

A Case Study of the E-commerce Major Serving Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritance in Tibetan Areas: Taking Gansu Minzu Normal University as an Example

CHEN Chenwei

School of Economics and Management, Yunnan Open University (Yunnan Technical College of Industry), Kunming, China

Fund project: 2025 University-level Scientific Research Fund of Yunnan Open University (Yunnan Technical College of Industry), “Effectiveness Evaluation and Optimization Strategy of E-commerce Talent Cultivation in Higher Vocational Colleges from the Perspective of Industry-Education Integration” (No. 25YNOU53)

Abstract:

The living inheritance of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) bears an inherent coupling relationship with rural cultural revitalization in ethnic minority areas, and e-commerce is increasingly serving as a novel channel connecting ICH resources in Tibetan regions with external markets and youth populations. Taking the E-commerce major at Gansu Minzu Normal University, situated in Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, as a case study, this paper draws on secondary data from university official websites, government public materials, and published scholarship to examine how an applied undergraduate program engages in ICH inheritance through four pathways: talent cultivation, practical training platforms, faculty-student teams, and university-local cooperation. The study finds that the program has preliminarily established a four-dimensional linkage framework of “resources–actors–platforms–institutions,” and has manifested an institutional awareness of serving cultural development in Tibetan areas across live-streaming training, competition-based education, and university-local negotiations. Nevertheless, persistent shortcomings remain, including shallow integration between the program and ICH, a shortage of bilingual and interdisciplinary faculty, weak standardization and supply chains for ICH products, tension between cultural authenticity and commercialization, and an absence of sustainable mechanisms. Accordingly, this paper proposes countermeasures encompassing deepened curriculum embedding, co-construction of faculty teams and workshops, improved supply chains and branding, and the establishment of authenticity review and long-term cooperation mechanisms, so as to provide transferable lessons for e-commerce programs in comparable universities in ethnic minority regions to support ICH inheritance.

Keywords: *E-commerce; Intangible Cultural Heritage; Tibetan Areas; University Social Service; Industry-Education Integration; Gansu Minzu Normal University*

1.Introduction

Intangible cultural heritage constitutes an important carrier of cultural capital in ethnic minority regions and serves as a resource foundation for rural cultural revitalization. Article 3 of the Law of the People’s Republic of China on Intangible Cultural Heritage establishes the principle of protecting ICH that embodies the outstanding traditional culture of the Chinese nation through inheritance and dissemination, while Article 4 emphasizes that protection should attend to its authenticity, integrity, and intergenerational continuity [1]. Article 32 of the Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Promotion of Rural Revitalization requires people’s governments at all levels to protect agricultural cultural heritage and ICH

and to carry forward fine traditional culture, and Article 33 proposes promoting the revitalization of traditional crafts in rural areas and developing rural cultural and sports industries with local characteristics [2]. Together, these two laws constitute the institutional interface between ICH protection and utilization on the one hand and rural cultural revitalization on the other. The Opinions of the General Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council on Further Strengthening the Work of Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection further specify that ICH content should be integrated throughout national education and that the disciplinary system and program development for ICH in universities should be strengthened [4], thereby providing a direct policy basis

for university-level disciplines and programs to engage in ICH inheritance.

At the technological and market levels, the digital cultural industry and e-commerce are reshaping the modes of ICH dissemination and transformation. Fan Jianhua and colleagues point out that the digital cultural industry empowers rural revitalization by upgrading the industrial foundation and facilitating the renewal and revival of local culture, emphasizing the alignment between technical rationality and cultural mission and the unity of digital empowerment and subjective capacity-building [9]. Yu Fengjing and colleagues, observing the “live-streaming + ICH + e-commerce” model in ethnic minority areas of southwest China, argue that economic value should be realized alongside cultural value to support rural revitalization in ethnic regions [6]. This implies that ICH is no longer merely a static object to be recorded and exhibited; rather, it can acquire new momentum for living inheritance through circulation and consumption. The E-Commerce Law of the People’s Republic of China brings live-streaming marketing within the scope of e-commerce operators and establishes an e-commerce promotion regime in Chapter 5, providing a regulatory framework for “ICH + e-commerce” [3].

Nevertheless, ICH inheritance in Tibetan areas still confronts the living dilemma of “loss of skills as bearers pass away.” The aging of inheritors, youth outmigration, limited dissemination channels, and the disconnect between products and markets make it difficult for a great number of orally transmitted and apprenticeship-based crafts to continue naturally across generations. As a local university serving as the gateway from inland China to Tibetan areas, Gansu Minzu Normal University bears the function of cultivating applied talent for ethnic regions in western China. How its E-commerce major responds to the ICH inheritance needs of Gannan within program development and social service is a question of both theoretical and practical significance. This paper focuses on three research questions: first, what are the practical pathways and formative mechanisms through which the program serves ICH inheritance in Tibetan areas; second, what structural dilemmas does this process encounter; and third, what optimization directions lie behind these dilemmas. The study contributes to expanding empirical understanding of the social service function of universities in the domain of cultural inheritance in ethnic regions, and offers a reference for e-commerce programs in comparable institutions to engage with local cultural resources.

