

A study of the factors influencing the innovative development of traditional handicrafts: intergenerational inheritance and modern evolution

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Traditional handicrafts, as an important part of intangible cultural heritage, face the dual challenges of inheritance and innovation against the background of globalisation and modernisation. This study is based on grounded theory and conducted in-depth interviews with 12 craft inheritors (6 elderly people aged 50 and above and 6 young people under 50) in Yunnan Province. It systematically analysed the similarities and differences between the two generations in terms of their value creation capabilities and the factors affecting them. The study found that elderly inheritors tend to stick to traditional techniques and maintain value creation through their long-standing reputation and traditional markets, while young inheritors use modern technology, digital platforms and innovative designs to expand market coverage and enhance product competitiveness. In addition, this paper further explores the key factors in the innovative development of handicrafts, including policy support, technology application and market strategies, and proposes a path to achieve a balance between protection and innovation through technology empowerment and market orientation. This study provides theoretical and practical strategies for intangible cultural heritage protection policies and practices, achieving a dynamic balance between tradition and innovation and helping the sustainable development of handicrafts in modern society.

Keywords: *traditional handicrafts, intangible cultural heritage, intergenerational transmission, innovative development.*



1. Introduction

In a modern society that is developing at a fast pace, the fate of traditional handicrafts is severely challenged. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), about 20 per cent of the world's intangible cultural heritage is at risk of being lost, and traditional crafts, as an important part of it, are particularly endangered. Traditional crafts are not only an important carrier of cultural heritage, but also carry the historical memory and social identity of communities. However, the question of how these crafts can remain viable in the process of modernisation has become an important issue for today's academics and policy makers to address. Handicrafts are the culmination of human intellectual and physical-technical creativity, embodying the profound connection between human beings and nature, and human beings and society. Individuals accumulate experience through physical practices to create uniquely personalised expressions of their skills (Dewi et al., 2022). However, in the wave of globalisation and modernisation, these crafts, which rely on individual skills and cultural memory, are losing ground. Traditional crafts, which used to be seen as part of a way of life, are now at risk of being marginalised, with their functional and symbolic meanings being replaced by modern production methods (Zhao, 2024). At the same time, technological advances and market changes have opened up new possibilities for craft innovation, and this dynamic interaction is particularly evident in intergenerational transmission.

Although the protection of traditional crafts has long been on the agenda of the international community, and their cultural and economic values have been widely recognised, their inheritance and development still face many challenges. Traditional crafts are not only forms of artistic expression, but also concrete manifestations of local cultures that contain rich historical memories and social narratives (Swastika et al., 2023). They sustain social cohesion and bring vitality to the local economy through the daily practices of the community. However, in modern society, how to balance the relationship between tradition and innovation has become a major challenge. Different generations of inheritors show significant differences in understanding and practising this balance, which is influenced by multiple factors such as cultural background, market demand and technological advancement. Against this background, this paper focuses on exploring how generational differences affect the innovation and inheritance of traditional crafts. Based on the rootedness theory, this study selects 12 intangible cultural heritage inheritors in Yunnan to conduct in-depth interviews, including six elderly inheritors who are 50 years

old and above, and six young inheritors who are under 50 years old. By analysing their similarities and differences in value creation capacity and its influencing factors, this study aims to reveal how traditional handicrafts can achieve innovation and development in intergenerational transmission, and to provide theoretical basis and practical guidance for the protection and promotion of intangible cultural heritage.

