

# Short Video Platforms: Safeguarding Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage through Marketization



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## Abstract

In 2018, the market scale of China's ICH industry reached to 335 billion Yuan (about 4.69 billion USD), indicating a strong ICH consumption power of Chinese consumers and a booming trend in ICH marketization. The topics of “safeguarding” and “Marketization” of ICH are usually discussed simultaneously (Maags, 2021) in literature due to the inherent contradictory patterns of the two concepts. Many Chinese scholars (Jiang & Li, 2012; Kang, 2011; Liu, 2004a, 2004b; Wang, 2006; Zeng, 2011) who oppose ICH commodification keep emphasizing that the authenticity and integrity of cultural heritage will be harmed through over-commodification, yet ICH is still widely accepted as the ‘heritage that is embodied in people rather than in inanimate object’ (Logan, 2007, p.33) and the changeability of ICH is its basic characteristic (Su, 2019). This indicates that once the practitioner is making a living from the ICH, it is inevitable to intersect ICH preservation with ‘market’ practices.

With the advancement and evolution of media technology and the fast proliferation of wireless and mobile devices, online video consumption has become an integral component of the daily lives of the majority of young people. Statistics show that, as of June 2019, the number of Chinese users of Short-Video Platforms (marketers generally agree that any video under 60 seconds is short-form, with the best duration between 31 to 60 seconds) reached 648 million, covering 78.2% of mobile users. The usage rate of Short-form Streaming Video, for the first time, exceeded that of Online (long) Video, becoming the communication form with the highest usage rate and high usage viscosity (Statistical Report on China's Internet Development, 2019). Based on the AI algorithm recommendation and big data technology, the algorithmic recommendation logic on the Short Video Platform not only tackles geographical limitations but also extends the scope of information dissemination. This study addresses the question to what extent can Short Video Platforms provide an additional way of facilitating ICH safeguarding in China? The aim of this research is trying to find out whether Short Video Platforms can play a supporting role in facilitating ICH safeguarding in China, and how ICH practitioners could practice with it.

**Keywords:** Intangible Cultural Heritage, Craft, Short Video Platform, Motivations, Uses and Gratification Theory

# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Research Objective

The aim of this research is trying to find out whether Short Video Platforms can play a supporting role in facilitating ICH safeguarding in China, and how ICH practitioners could practice with it. Therefore, the research question of this paper is formed: “To what extent can Short Video Platforms provide an additional way of facilitating ICH safeguarding in China”? The three subquestions are: 1) “What are the current practices of Chinese ICH”? 2) “Why do ICH practitioners use Short Video Platforms and how”? 3) “What problem do Short Video Platforms solve in the practice of ICH preservation”?

This research adopts a qualitative approach in order to obtain a deeper understanding of how ICH practitioners understand the discourse of ICH safeguarding and what they treat with the Short Video Platforms in their daily practices.

## 1.2 Outline:

This research paper will start with the theoretical bases including the review of literature from previous research which form the theoretical framework for this paper. The methodology is introduced in Chapter 3, where the research process including research design, sampling, data collection, coding, and analysis will be introduced. Findings are analyzed in Chapter 4, where two qualitative approaches, thematic analysis, and document analysis, are adopted. The final chapter will give the conclusion of the research.

## 2 Theoretical Bases

### 2.1 Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)

In the 2003 biennial meeting of the General Conference of UNESCO, around 120 countries voted for and passed the multilateral treaty of the *International Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. The Convention not only defines the notion of intangible heritage (ICH) and describes the lists of ICH, but also points out the importance and responsibility of global governments in facilitating legislation, research, awareness-building, and supporting local communities in safeguarding their unique cultural heritage.