2 Literature Review and Theoretical Foundation

2.1 Research on E-commerce and Digital Media Empowering ICH Inheritance

A substantial body of scholarship has examined the roles of e-commerce, live-streaming, and digital media in ICH inheritance. Wang Dan summarizes practical models through which ICH serves development in ethnic minority regions, including “ICH + tourism,” “ICH + production,” “ICH + performance,” “ICH + Internet,” and “ICH + branding,” emphasizing the need to excavate the capital attributes of ICH and to implement classified protection and innovative transmission [7]. This classification provides a typological basis for understanding the position of e-commerce, which corresponds precisely to the combination of “ICH + Internet” and “ICH + branding.” Regarding digital protection, Tan Guoxin and colleagues note that ICH digitization must address scientific problems such as the digitization of cultural space and living inheritance, and break through key technologies including semantic ontology, spatiotemporal modeling, and visualization [11]. Song Fanghao and colleagues advocate transforming ICH into entertaining and productized cultural-industry advantages through digital interaction design, thereby achieving outcomes in cultural and creative industries [13]. Wen Wen and colleagues characterize the trajectory of ICH digitization as three stages—“deposition—online presence—embeddedness”—and propose three types of scenarios, namely protection and inheritance, creative transformation, and dissemination and experience, while advocating for a multi-actor co-creation system centered on inheritors [14]. Quan Xi, writing from the perspective of ethnic regions in northwest China, demonstrates that “Internet+” brings new scenarios for ICH protection, inheritance, innovation, and industrialization [15].

At the same time, scholars maintain a critical stance toward digital dissemination. Xie Mengwei and colleagues caution that digital media dissemination of ICH tends to produce a “recession of the subject,” leading audiences to misunderstand authenticity, and call for reconstructing the evaluation system of digital communication [12]. Ji Linxuan and colleagues point out that ICH short-videos in a commercialized environment easily fall into content homogenization and formulaic pan-entertainment tendencies, and argue that dissemination should respect the laws of inheritance and reveal cultural connotations [10]. These critiques remind us that e-commerce empowerment of ICH must not pursue traffic and sales at the expense of the bottom line of cultural authenticity.

2.2 Research on University Social Service and Industry-Education Integration

The subject position of universities in ICH inheritance is receiving growing theoretical recognition. Zhang Bo systematically demonstrates that universities are both

the ought-to-be and the actual subjects of ICH protection, and that the five missions of universities—talent cultivation, scientific research, social service, cultural inheritance and innovation, and international exchange and cooperation—form a coupling relationship with ICH protection [20]. Chen Batu and colleagues propose that cultural inheritance and innovation, as the fourth function of universities, complements talent cultivation, research, and social service in an organic unity, forming a “four-element interaction” mechanism [22]. Leng Zhiming provided an early analysis of the pathways through which universities in western ethnic regions serve local economic and social development [23], while Gong Zhenghua proposed the ideal form of a “cultural collaborative innovation center,” connecting universities, government, and industry through cultural projects to form a research-government-industry symbiotic system [21].

In the dimension of vocational education and industry-education integration, Gao Yuehan and colleagues, drawing on the organizational-sociological framework of rationality, identify dilemmas in ethnic-region vocational education–industry integration, including insufficient intrinsic motivation, lack of value recognition, and dual lag in capacity and objectives [16]. Jiang Tao and colleagues demonstrate the value of vocational education in cultivating skilled talent, promoting industrial upgrading in ethnic regions, and forging a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation, and propose a practical logic encompassing political, comprehensive, adaptive, and cultural dimensions [17]. Tan Zhuolin and colleagues argue that governance of vocational education in ethnic regions should shift from command-and-execute management to multi-actor integrated governance, achieving multi-dimensional coupling between the educational system and the social system [18]. At the specific level of e-commerce talent cultivation, Ding Ju and colleagues, targeting the goal of “understanding agriculture, loving rural areas, caring for farmers, and mastering operations,” construct a rural e-commerce education model of “four-level classrooms + three-dimensional practice,” providing a reference for restructuring the curricula of agriculture-related e-commerce programs [19].

2.3 Theoretical Perspectives and Analytical Framework

This paper draws on four theoretical perspectives to construct its analytical framework. The first is the perspective of university social service and cultural inheritance/innovation functions [20][22], used to explain why and how local universities engage in ICH inheritance. The second is the cultural capital

transformation perspective [8]: Zhou Xixi and colleagues, starting from Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital, argue that ICH can be converted into cultural capital and participate in cultural industries and community development; accordingly, this paper interprets “monetization of ICH through e-commerce” as a process of converting cultural capital into economic capital. The third is the perspective of industry-education integration and multi-actor collaborative governance [16][18], used to analyze the relational structure among universities, local government, enterprises, and inheritors. The fourth is the value co-creation perspective, which emphasizes that the realization of ICH value is not a unilateral output by universities but is co-created by multiple actors through platform-based interaction. Accordingly, the case analysis section integrates practical pathways through the four-dimensional mechanism of “resources–actors–platforms–institutions,” and the sections on dilemmas and countermeasures maintain a one-to-one correspondence with this framework.