1.1 Cultural and economic value of traditional crafts

Traditional handicrafts are a bridge between the past and the present, and their cultural and economic value cannot be ignored. As an important part of intangible cultural heritage, crafts sustain the identity and social cohesion of local communities through narratives, symbols and emotions (Zhang, 2024). For example, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples explicitly states that traditional crafts and their cultural expressions should be protected from exploitation (Ghose & Aamir Ali, 2023). From an economic perspective, crafts are not only an important engine of local economic development, but also occupy a central place in cultural tourism and the creative economy. Crafts contribute to sustainable development by creating economic opportunities through tourism and job creation, especially in marginalised areas. Such economic benefits are essential for maintaining the social fabric and cultural identity of a community, which not only contributes to the local economy but also reflects the cultural identity of the area (Mahmoud et al., 2023; Taheri et al., 2024). Crafts are a bridge between cultural heritage and economic development and play an important role in cultural tourism and the creative economy. Handicrafts are at the centre of creative tourism. For tourists, these crafts have a symbolic value and they appreciate the traditional knowledge and techniques contained in them. This appreciation contributes to economic revitalisation and cultural diffusion, highlighting the potential of crafts in tourism (Forero & Mejía, 2023). For example, through fair trade and cultural branding, handicrafts provide a unique cultural experience for tourists, who participate in meaningful experiences that add value to the handicrafts and support local livelihoods (Ezra & Duffy, 2022). Similarly, Wan and Cho (2023) indicate that the craft and design industry creates economic value by embodying cultural and artistic elements, and that in Indonesia, craft tourism villages have significantly increased market reach and economic benefits through branding and digital integration.

1.2 Key factors affecting value creation in traditional crafts

Traditional handicrafts have great value in terms of their cultural, economic and social benefits, bridging traditional and modern life, embodying the content and sentimental value of the text, and connecting historical practices with modern artistic expressions (Yan & Sijia, 2022). Various factors influence the value creation of traditional crafts, including user preferences, marketing strategies and perceived value (Hong & Huang, 2021). Environmental experience also plays an important role by enhancing the overall appeal of handicrafts and increasing their success in the marketplace, while Liu et al. (2024) suggest that traditional handicrafts are more likely to achieve higher sales and customer satisfaction if they match consumers' tastes. Perceived value further enhances this effect as it has a positive impact on both customer satisfaction and sales performance, thus creating a virtuous cycle of value creation. The design of the display space for these handicrafts can enhance their cultural value by promoting craftsmanship and guiding regional cultural heritage. This cultural dimension increases the intrinsic value of handicrafts and makes them more attractive to local and international audiences (Wang, 2022). Geng and He (2021) mention that innovative marketing strategies such as short-video marketing have become effective tools for promoting traditional handicrafts. Through these platforms, craftspeople can showcase the artistic and aesthetic value of their products, reach a wider audience, and embed purchase links directly into the content. This approach addresses the mismatch between supply and demand in the traditional sales model. Geng and He (2021), Ghose and Aamir Ali (2023), and Fu (2023) explore the impact of changing market demands on crafts heritage, such as consumer preferences, and the impact of globalised markets. Meanwhile, policy support and education and training also play a key role in promoting craft sustainability. Dalal, Bhattacharya, and Chattopadhyay's (2024) study shows that craft producing groups, especially those at the bottom of the social ladder, face complex challenges in terms of livelihood sustainability. Through a mixed-methods study, the literature presents an integrated framework that highlights the critical role of skills training, market access, and policy support in upgrading the economic and social status of producers. This provides insight into how policy interventions and community support can work together to promote the sustainability of traditional crafts in the current study.