According to Article 2.2 of the Convention, Intangible Cultural Heritage is categorized as comprising five forms:

- a. Oral traditions and expressions (including epic, stories, and others with language as a vehicle);
- b. Performing arts (such as songs, music, and puppetry);
- c. Social practices, rituals, and festive events;
- d. Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe (e.g. folk medicine);
- e. Traditional craftsmanship

Following the definition from UNESCO Convention (2003), ICH is further explained as “The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills—as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces associated therewith—that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage” — Deeply rooted in the local communities, ICH is seen as the culture that people practice in their everyday lives. “It is beliefs and perspectives, ephemeral performances and events that are not tangible objects of culture like monuments, or paintings, books or artifacts” (Kurin, 2004, p.2). Sometimes, ICH is even perceived as the underlying ‘spirit’ of a certain cultural group (Kurin, 2004).

UNESCO Convention (2003) elaborates on the main features of recognizing ICH: firstly, it is transmitted from generation to generation; secondly, it is continually generated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their connection with nature, and their history; and thirdly, it provides communities and groups with a sense of continuity and identity. Therefore, we can use “inheritance”, “locality”, and “cultural identity” to summarize what is treasured most in the practices of safeguarding ICH.

It can be seen that the existence of ICH, as a living culture, is not static, but continually recreated and responds to the historical and social development of the communities and groups involved (Cominelli & Greffe, 2012). This is also why the safeguarding and sustainable development of ICH is necessary since the conservation, promotion, and maintenance of cultural diversity are essentially needed for the benefit of present and future generations (UNESCO, 2005, art. 2.6).

Regarding the responses to the UNESCO Convention from countries around the world, Kurin (2004), pointed out a main drawback and obstacle of the Convention. Firstly, the Convention requires states to adopt "necessary measures" to ensure the viability of ICH, Kurin argues that the envisioned outcomes cannot be “guaranteed” because culture changes and evolves. Other scholars also explained that the values of ICH are revealed through its use or the interaction between the practitioners and the ICH they are engaged with (Smith, 2006; Suga, 2009). Therefore, when past practices are no longer functionally useful or symbolically significant to a community, they're inevitably discarded. In this case, Kurin (2004) asserted, when implementing the Convention, UNESCO Member states should neither use monetary or symbolic incentives to guarantee the survival of those cultures and traditions that local communities want to abandon, nor even adopt harmful strategies to ‘freeze’ cultural activities under the pretense of protecting diversity or fighting cultural globalization. After all, the real purpose of the Convention is to support and let flourish the diverse traditional cultures globally so that they could have a better chance to survive, but no treaty could guarantee such results (Kurin, 2004). That is to say, listing UNESCO-registered ICH may have value for recognizing and valorizing various traditions, but it may hardly save them. The list of endangered ICH will highlight their needs for international help, but will not necessarily include action plans sufficient to ensure their survival (Kurin, 2004).

## **2.2 Intangible Cultural Heritage in China**

### *2.2.1 A Debate between the Market and Communities*

As a country comprised of 56 nations, 55 of which are categorized as Minority Ethnic Groups, China has a wide variety of cultures that have contributed to the cultural diversity of

the Chinese socio-cultural ecology. Since 2004, China has established an early-phase ICH management system, trying to preserve its rich traditional cultural assets. After the ratification of the ICH Convention in 2004, the Chinese government rapidly establish its own ICH regimen. Similar to UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO 2020b), the Chinese government has established a more detailed and localized standard listing program in order to recognize and categorize the enormous ICH assets across the country. All domestic ICH practices and their corresponding practitioners are compiled at an ascending level: the county, municipal, provincial, and national levels (Svensson & Maags, 2018).

Until 2022, China had registered 1557 national-level intangible cultural heritage items, with 43 recognized in the UNESCO ICH list, ranking first among all countries in the world. The debate and critical views on the Convention are inspiring Chinese policymakers to think about their operations of safeguarding ICH in China. Although China currently is doing an impressive job in documenting ICH objects, behind a large number of governmental recognition, are the country's intangible cultural heritage assets truly protected in a sustainable manner? What are the most effective ways to preserve them? These are questions worthy of further discussion.