3 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case study method. Case research is suitable for examining complex contemporary phenomena with blurred boundaries and intertwined factors in real-life contexts, and is particularly apt for answering process-oriented questions of “how it happens” and “why it is so.” The E-commerce major at Gansu Minzu Normal University is selected as the unit of analysis for three reasons. First, typicality: the university is located in Hezuo, the capital of Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, serving as a gateway from inland China to Tibetan areas, and is the only provincially-administered ethnic normal undergraduate institution in Gansu Province; its e-commerce program simultaneously addresses the rural revitalization needs of ethnic regions and is situated within a resource-rich ICH environment, offering “small but complete” observational value. Second, accessibility: the university’s operational information, cooperation dynamics, and the Gannan ICH inventory are documented fairly continuously on government and university websites. Third, exemplariness: as an applied undergraduate program in an ethnic region, its exploration holds transferable significance for comparable institutions.

It should be specified that this study is based on secondary public materials and does not involve field interviews, questionnaire surveys, or participant observation. Data sources include: the university introduction, program descriptions, and news updates on the official websites of Gansu Minzu Normal University and its School of Sociology and Public Administration; ICH inventories and policy documents

published by the Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture People's Government and its cultural and tourism authorities; official policy texts from the National Laws and Regulations Database and the Chinese government website; and published scholarship on Gannan ICH and vocational education in ethnic regions. Where quantitative claims appear, their source basis is indicated; for example, the number of training venues and off-campus bases differs between the college introduction and the admissions website, and this paper reports both figures side by side without merging or selecting between them.

This evidentiary base delimits the claims of the paper: it can describe the publicly observable contours, pathway structures, and identifiable dilemmas of the program's service to ICH inheritance, and can propose theoretically grounded countermeasures accordingly, but it cannot make quantitative judgments about dissemination effects, economic impact, or inheritance outcomes, nor can it replace causal explanations based on first-hand fieldwork. Matters not disclosed in public sources are not asserted as established facts but are presented as directions worthy of strengthened effort. Future research could supplement the limitations of secondary materials regarding process mechanisms and outcome evaluation through in-depth interviews with faculty, students, inheritors, and local officials, as well as longitudinal tracking of live-stream sales and workshop employment data.

4 Case Background

4.1 Gansu Minzu Normal University and Its E-commerce Major

Gansu Minzu Normal University was founded in October 1984 as Hezuo Normal Junior College for Ethnicities. In March 2009, it was approved by the Ministry of Education to upgrade to an undergraduate institution, becoming the only provincially-administered ethnic normal university in Gansu. In May 2013, it was designated a co-built institution of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission and the Gansu Provincial People's Government, with Tianjin Normal University providing paired support. Rooted in Gannan and Linxia and oriented toward ethnic regions in western China, the university balances teacher education and applied technology education, and is located in Hezuo, the capital of Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture at the junction of Gansu, Qinghai, and Sichuan provinces. It has received honors including "Gansu Provincial Model Collective for Ethnic Unity and Progress" and "Inheritance Base for

Fine Traditional Chinese Culture," and maintains an educational tradition close to Tibetan culture.

The undergraduate E-commerce program was established in 2017, conferring a Bachelor of Management degree over a four-year curriculum, and is currently administered by the School of Sociology and Public Administration, which offers four undergraduate majors—Financial Management, Social Work, E-commerce, and Law—and houses an E-commerce teaching and research office. The program's cultivation objective is positioned around the needs of economic and social development and comprehensive rural revitalization in Gansu and surrounding ethnic regions, training applied talent with knowledge and skills in e-commerce operations management, online marketing, new media operations, and data-driven decision-making. Regarding training conditions, the college introduction reports that the School of Sociology and Public Administration has built e-commerce training rooms, integrated finance-and-tax training rooms, a government affairs training hall, social work training rooms, and a moot court, totaling approximately 640 square meters with equipment valued at over 6.5 million yuan, and has established 12 off-campus professional practice bases; the admissions website, in contrast, reports on-campus training venues such as a smart learning factory for new business, a moot court, and an e-commerce live-streaming training room, and nearly 50 off-campus practice bases inside and outside the province. These two accounts differ markedly in the number of bases; this paper reports both figures without forcing a reconciliation.

4.2 Overview of Intangible Cultural Heritage Resources in Gannan Tibetan Area

Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture is rich in ICH resources. As of May 2025, the prefecture hosts 13 national-level ICH items, 71 provincial-level items, 267 prefecture-level items, and 518 county/city level items; there are 10 national-level representative inheritors, 65 provincial-level, 334 prefecture-level, and 863 county-level inheritors. Among the 13 national-level items, the batch composition is 2 from the expanded first batch, 5 from the second batch, 1 from the third batch, and 5 from the fifth batch, ranking among the highest in Gansu Province. Three items—Gannan Tibetan Thangka, Zhuoni Tao Inkstone craftsmanship, and Gannan Tibetan medicine—are included in the first national catalog for the revitalization of traditional crafts. The formal names, categories, and batches of the 13 national-level items are listed in Table 1.