1.3 Generational differences and the innovative development of crafts

Generational differences are a central theme in the transmission and innovation of traditional crafts. Older generations of inheritors tend to protect the purity of their skills, while younger generations are more concerned with market demand and technological integration. Such preservation is essential to maintain the authenticity of cultural practices and ensure their survival in the modern world (Foster et al., 2023; Balci, Kuban, & Çiftçi, 2022). Veteran craftsmen are often described as the guardians of traditional skills and tend to keep the skills original, passing on the existing processes and cultural connotations. Their mode of transmission usually relies on the master-apprentice system, which emphasises the purity of the skills and cultural continuity. Craft traditions are passed on through formal and non-formal education frameworks. Formal education provides a structured learning environment, while non-formal methods such as apprenticeships provide practical experience and guidance. While traditional craftspeople play a key role in the preservation of cultural heritage, the incorporation of modern technology and adaptation to contemporary challenges is also necessary. Community involvement and educational programmes are essential to stimulate the interest and participation of the younger generation in traditional crafts. These initiatives can foster a sense of ownership and pride within the community, thus contributing to the sustainable development of local crafts (Zhang , 2024). Chen and Sharudin (2024) explore how the younger generation of inheritors can innovate on the basis of tradition by introducing modern design elements, digital tools, and cross-border collaborations in order to expand the market and audience for their crafts. They tend to focus more on modernising and market-adapting their products, and this technological integration promotes the preservation and dissemination of crafts, making them more accessible and engaging for younger generations (Zhang, 2024). With the introduction of artificial intelligence and digital technologies, young inheritors have explored more possibilities for cross-border collaboration, significantly expanding the market and audience for crafts (Zhang & He, 2023). The younger generation has shifted the focus from technology-orientated design to human-experience-orientated design, an approach that has broadened the path of innovation and inheritance of traditional skills. The balance between innovation and tradition is a delicate one, and together these points reveal the opportunities and challenges that traditional crafts face in modern society, especially in terms of the dynamics of intergenerational transmission and innovative development.

2. Methodology

Glaser and Strauss (1967) laid the foundations for the grounded theory methodology by proposing 'Grounded theory discovery: a qualitative research strategy'. They described grounded theory as a highly adaptive research method that avoids preconceived assumptions and develops theory directly from the data. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), grounded theory is the process of analysing textual data that involves an ongoing interactive process. Casey and Esmeraldo (2024) emphasise that in grounded theory research, respondents should be familiar with their own goals and have the ability to explain what they are doing, how they are doing it, and why they are doing it, which is essential for the development of theory based on the co-constructing theories from data collected from different cultural contexts is crucial. Sample selection was made using a combination of convenience sampling method and theoretical sampling method, and 12 intangible cultural heritage craftsmen were screened as the research subjects, taking Yunnan region as the research scope. The sample selection criteria include the following aspects: in terms of age criteria, the older generation of inheritors are aged 50 and above, with rich experience accumulation and deep understanding of skills; the younger generation of inheritors are aged 49 and below, who are learning or have mastered some of the skills, and are more involved in the practice of innovation and inheritance. In terms of the degree of skill mastery, the older generation of inheritors are usually the representative figures or masters of a certain skill, and bear the important responsibility of inheritance and teaching, while the younger inheritors have usually completed the learning period, but their skills have not yet fully reached the depth of the older generation, and they have been active in the innovative application of the skill. The social and cultural context takes into account the cultural status and social roles, with the older generation of inheritors often enjoying higher social authority, while the younger inheritors are more likely to face the challenge of maintaining the vitality of their traditional skills in the modern society. In addition, the sample size is determined based on the theoretical saturation principle, which means that sample expansion is stopped when the additional samples no longer provide new information. The basic information of the 12 inheritors finally selected is shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1 Basic information of the respondents

No	Handcraft	Age	Education
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A01	Silverware	72	Primary school
A02	Bamboo weaving	67	Primary school
A03	Brocade	60	Junior high school
A04	Tie-dyeing	58	Junior high school
A05	Handmade paper	61	Primary school
A06	Purple pottery	59	Technical secondary school
A07	Silverware	32	Technical secondary school
A08	Bamboo weaving	40	Technical secondary school
A09	Brocade	37	Undergraduate school
A10	Tie-dyeing	31	Undergraduate school
A11	Handmade paper	28	Undergraduate school
A12	Purple pottery	24	Primary school

(Source: author)

The data collection of this study was conducted using the problem-focused semi-structured in-depth interview method, and the interview process was divided into three stages: the interview preparation stage, in which the researcher formulated an interview outline, designed key questions around the research problem, ensured that the structure of the interviews was logically clear, contacted the interviewees to book an appointment for the interviews in advance, and prepared the recording equipment and the research assistants; the interview implementation stage, in which the format of the interview was a one-on-one in-depth interview led by the researcher and recorded with the assistance of the research assistants. The interviews are divided into four parts, including basic information about the respondents (e.g, In the post-interview processing phase, the researcher transcribes the audio recordings into text to form a complete set of interview data and sends the text of the interview to the respondents for confirmation, ensuring that the data are not lost in the process.

