific local relationships and cultural practices [23].

4. Cross-media communication pathways

4.1. Content matrix and media task allocation

One cultural asset cannot be pushed to every platform unchanged; it has to be broken into information units suited to each platform and then reconnected under a consistent narrative. Several studies inform this task. Audience size matters because influencers of different scales reach people and earn trust in different ways [24]. Short travel videos work because they carry informational value, presence, and destination imagination into heritage-destination decisions [25]. Internal capability matters as well: in a longitudinal case study of tourism digitalization, upgrading technology paid off only where business processes, content capabilities, and

organizational collaboration were adjusted together [26]. And the choice of spokesperson makes a difference, since virtual and human influencers do not perform identically—travel inspiration and advertising appeals tip the balance [27]. **Table 2** summarizes the cross-media touchpoint and conversion loop. **Figure 3** presents the cross-media content translation matrix.

Table 2. Cross-media touchpoint and conversion loop

Media touchpoint	Content responsibility	Interactive action	Offline conversion	Re-dissemination
Short video	fast recognition	comment / save	route or booking	remix / repost
Livestream	process explanation	question / choice	event or store visit	clip sharing
Official content	knowledge archive	deep reading	itinerary planning	link citation
Offline venue	embodied experience	observe / make / taste	purchase / next stop	photo + review
Derivative product	memory extension	scan / collect	repeat purchase	gift + story

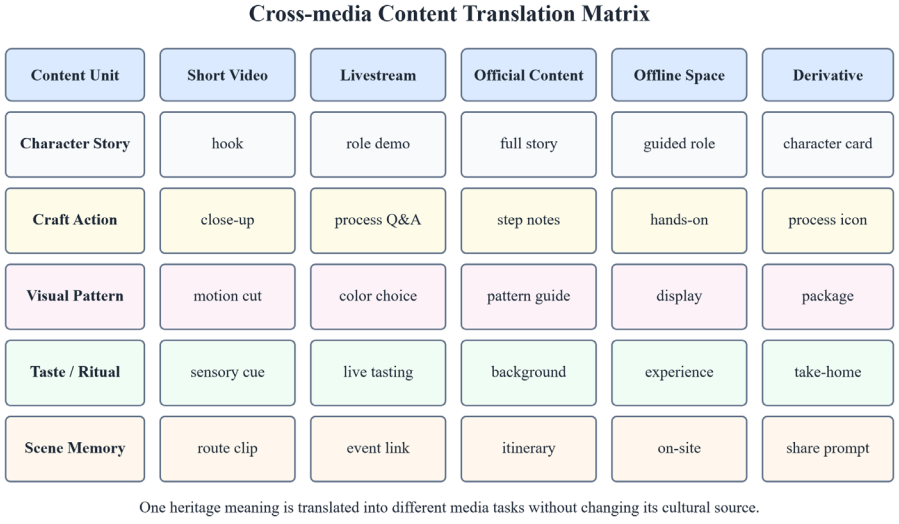


Figure 3. Cross-media content translation matrix

4.2. Scene-based narratives and interactive conversion

Scene-based narratives should be organized around a continuous process of reach, participation, visitation, experience, consumption, and sharing. Research on viewing cultural-heritage travel videos has found that online viewing can evoke both social and non-social emotions and influence how audiences imagine heritage places [28]. Research on social-media information processing shows that tourists combine source characteristics, credibility, and perceived risk when forming cognitive and affective destination images [29].

Large language models have recently entered the interaction design of digital cultural-heritage websites [30]. They can take visitors deeper into the content, but only if three things are already in place: reliable information, clear pathways, and answers that match the questions people actually ask.

4.3. User co-creation and word-of-mouth diffusion

User co-creation occupies an important later stage of the cross-media cycle. Longitudinal research shows that social-media marketing activities can influence sustained customer stickiness through customer engagement

[31], while cross-national research also identifies community engagement as a key factor in tourism behavior on social media [32].

Research on social influence among travel consumers shows that audiences form differentiated tourism-consumption pathways according to identity, aesthetics, and models for imitation [33]. Research on participatory ICH tourism emphasizes that co-creation design needs to incorporate purpose, participants, digital tools, and conservation boundaries within the same process [34].

5 Case validation and results analysis

5.1. Role-based communication of Qinqiang

Qinqiang lends itself to examining how role-based narratives turn complex stage knowledge into content that tourists can readily enter. Role cues can be drawn from character types, representative movements and poses, the emotional qualities of vocal styles, and story conflicts, then organized across three stages: pre-performance recognition, on-site viewing, and post-performance sharing.

Figure 4 presents the Qinqiang role-based storyworld prototype.

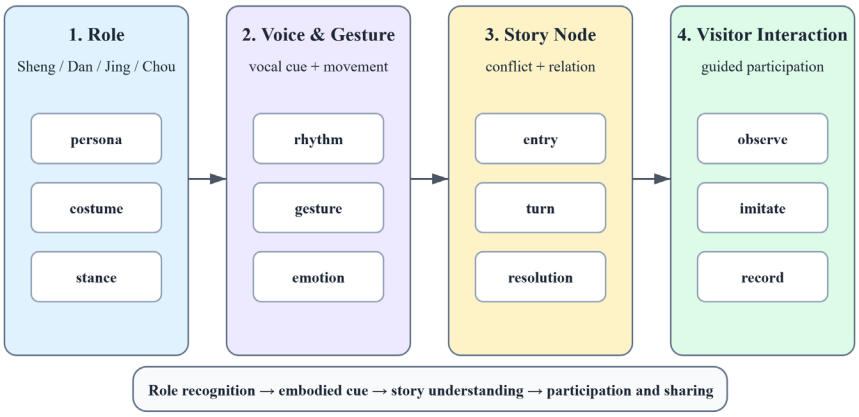


Figure 4. Qinqiang role-based storyworld prototype

5.2. Visual translation of Xunyi colored paper-cutting

For Xunyi colored paper-cutting, the test is whether visual symbols still read once they leave the original medium. A single motif cannot carry recognition on its own. It takes several features working together: colored paper, cut-and-paste combinations, dense compositions, and folk motifs.