Table 1 National Representative Intangible Cultural Heritage Items of Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (13 items)

Item Name	Category	Batch / Type	Submitting Region or Unit
Tibetan Folk Songs (Gannan Tibetan Folk Songs)	Traditional Music	2008 Second Batch (New)	Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture
Buddhist Music (Labrang Monastery Hall Music Daoder)	Traditional Music	2008 Second Batch (New)	Xiahe County
Duodi Dance	Traditional Dance	2008 Second Batch (New)	Zhouqu County
Balang Drum Dance (Shamu Dance)	Traditional Dance	2008 Second Batch (New)	Zhuoni County
Tibetan Thangka (Gannan Tibetan Thangka)	Traditional Fine Arts	2008 Second Batch (Expanded)	Xiahe County
Tibetan Opera (Namthar Tibetan Opera)	Traditional Drama	2011 Third Batch (Expanded)	Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture
Tibetan Medicine (Gannan Tibetan Medicine)	Traditional Medicine	2008 First Batch (Expanded)	Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture
Tao Inkstone Craftsmanship (Zhuoni Tao Inkstone)	Traditional Crafts	2008 First Batch (Expanded)	Zhuoni County
Lantern Festival (Dongshan Lantern Turning)	Folk Customs	2021 Fifth Batch (Expanded)	Zhouqu County
Guozhuang Dance (Gannan Guozhuang Dance)	Traditional Dance	2021 Fifth Batch (Expanded)	Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture
Maqu Dragon-Head Qin Balladry	Quyi (Narrative Arts)	2021 Fifth Batch (New)	Maqu County
Tug-of-War (Lintan Ten-Thousand-Person Rope-Pulling Contest)	Traditional Sports, Games and Acrobatics	2021 Fifth Batch (New)	Lintan County
Xinlong Dragon God Festival	Folk Customs	2021 Fifth Batch (New)	Lintan County

Regarding protection infrastructure, the prefecture has established 1 ICH protection center, 7 folk-culture ICH exhibition venues, 38 transmission institutes, and 9 performance venues. Fourteen provincial-level ICH workshops have been certified (some reports cite 15), covering such crafts as Xiahe metalworking, Zhouqu embroidery, and Tao inkstone craftsmanship, ranking among the top in Gansu's 14 prefectures and cities. The prefecture has developed regional cultural and creative products including Thangka, Tao inkstones, brocade ribbons, Tibetan incense, and couplet folding fans, and supports local e-commerce platforms in integrated online-offline sales of cultural tourism merchandise.

The protection and inheritance of Gannan ICH also face pronounced difficulties. Based on research at the Key Laboratory of Digital Protection Technology for Intangible Cultural Heritage in Tibetan Areas at Gansu Minzu Normal University, An Xiaohong points out that emergency rescue projects for Gannan ICH confront problems such as inheritance discontinuity, and proposes establishing databases for rescue

projects, developing “Internet + ICH,” and promoting coordinated economic and cultural development under government leadership [24]. Faculty in fine arts and crafts at the university have likewise conducted research on the innovation system of ethnic crafts in Gannan Tibetan areas and on modern folk art design, advocating that ICH elements support cultural revitalization in Tibetan agricultural and pastoral villages [25][26]. At the school-education level, Ma Yanyan and colleagues observe that Tibetan ICH items such as Thangka and Guozhuang dance have been incorporated into local school and vocational education systems, but that the traditional “emphasis on technique over moral cultivation” model struggles to meet the requirements of fostering virtue through education, and they propose integrating cultural connotation into curriculum design [28]. Li Zhengyuan’s study of the “Tiao Badang” folk custom in the Tao River basin demonstrates how academic, performative, and administrative actors circulate and collaborate around local knowledge under ICH protection scenarios [27]. These local studies constitute

the knowledge base through which the case university engages in ICH inheritance, and they also indicate that the university itself is an important hub for ICH research in Gannan.

5 Case Analysis

5.1 Practical Pathways of the E-commerce Major in Serving ICH Inheritance

The service of Gansu Minzu Normal University's E-commerce major to ICH inheritance in Tibetan areas is not conducted through a single isolated project but is embedded in the routine operations of program development, practical training, faculty-student competitions, and university-local cooperation. Based on public materials, its practical pathways can be summarized as five interlinked dimensions.

First, talent cultivation and curricula oriented toward the needs of ethnic regions. Grounded in the rural revitalization needs of Gansu and surrounding ethnic regions, the program has formulated its cultivation objectives, constructed a trinity practical teaching system of "curriculum–practice–competition," and established an e-commerce live-streaming training room, incorporating new media operational skills such as live-account setup and live-stream selling into its training content. This orientation resonates with general experience in rural e-commerce talent cultivation, in which real project tasks and professional competitions drive practical teaching [19].

Second, training bases and live-streaming platforms serve as conversion touchpoints. The college has both approximately 640 square meters of training space with equipment valued at over 6.5 million yuan and a smart learning factory for new business and an e-commerce live-streaming training room for simulation and hands-on training; under the admissions-website account, nearly 50 off-campus practice bases provide students with entry points into authentic e-commerce scenarios. The live-streaming training room functions not only as a teaching venue but also possesses the physical conditions to become a touchpoint for digital display and sales of ICH products, aligning with the envisaged mechanism of "live-streaming + ICH + e-commerce" [6].