Data analysis was carried out using the rooted theory combined with NVivo 12.0 software, which included three steps: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. In the open coding stage, the interview data were broken down into discrete parts, analysed segment by segment and initial concepts were extracted, and texts with similar or identical meanings were summarised into initial categories. The axial coding stage regroups the

data by analysing the relationships between categories, focusing on the patterns embodied in the data and clarifying the logical connections between categories. The selective coding stage refines the core categories, constructs a theoretical framework, and tests the textual material to see if it supports the proposed concepts and refines the research model. In this process, Rêgo et al. (2023) mentioned open coding as a key step in the initial extraction of concepts, while axial coding constructed the data framework by analysing category relationships, and selective coding further refined the theoretical constructs.

Twelve interviews were transcribed, totalling over 38,000 words of text data. Through cascading coding and data categorisation, the researcher organised and analysed the data using NVivo 12.0 software to ensure that all theories were based on the data and to avoid preconceived assumptions. Ultimately, through strict sample selection criteria and systematic qualitative research methods, this study analyses in depth the value creation capacity of ICH inheritors and their influencing factors, and puts forward a theoretical framework about the innovative development of traditional handicrafts, which provides new perspectives and references for cultural heritage preservation and inheritance.

3. Data collection and analysis

3.1 Open coding

This study began with open coding of the textual data collected from the 12 interviews, line by line and sentence by sentence. After the text data were imported into the Nvivo 12.0 software, they were analysed by sentence or paragraph analysis, selected and labelled as relevant to the research purpose, conceptualised gradually and grouped into categories. Through this step, the researcher identifies features and dimensions in the text and generates a list of categories and codes. During the open coding process, a total of 156 original utterances and concepts were generated, and after eliminating concepts with a frequency less than 1, 138 concepts and 22 categories were finally obtained (**Table 2**).

Table 2 Open coding results

Category	Original representative statement (Concept)
Preserve the inheritance of skills	A01 Skills must be passed on to someone. Don't play around with them too much, just do them properly. (Skills passed on) A08 Passing on your father's skills means you can pass them on to your children in the future, and you can support yourself, which is the most important thing. (Skills passed on)
The importance of oral tradition	A02-A09 I learned my craft by standing next to the master while he worked. He would tell me what to pay attention to as he worked, and I would take careful notes (oral transmission).
Incorporate modern elements	A01-A06: Previous products had too many patterns and were not practical. Today's consumers prefer products with more functionality and less decoration. (Incorporating modern aesthetics)
Passing on through digital platforms	A07-A12 Nowadays, there are many platforms that allow people to show off their work, like TikTok and Xiaohongshu. Many customers directly message me.
Break through traditional frameworks	A10 During the years I worked in the Hangzhou garment factory, I learned a lot of modern techniques. If I combine these techniques with traditional batik, it may create a different spark (combination of modern techniques and traditional batik).
Product development and innovation	A10 Draw more complex patterns on the computer and complete the rest by hand (combination of industry and craftsmanship) A09 Introduce intelligent embroidery machines to optimise the process (combination of industry and craftsmanship) A08 To appeal to young people, it needs to match their aesthetics and also suit modern lifestyles. Motifs like those engraved by older generations are considered too complicated by young people. (Product development)
Expression of community culture	A01-A07 Once you've made a name for yourself, people from all over the region will come to you to place orders, and my relatives will follow me in doing the same. (Community culture) Everyone knows that we have good craftsmanship here, and there is an industry of purple pottery, so many people from other provinces come to place orders. (Community culture)
Preservation of traditional	A03: Originally, these weren't meant to be sold. Many of them were for our own wear. We embroidered so many flowers because we