Figure 5 presents the visual and experiential translation prototype.

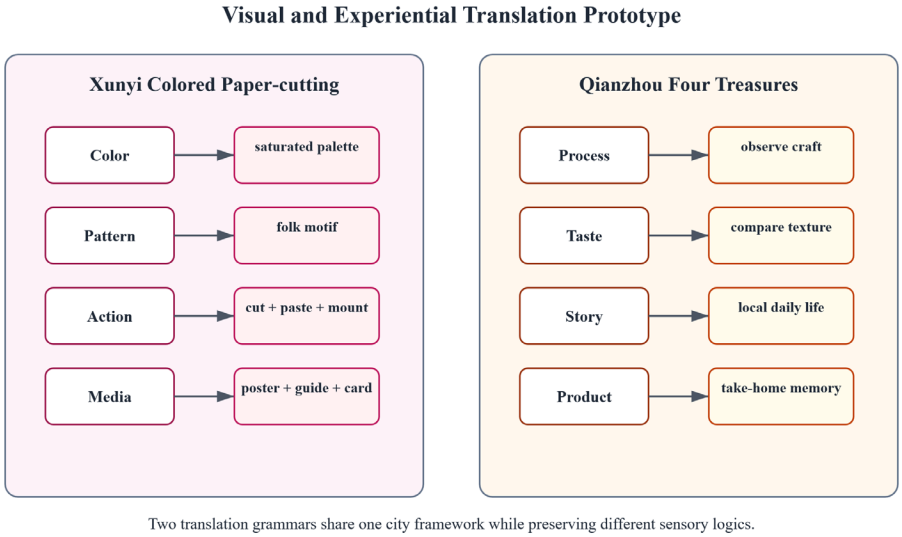


Figure 5. Visual and experiential translation prototype

5.3. Experiential narratives of the Four Treasures of Qianzhou

With the Four Treasures of Qianzhou, the starting point is taste rather than image, and the question is how such resources become experience scripts. The four foods give different answers. Guokui flatbread, hanging noodles, doufunao, and chaisu pastry differ in production rhythm, in the utensils involved, and in the settings where they are eaten.

Food-oriented brands need to address operational efficiency and craft narratives simultaneously.

5.4. Scene integration of Fucha craftsmanship

With Xianyang Fucha-related craftsmanship, what has to hold together are three layers that marketing often splits apart: production culture, brewing experience, and social setting. Service language does part of this work. It should sound like tea practice itself—foregrounding hospitality and the atmosphere of social exchange.

Figure 6 maps the Fucha ritual experience cross-media journey. The journey runs through five nodes in order, from awareness to participation, tasting, interaction, and finally sharing. None of the nodes is online-only. Each is assigned its online content, its offline action, and its re-dissemination entry point.

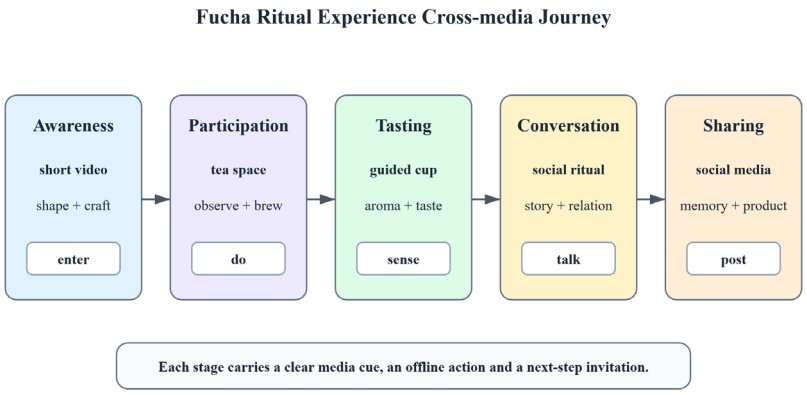


Figure 6. Fucha ritual experience cross-media journey

6. Conclusion

This study compares four cases of Xianyang ICH tourism—Qinqiang, Xunyi colored paper-cutting, the craft practices behind the Four Treasures of Qianzhou, and Xianyang Fucha-related skills—through multi-case mechanism analysis. The comparison yields a five-link analytical framework: resource-value anchoring, brand-persona development, cross-media content allocation, scene-based interactive conversion, and collaborative governance. It also shows how one city brand can hold resources this differently. The shared themes do the holding—everyday life in the Qin cultural region, craft transmission, interpersonal exchange. The sensory codes do the separating. Qinqiang reaches people through roles and sound, paper-cutting through color and motifs, the Four Treasures of Qianzhou through making and tasting, and Fucha through procedures, ritual order, and social interaction. On the communication side, each medium is left to do what it does best at the right point of the tourist journey: short videos for reach, interactive content for process explanation, official content for knowledge preservation, offline spaces for the experience itself, and products and user sharing for continued contact.

The framework operates within four boundaries: cultural authenticity, the rights and interests of heritage bearers, scene capacity, and brand coordination. Brand personas and visual systems must stay anchored in authentic craftsmanship, performance conventions, local life, and the accounts of heritage bearers. Co-creation by users and commercial co-branding both need explicit rules—who authorizes, who is credited, and what passes content review. Combinations across settings, finally, have to respect how long visitors stay, how residents actually use the space in daily life, and the experiential tempo of each project.

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The author declares no conflict of interest.

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