Third, faculty-student teams engage in assisting agriculture and ICH through competitions and social service. In the 2025 15th National College Student E-commerce "Innovation, Creativity, and Entrepreneurship" Challenge (Gansu Provincial Selection), the School of Sociology and Public Administration project "Smart 'Zero' for Domain Revitalization—Innovator of New Retail in Ethnic Regions" won first prize in the new retail track of the Rural Revitalization Practical Competition; the admissions website also reports that students received

a national grand prize in this competition in 2025. The university also undertakes the "Gannan Prefecture Rural Revitalization Talent Training Base" project, which includes an e-commerce technology training group conducting market development, e-commerce talent cultivation, and training-needs research. Although these practices have not publicly disclosed details of targeted alignment with specific ICH projects, they have accumulated experience in serving local cultural industries at the level of capacity building.

Fourth, university-local cooperation and enterprise-visit recruitment continuously expand the collaborative network. In May 2025, the School of Sociology and Public Administration visited the Gannan Prefecture government to negotiate cooperation in e-commerce, introducing the program's achievements in live-account setup and live-stream selling and discussing how live-streaming could support agricultural product sales. In October 2025, the university and the Longnan Municipal E-commerce Development Bureau jointly held the themed activity "Longnan E-commerce Enters Campus · Youth Empowering Rural Revitalization," featuring a specialty agricultural product exhibition area, live-stream selling, interactive experiences, and product displays, and signed a strategic cooperation framework agreement and an internship base agreement, appointing officials and enterprise leaders as off-campus supervisory experts. In December 2025, the college visited Gannan Supply and Marketing Digital Technology Co., the China Tao Inkstone E-commerce Center, and the Zhuoni County Tao Inkstone Development Association for enterprise visits and recruitment, exchanging views on digital supply and marketing, e-commerce operations, brand promotion, talent cultivation, and internships; in the same month, it also visited Zhejiang Economic and Trade Polytechnic and the Hooya Group to study program development. Notably, the China Tao Inkstone E-commerce Center and the Zhuoni County Tao Inkstone Development Association are precisely the industrial carriers of the national-level ICH Tao inkstone craftsmanship, demonstrating a clear intention for university-local cooperation to extend into the ICH domain.

Fifth, interdisciplinary collaboration forms on-campus support. The Fine Arts College at the university has signed cooperation agreements with local authorities on cultural tourism promotion projects, jointly building cultural tourism planning and artistic creation practice bases, and jointly undertaking research topics on ICH inheritance and rural environmental art design [25][26]. The e-commerce program's strengths in digital marketing and platform operations, combined with the fine arts programs' accumulated expertise in

ICH crafts and cultural creative design, offer potential

for collaborative service to ICH inheritance.

Table 2 Summary of Practical Pathways of Gansu Minzu Normal University’s E-commerce Major in Serving ICH Inheritance in Tibetan Areas

Pathway Dimension	Publicly Verifiable Practice	Connection to ICH Inheritance
Talent Cultivation and Curriculum	Applied cultivation objectives oriented toward rural revitalization in ethnic regions; live-streaming training room; “curriculum–practice–competition” system	Cultivating young communicators who understand operations and care about Tibetan areas
Training and Platforms	Approximately 640 m ² training rooms with equipment worth ~6.5 million yuan; live-streaming training room; 12 off-campus bases (college account) or nearly 50 (admissions website account)	Providing physical and channel conditions for ICH product display and live-stream sales
Faculty-Student Competitions and Service	First prize in the provincial three-innovation competition; e-commerce training group of the rural revitalization talent training base	Training ICH narrative and new retail capabilities through real-world practice
University-Local Cooperation	E-commerce cooperation negotiations with the Gannan Prefecture government; strategic cooperation with the Longnan E-commerce Development Bureau; enterprise visits to the Tao Inkstone E-commerce Center	Engaging ICH industrial entities such as Tao inkstone and local e-commerce policy
Interdisciplinary Collaboration	Fine Arts College cultural tourism cooperation and ICH research projects	Complementarity between cultural creative design and digital marketing

5.2 Formative Mechanism: Four-Dimensional Linkage of Resources–Actors–Platforms–Institutions

The pathways outlined above are not a mere accumulation of scattered activities but can be explained through four dimensions: resources, actors, platforms, and institutions.

In the resource dimension, Gannan’s abundant national- and provincial-level ICH resources complement the university’s digital communication capacity: ICH provides cultural capital and content material, while the e-commerce program provides technology, channels, and talent. The cultural capital transformation perspective indicates that only when ICH enters circulation and consumption can its cultural value be converted into economic capital that feeds back into inheritance [8], and e-commerce is precisely the key intermediary in this conversion.

In the actor dimension, a multi-actor collaborative network is taking shape among universities, local government, e-commerce enterprises, and ICH inheritors. Universities bear talent cultivation and social service functions [20][22]; government provides

policy and cooperation frameworks; enterprises provide market channels and jobs; and inheritors provide the cultural foundation. The multi-actor integrated governance advocated by Tan Zhuolin and colleagues [18] and the research-government-industry symbiotic system proposed by Gong Zhenghua [21] offer reference points for understanding this structure; the interactions between Gansu Minzu Normal University and the Gannan Prefecture government, the Longnan E-commerce Development Bureau, and the Tao Inkstone E-commerce Center represent precisely the embryonic form of such a governance structure at the local level.