community roles	wanted them to look good. Seeing your motif, I'll know where you're from. (Community symbol)
The formation of cross-community identity	A04 Our village does a lot of tie-dyeing, and the neighbouring village does batik, each with its own characteristics. (Community identity)
Reject excessive innovation	A01-A03 Nowadays, some products have very little craftsmanship and are just put together. (Loss of craftsmanship) A04-A05 We are quite honest, so we just do our job well and let appreciation come naturally. (Resistance to excessive change)
Self-improvement of traditional techniques	A01-A03 I will think about how to do it a little better based on what the previous master taught me. (Technique improvement)
Fusion with modern art	A07-A09 proposes the combination of handicraft and cultural creativity to extend the depth of development of the industrial chain (extending the industrial chain) A07 introduces modern technology into the silver jewellery industry, optimises processes and diversifies communication channels (modern technology)
Intangible cultural heritage protection	A01-A12 As intangible cultural heritage, these skills are the spiritual heritage of Yunnan, a vivid manifestation of ways of thinking and cultural awareness, and an important part of Yunnan's multi-ethnic culture (intangible cultural heritage inheritance) A08-A10 If this continues, intangible cultural heritage will no longer be deliberately passed on, but consciously (natural inheritance)
Continuation of cultural values	A01 The silver trophy for the original photography exhibition 'Colourful Yunnan' and other works such as 'Yunnan Story Totem Pole' blend traditional ethnic culture with silver forging techniques. (Ethnic stories) A03 There are many ethnic minorities in Yunnan, each with its own characteristics. For example, the embroidered motifs on our Hani clothes were passed down from our ancestors and all have meanings. (Cultural continuity)



maintaining the master-apprentice relationship	A02-A06 I have six apprentices, and A is one of them. He has been with me for three years. (Apprenticeship) Every Chinese New Year, I give my master a gift to thank him for his teachings, not just about craftsmanship, but also about how to behave and get along with others. (Master-apprentice relationship)
Flexible mentoring relationships	A06-A09 Nowadays, it's not like it used to be when you could just pick up a trade. If you want to learn, I'll teach you. (Flexible teaching) Every summer, many students come to experience it. Those who like it will stay behind and study with me, and I'll teach them too. (Flexible schedule)
Traditional tool	A06-A10 The original tools are still the best. Although modern tools are faster, they lack the attention to detail. (Keep it traditional.)
A cautious approach to technological innovation	A03-A07 If the power suddenly went out right now, half the village's silversmiths would be unable to continue working because they rely too heavily on electronic equipment. (Handmade)
The widespread use of digital technology	A07-A09 Introduce intelligent industrial machinery production, optimise the process flow, and continuously enhance the practical design of silver jewellery. (Introduce machinery optimisation technology)
Creation driven by technological innovation	A02-A03 3D printing is now used, and many shapes that could not be made before have been broken through. (3D technology) A01 This training not only allows students to master traditional techniques such as plant dyeing and tie-dyeing, but also allows them to master the tailoring and design concepts of clothing (learning tie-dyeing).
Reliance on traditional market channels	A04-A06 are generally customers who come through referrals or introductions by acquaintances. (Acquaintance introductions) A03-A05 will place the work in the store, and customers will still feel more real when they see the actual product. (Offline market)
Marketing strategy	A07-A12 Collaborate with schools to teach skills, while interacting with design students to expose to new design concepts, combining modern design with traditional craftsmanship (design products that meet consumer needs) A11-A12 The Yunnan provincial government promotes and

displays intangible cultural heritage experience activities through the Internet, events, etc., and holds an intangible cultural heritage shopping festival (intangible cultural heritage communication)
A07-A12 Nowadays, the Internet is so well developed that we all have online stores and advertise ourselves. (Online operations)