In the platform dimension, on-campus live-streaming training rooms, off-campus practice bases, and local e-commerce platforms jointly constitute the carriers of transformation. The digitization process described by Wen Wen and colleagues as “deposition–online presence–embeddedness” [14] is manifested in local practice as follows: ICH resources are first documented and organized, then brought online to live-streaming rooms and e-commerce stores, and

ultimately return to the living production of workshops and communities.

In the institutional dimension, national laws and local regulations provide the legitimacy framework. The ICH Law, the Rural Revitalization Promotion Law, the E-commerce Law, and the Gannan Prefecture ICH Protection Regulations jointly define the boundaries of rational utilization, university-local cooperation, and live-stream marketing [1][2][3][5]; the Opinions of the General Offices of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council provide the policy basis for university program development to engage in ICH inheritance [4]. It is precisely the interlocking of these four categories—resources, actors, platforms, and institutions—that makes the program's service practice possible.

5.3 Evident Achievements

Based on public materials, three cautiously verifiable areas of progress can be identified. First, the institutional awareness of the program in serving the local community has taken shape: the college's proactive visits to the prefecture government to negotiate e-commerce cooperation and its strategic agreements with municipal and county e-commerce authorities indicate that the e-commerce program has been incorporated into the university's overall layout for serving local cultural and industrial development. Second, practical education has yielded visible results: students' awards in the rural revitalization track of the three-innovation competition signal that issues such as new retail and agricultural assistance in ethnic regions have entered students' authentic training tasks. Third, the cooperative network is beginning to extend toward ICH industries: enterprise visits reaching the Tao Inkstone E-commerce Center and the Tao Inkstone Development Association lay the interface for future university-enterprise collaboration on ICH product development and live-stream dissemination. It should be emphasized that, because public sources do not disclose specific sales figures, number of agricultural-assistance sessions, or count of farmers reached, this paper makes no quantitative claims about economic impact.

6 Practical Dilemmas

Although the pathways have begun to unfold, measured against the requirements of universities serving ICH inheritance, the case still faces several structural dilemmas that correspond one-to-one to the four-dimensional mechanism outlined above.

First, program development and ICH are not deeply integrated. Public materials indicate that the university's e-commerce program currently conducts university-local cooperation mainly around agricultural

product sales, new retail, and general e-commerce skills; stable, targeted curricular modules or funded projects linked to specific ICH items such as Thangka, Tibetan opera, Tao inkstone, and Tibetan medicine have not yet emerged. Whether the curriculum includes dedicated modules on "ICH e-commerce" or "digital marketing for ICH in Tibetan areas" is not disclosed in public sources. This means that the connection between cultural resources and program teaching remains at a potential stage, and the resource-dimensional coupling has not yet truly landed in courses and projects. The "lack of value recognition and dual lag in capacity and objectives" in industry-education integration in ethnic regions identified by Gao Yuehan and colleagues [16] manifests in this case as the insufficient systematic embedding of ICH knowledge within the e-commerce program.

Second, bilingual and interdisciplinary faculty are insufficient. Accurate dissemination of ICH in Tibetan areas requires both e-commerce operational capability and Tibetan linguistic-cultural literacy and ICH expertise. Public materials do not disclose the composition of full-time faculty with bilingual proficiency or ICH research backgrounds, and stable interdisciplinary teaching teams between the university's Key Laboratory of Digital Protection of ICH in Tibetan Areas and Fine Arts Department on the one hand and the E-commerce teaching and research office on the other are not evident. The absence of interdisciplinary faculty who understand both digital marketing and the cultural foundation of Tibet is a key bottleneck limiting the program's in-depth service to ICH inheritance.

Third, ICH product standardization and supply chains are weak. ICH products such as Tao inkstones, Thangkas, Tibetan incense, and embroidery are largely handmade, exhibiting large piece-to-piece variation, difficulties in mass production, inconsistent quality control and packaging, and incomplete logistics and after-sales chains. Although approximately 14 provincial-level ICH workshops have been certified, the e-commerce adaptability, standardization, and branding level of their products are difficult to assess from public sources. The e-commerce training room possesses channel capacity but lacks a matching supply of stable, sellable ICH products, which tends to confine live-stream sales to agricultural product consignment.

Fourth, tension exists between cultural authenticity and commercialization. Digital dissemination and live-stream selling pursue traffic and conversion, easily simplifying complex Tibetan cultural symbols into visual spectacles. Existing research cautions that digital dissemination of ICH may produce a "recession of the subject" and misunderstandings of authenticity

[12], and that commercialization of short videos easily leads to content homogenization and pan-entertainment [10]. If the e-commerce program prioritizes sales over cultural interpretation in its dissemination, items such as Thangka and Tibetan opera may be decontextualized, ultimately undermining rather than enhancing their inheritance value.

Fifth, sustainable mechanisms are lacking. Current cooperation is mostly conducted through one-off events, enterprise visits, and competition guidance; public sources do not yet reveal long-term agreements, dedicated project funding, or outcome-transformation mechanisms between the university and enterprises/local government around ICH inheritance. The multi-stakeholder talent cultivation quality evaluation system described by Ding Ju and colleagues [19] and the institutionalized integrated governance emphasized by Tan Zhuolin and colleagues [18] remain to be established in this case. The absence of long-term mechanisms means that service practice depends on the initiative of individual faculty and is difficult to consolidate as a stable component of program development.

7 Optimization Pathways

Addressing the above dilemmas and integrating theory with local conditions, this paper proposes the following countermeasures.

First, deepen systematic alignment between curricula and ICH projects. Modules on digital marketing for ICH and cultural creative product operations should be added to the e-commerce program's cultivation plan, and tangible ICH items such as Tao inkstone, Thangka, and Tibetan incense should be transformed into course cases and hands-on topics, so that the resource-dimensional coupling lands in the classroom. Drawing on the rural e-commerce education experience of "four-level classrooms + three-dimensional practice" [19], instruction can be moved into ICH workshops and live-streaming rooms, forming an integrated chain of "curriculum-workshop-live-stream room-competition."

Second, co-build bilingual, interdisciplinary teaching teams. The E-commerce teaching and research office should be encouraged to form interdisciplinary teams with the on-campus Key Laboratory of Digital Protection of ICH in Tibetan Areas, the Fine Arts Department, and off-campus inheritors and workshop technicians. Through reciprocal appointments, joint teaching research, and co-supervision of student competitions, faculty gaps in language, culture, and ICH knowledge can be addressed [24][25][28]. E-commerce literacy training for ICH inheritors could also be explored, which would both serve the local community and enrich the teaching case library.

Third, address the weaknesses in ICH product standardization and supply chains. Collaboration with local government and ICH workshops should promote the establishment of grading, packaging, quality control, and logistics standards for ICH products while preserving their handmade character, and should support local improvement of the county-township-village three-tier delivery logistics system. The e-commerce program can leverage its data-driven strengths to conduct user profiling and product-selection analysis, assisting workshops in selecting cultural creative categories suitable for online sales and converting cultural capital into sustainable economic output [8].

Fourth, establish a cultural authenticity review mechanism. Content review involving inheritors and local scholars should be introduced into the production of live-stream and short-video content, upholding the principles of authenticity, integrity, and intergenerational continuity [1], and avoiding the simple appropriation and excessive entertainment of Tibetan cultural symbols [10][12]. Drawing on the multi-actor co-creation approach proposed by Wen Wen and colleagues [14], inheritors should become subjects of content production rather than objects on display.

Fifth, improve the long-term university-local-enterprise-inheritor collaborative mechanism. Building on existing cooperation with the Gannan Prefecture government, the Longnan E-commerce Development Bureau, and the Tao Inkstone E-commerce Center, efforts should be made to sign long-term cooperation frameworks clarifying the rights and responsibilities for talent cultivation, internship bases, project R&D, and outcome sharing [2][18][21]. At the same time, a practical teaching quality evaluation system involving employers, industry associations, inheritors, and students should be established, so that social service shifts from event-based to institutionalized practice [19].

8 Conclusion and Prospects

Taking the E-commerce major at Gansu Minzu Normal University as a case study, this paper has examined the practical logic through which an applied program at a university in an ethnic region serves ICH inheritance in Tibetan areas. The study shows that, relying on its talent cultivation orientation toward ethnic regions, live-streaming training platforms, faculty-student competitions, and university-local cooperation networks, the program has preliminarily constructed an action framework for serving Gannan ICH inheritance across the four dimensions of resources, actors, platforms, and institutions, and has shown positive signs in university-local negotiations, competition-

based education, and extension toward ICH industries such as Tao inkstone. This case verifies the coupling relationship between the university functions of social service and cultural inheritance/innovation on the one hand and ICH protection on the other [20][22], and demonstrates the realistic potential of e-commerce as a channel for cultural capital transformation [6][8]. At the same time, the problems of shallow program-ICH integration, insufficient bilingual interdisciplinary faculty, weak product supply chains, tension between authenticity and commercialization, and lack of sustainable mechanisms indicate that this practice remains at an exploratory initial stage.

This study has clear limitations. First, the data are based on secondary public sources; without field interviews or questionnaires, the grasp of faculty and student motivations, inheritor feedback, and actual sales effects is limited. Second, as a single case, the transferability of the findings requires comparative examination against more cases from comparable institutions. Third, public sources inadequately disclose the nature of training bases, details of cooperation projects, and the number of trainees, and some judgments are presented as directions worthy of strengthened effort. Future research could use in-depth interviews and participant observation to trace the interactive process between the program and ICH workshops and live-stream rooms, and to evaluate the actual impact of e-commerce intervention on the lived reality of ICH inheritance and the livelihoods of inheritor communities, thereby testing and refining the four-dimensional framework proposed here on more solid empirical material.