3.2 Axial coding

After open coding, the researcher further refined the relationships between categories through axial coding. The lower categories were linked to the higher categories to form a clear framework of main categories and subcategories, and the inner logic of the core categories was identified through inductive and deductive analyses. The researcher discussed and analysed the categories with traditional craft practitioners and academics, and eventually refined them into two categories, core competencies and key factors. (Table 3)

Table 3 Process of generating an axial code

Main category	Older generation		Younger generation	
	Subcategory	Concept	Subcategory	Concept
Core competence	Protection and transmission of skills	Preserving the transmission of skills The importance of oral transmission	Product development and innovation	Incorporating modern elements Inheritance through a digital platform
Key factor	Cultural heritage	Preservation and transmission of traditional skills Continuation of cultural values Maintenance of the master-apprentice relationship	Cultural heritage	Preservation and transmission of traditional skills Continuation of cultural values Flexible master-apprentice relationship

	Community identity	Expression of community culture Preservation of traditional community roles	Community identity	Expression of community culture Formation of cross-community identity
	Innovative perspective	Reject excessive innovation Self-improvement of traditional techniques	Innovative perspective	Breakthrough the traditional framework and blend in with modern art
	Technology application	Traditional tools	Technology application	Extensive use of digital technology
	Market understanding	Cautious approach to technological innovation	Market understanding	Creation driven by technological innovation

3.3 Storyline

The main goal of selective coding was to integrate the core categories with other categories to build a clear story line. The study found that there were significant differences in the perceptions of core competencies and key factors between the two generations of craftspeople. The older generation of craftspeople were more inclined to emphasise the preservation and transmission of skills, and to focus on the continuation of traditional values and community identity; while the younger generation of craftspeople were more concerned with product development and innovation, and expanding the reach of traditional crafts through digital technology and marketing. The interview data suggest that maintaining the core competitiveness of traditional crafts requires satisfying the synergistic effects of several key factors. The researcher has organised these relationships into a complete theoretical framework, which is presented graphically (**Figure 1**).

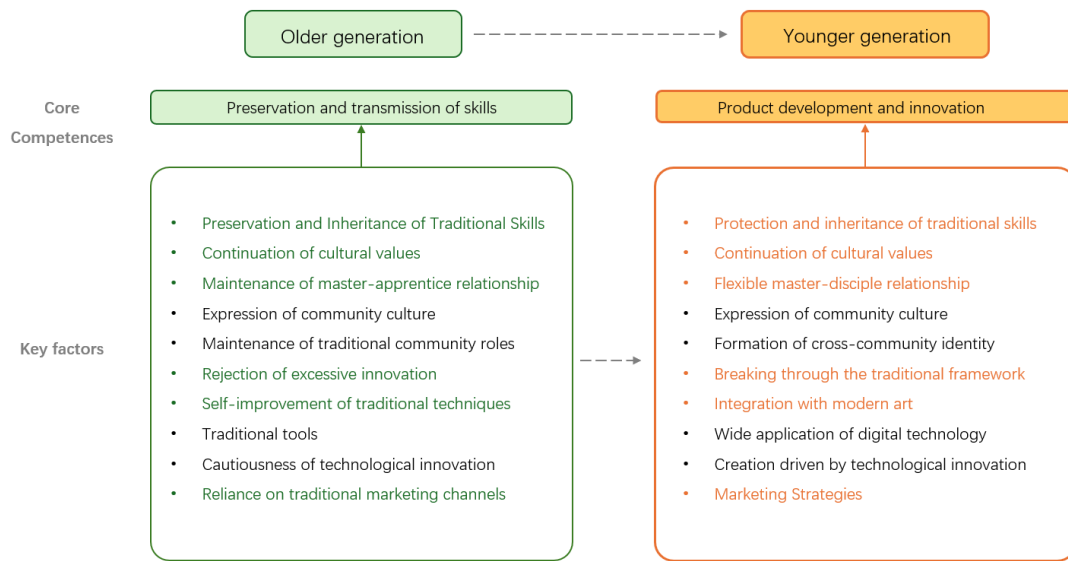


Figure 1 Intergenerational changes in factors influencing the innovative development of traditional handicrafts

3.4 Theoretical saturation analysis

Theory saturation is defined as the saturation of theoretical categories, i.e. the inability to derive new insights, new theoretical orientations, and new category relationships after repeated review and careful analysis of the information collected (Züleyha & Qureshi, 2023). In order to verify theoretical saturation, the researcher coded information from two craftspeople who did not participate in the formal interviews, which resulted in no new concepts or categories being identified and no new factors being generated. This suggests that the theoretical categories have reached saturation. The validation of the theoretical categories further supports the generational differences in core competencies and key factors between the two generations of craftspeople and the impact of these differences on the development of innovation in traditional crafts. Through the above coding and analysing process, the study reveals the importance of intergenerational differences in the transmission process of intangible cultural heritage, constructs a theoretical framework for the innovative development of traditional handicrafts, and provides directions for subsequent research.

4. Results and discussion

By analysing interview data from two generations of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) bearers, this study reveals generational differences in cultural heritage, community identity, innovation perspectives, technology application and market understanding. These differences not only reflect the different focuses on core competencies of the older and younger generations, but also their dynamic balance between cultural preservation and innovation development. Although this paper identifies these differences, further exploration of the underlying causes of these differences will help to deepen the understanding of intergenerational cultural transmission mechanisms.

Firstly, both older and younger inheritors attach great importance to the transmission of culture and regard it as the core of value creation. However, there are significant differences in the embodiment of core competence between the two generations. Older inheritors focus on the preservation and transmission of skills, emphasising the maintenance of cultural heritage integrity through oral transmission and the conservatism of traditional skills. This view is in line with Mellēna's (2015) study, where the older generation tends to be viewed as guardians of cultural knowledge who preserve community cohesion and cultural identity through storytelling, rituals, and other oral practices. This tendency is closely related to the socio-economic context in which they live. The older generation has usually experienced a period of less technological change and, faced with conditions of limited resources, has developed a deep dependence on the transmission of traditional skills. In contrast, young inheritors tend to incorporate modern elements in product development and innovation, and use digital platforms to expand the cultural impact and market reach of traditional skills. This trend reflects the challenges posed by globalisation and digitalisation to the way traditional culture is disseminated. Younger generations are breaking with the traditional oral and written transmission of cultural heritage through new forms of media and are innovating to ensure cultural continuity. This is linked to their advantages in terms of technological exposure and educational background. Often with higher levels of education and earlier exposure to digital technologies, young inheritors are able to utilise modern tools to achieve a pluralistic dissemination of culture.

Secondly, the two generations of inheritors differ in the way they practice the key elements. Older inheritors focus more on the preservation and transmission of traditional skills, emphasising the continuation of cultural values and sustaining this tradition through a rigorous master-disciple relationship. This cultural transmission is complemented by the transmission of material wealth, forming family and emotional bonds. Similarly in Malik,

Alkhaldi, Salamzadeh and Mantas' (2024) study, the importance of family support in the transmission of handicrafts is mentioned as a model that not only helps families cope with financial difficulties, but also enhances the sense of participation and community connectivity among female artisans. While inheriting these values, young inheritors have become more flexible in their master-apprentice relationships and have sought ways of passing on their crafts that are adapted to the modern world. This flexibility reflects their ability to adapt to socio-economic changes. For example, accelerated urbanisation and increased labour mobility have prompted young inheritors to seek more convenient ways of passing on their skills, such as through short-term learning and online teaching.