References

- [1] Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. Law of the People's Republic of China on Intangible Cultural Heritage [Z]. 2011-02-25.
- [2] Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. Law of the People's Republic of China on the Promotion of Rural Revitalization [Z]. 2021-04-29.
- [3] Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. E-Commerce Law of the People's Republic of China [Z]. 2018-08-31.
- [4] General Office of the CPC Central Committee, General Office of the State Council. Opinions on Further Strengthening the Work of Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection [Z]. 2021-08-12.
- [5] Standing Committee of Gansu Provincial People's Congress. Regulations of Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Gansu Province on Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection [Z]. 2015-07-31.
- [6] Yu, F. J., & Wang, W. Q. Live-streaming: Research on innovative strategies for presenting the online value of intangible cultural heritage—A case study of ethnic minority areas in Southwest China [J]. *Contemporary Communications*, 2019(4): 95-97.
- [7] Wang, D. Practical models of intangible cultural heritage serving targeted poverty alleviation in ethnic minority areas [J]. *Journal of South-Central University for Nationalities (Humanities and Social Sciences)*, 2020, 40(5): 64-69.
- [8] Zhou, X. X., & Xiao, F. Heritage and capital: Contemporary practice of intangible cultural heritage as cultural capital [J]. *Cultural Heritage*, 2023(1): 40-46.
- [9] Fan, J. H., & Deng, Z. X. The complex context, practical logic, and optimization paths of the digital cultural industry empowering rural revitalization [J]. *Journal of Shandong University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, 2023(1): 67-79.
- [10] Ji, L. X., Ma, Z. Y., & Liu, Y. X. The dissemination and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage in the new media era [J]. *Ethnic Art Studies*, 2020, 33(4): 137-143.
- [11] Tan, G. X., & Zhang, L. L. On the digital protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage [J]. *Library*, 2019(4): 79-84.
- [12] Xie, M. W., & Hou, X. F. Reflections on the digital dissemination of intangible cultural heritage [J]. *Ethnic Art Studies*, 2021, 34(6): 139-145.
- [13] Song, F. H., & Liu, Y. Strategies for digital protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage from the perspective of cultural industry [J]. *Shandong Social Sciences*, 2015(2): 83-87.
- [14] Wen, W., & Zhao, M. D. Digital scenarios and construction paths of intangible cultural heritage in China [J]. *Theory Monthly*, 2022(10): 89-99.
- [15] Quan, X. "Internet+": Constructing new scenarios for digital inheritance of intangible cultural heritage [J]. *Journal of Northwest Minzu University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, 2017(6): 181-184.
- [16] Gao, Y. H., & Liu, X. M. Practical dilemmas and optimization paths of industry-education integration in vocational education in ethnic minority areas [J]. *Ethnic Education Studies*, 2022, 33(2): 153-159.
- [17] Jiang, T., & Yang, Z. S. The value, logic, and pathways of vocational education promoting common prosperity in ethnic minority areas [J]. *Ethnic Education Studies*, 2022, 33(2): 146-152.
- [18] Tan, Z. L., & Zhu, D. Q. The social logic of integrated governance in vocational education in ethnic minority areas [J]. *Chinese Vocational and Technical Education*, 2023(10): 62-70.
- [19] Ding, J., & Liu, X. B. Research on the cultivation model of rural e-commerce talents—Innovation and practice of the "four-class linkage, three-dimensional practice" education model for rural revitalization [J]. *Higher Agricultural Education*, 2021(5): 117-122.

- [20] Zhang, B. Discipline construction of intangible cultural heritage from the perspective of new liberal arts—On the coupling relationship between university missions and ICH protection [J]. *Cultural Heritage*, 2021(4): 8-19.
- [21] Gong, Z. H. The cultural path of universities in ethnic minority areas serving local development [J]. *Higher Education Research of Heilongjiang*, 2016(5): 10-12.
- [22] Chen, B. T., & Sun, L. X. Four-element interaction: On the mechanism of universities inheriting and innovating culture [J]. *Jiangsu Higher Education*, 2012(6): 33-35.
- [23] Leng, Z. M. Research on universities in western ethnic minority areas serving local economic and social development [J]. *Ethnic Education Studies*, 2010(1): 100-104.
- [24] An, X. H. Research on the current situation and countermeasures for the protection of rescue projects of intangible cultural heritage in Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture [J]. *Journal of Gansu Normal Colleges*, 2021, 26(1): 36-41.
- [25] Zhang, Y. P., & Yan, B. H. Constructing the inheritance and innovation system of ethnic crafts in Gannan Tibetan areas (Part 2)—Countermeasure research based on facing problems [J]. *Chinese National Art*, 2021(4): 6-11.
- [26] Zang, L. L. Exploration of innovative practice in ICH handicrafts in Gannan Tibetan areas based on modern folk art design [J]. *Tian Gong*, 2023(4): 38-40.
- [27] Li, Z. Y. “Tiao Badang” and the circulation of knowledge in mountain civilizations [J]. *Cultural Heritage*, 2024(4): 129-135.
- [28] Ma, Y. Y., Wang, S. P., & Gao, J. K. Reflections and exploration on the design of school micro-courses in ethnic minority areas from the perspective of ICH education and inheritance—A case study of Gannan [J]. *Neijiang Science and Technology*, 2022, 43(7): 134-135.