Generational differences are particularly pronounced in terms of innovative perspectives and technological applications. Older inheritors are usually wary of over-innovation, preferring to maintain the integrity of traditional skills and rely on traditional tools. They emphasise the self-improvement of the skills rather than over-reliance on external innovation. This cautious attitude is related to their deep emotional connection to their cultural heritage. However, this attitude may have led them to be less receptive to technological innovations. Nonetheless, they are gradually realising that innovation, when done thoughtfully, can enhance the relevance and sustainability of traditional skills in a modern context. On the contrary, young inheritors show a more open perspective to innovation. They have the courage to break out of traditional frameworks and incorporate modern artistic elements into traditional crafts to create cultural and creative products that appeal to contemporary audiences. Digital technology, as an important tool for young inheritors, not only breaks through geographical restrictions, but also makes the dissemination of traditional skills more efficient and widespread. They use 3D printing and smart design tools to optimise the production process, thus enhancing the commercial appeal of their skills while maintaining their original value. Through digital technology and market expansion, artisan entrepreneurship has emerged as a key way to promote the revival of crafts (Rodrigues, Marques, & Santos, 2024).

There are also significant generational differences in market understanding and engagement strategies. Older inheritors rely on traditional market channels and long-term customer bases and tend to use familiar market models. However, the scalability of this model is limited and difficult to adapt to modern market demands. Younger inheritors are more focused on marketing strategies and actively use modern marketing channels such as e-commerce and social media. By integrating new media and digital platforms, they have not only expanded their market share and brand presence, but also ensured the

sustainability of their craft. Socio-economic changes are also creating new opportunities for young inheritors. For example, government policy support for cultural and creative industries, the diversification of consumer preferences and the increased demand for cultural experiences have created a wider market space for young inheritors (**Figure 2**).

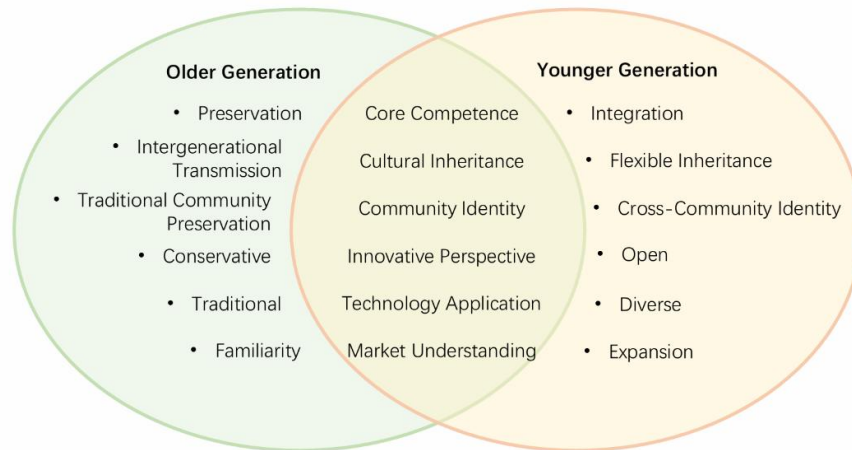


Figure 2 Balanced model of intergenerational innovation and technology adoption

5. Conclusion

This study reveals generational differences in the transmission of intangible cultural heritage crafts, focusing on the different manifestations of core competitiveness, key factors, innovation perspectives, technology application and market understanding. Older inheritors tend to protect traditional skills and focus on cultural integrity, while younger inheritors focus more on modernisation, innovation and market expansion. This generational difference not only reflects the dynamic relationship between cultural preservation and innovation practices, but also provides important insights into the sustainable development of cultural heritage. This study attempts to decipher the concrete paths of action for stakeholders through policy support, educational promotion and technological empowerment. The balance between tradition and innovation is achieved through the collaboration of the older generation and young inheritors, promoting the vitality and influence of intangible cultural heritage in modern society. Future research needs to further deepen the role of digital technology in cultural preservation and the ways in which communities can be involved in transmission practices, in order to promote the globalisation and sustainable development of cultural heritage preservation.

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