When critically reviewing the UNESCO Convention and its designated roles for State Parties, many scholars argued that it ignored presenting the role of the 'market' in safeguarding ICH. Maags (2021) pointed out that it is seen as a contradiction in the scholarly literature when topics of "safeguarding" and "commercialization"<sup>2</sup> of ICH are simultaneously discussed. As Bortolotto (2019) underlined, the term "marketization" seems to be seen as a "taboo" that the designers of the Convention did not include. The debate about the necessity to protect ICH from "the market" arose and became prevalent since China established the "ICH management in 2004 in response to the Convention" (2003).

On one hand, negative effects, such as the loss of cultural ownership or over-commercialization of ICH (Chen 2015; Sigley 2010) are frequently observed in many previous studies on various industries in the practices of safeguarding ICH in China (Chen 2015; Massing 2018). This is analogous to the issue of over-commercialization in mass tourism at World Heritage Sites (WHS) (Caust and Vecco 2017). Scholars who oppose ICH commercialization worry that ICH practitioners within the communities might be marginalized or disempowered when the government takes the role of leading ICH practices in order to

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<sup>2</sup> Commercialisation is explained as "the act of using something to try to make a profit, especially in a way that other people do not approve of." See "Commercialization," Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 2020, <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/commercialization> (accessed on 28 August 2020). [THE PART HIGHLIGHTED CAN GO IN THE REFERENCE AND HERE YOU SIMPLY PUT (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 2020) ]

display ICH and guide consumption of ICH products on a national scale (Liang 2013; Chen 2015; Zhang 2020).

Other scholars, on the other hand, point out that the market could be a way to support safeguarding ICH. Firstly, many Chinese scholars advocate that ICH products and brands are important for the flourishing of ICH tourism and other cultural industries (Maags and Holbig 2016). Taking traditional craftsmanship for example, craft products are seen as the live embodiment of the ways of life and customs of local communities (Mignosa & Kotipalli, 2019), which means traditional craft commodities, therefore, are inseparable components of local ICH tourism. Some scholars (Ding & Zheng, 2015; Li et al., 2019) also explain that the reason why commercialization is essential for certain ICH is that it can increase public awareness or understanding of ICH, and stimulate consumption for potential consumers, such as embroidery products for tourists (Cao & He, 2018). Consumers or visitors who live outside the places where ICH is based are neither emotionally connected nor culturally linked with local communities, and they usually find it difficult to understand the values of ICH. Therefore, commodified ICH products could be an intermediary that bridges the gap between different cultures. ICH, or any other types of traditional culture, could only be embraced by the next generation and revitalized if there is a sustainable market for such ICH products (Wang, 2018). The debate reveals the worries and expectations of ICH marketization, as a way to support ICH safeguarding, from different Chinese scholars (Maags, 2021). As Maags (2021) asserted, the key to answering how ICH marketization can support ICH preservation in nowadays China is to find out HOW to marketize ICH and WHO benefits from it.

### *2.2.2 The Values of ICH*

In order to better understand the commodified ICH and its marketization, it is necessary to first examine what the values of ICH are and how the values change with time.

Smith (2006, p.108) asserted that heritage, whether tangible or intangible, is 'the construction and regulation of a range of values and understandings'. However, unlike the "tangible" world heritage that is assessed with a standard set of criteria, there are not criteria to recognise ICH. As the Convention explained, 'the value of ICH is defined by the communities themselves' (UNESCO, 2017). Since the cultures raised by the communities change and evolve with time, the interaction between ICH and its practitioners will also change. As Smith (2006, p. 108) states, the recognition of "cultural change" is one of the most important aspects of the ICH discourse and the entire topic of "intangibility." In fact, the "change" of the values is deemed as the most significant characteristic of an evolving ICH element (Su, 2019), and therefore, it is important to hear about how values and the change of values of ICH are explained from the ICH inheritors' perspectives.

But how can we interpret the 'values' of ICH from different angles and for various purposes? Scholars (del Barrio et al. 2012; Francioni 2012) have identified four co-existing values of cultural heritage: **intrinsic value, economic value, cultural value, and public value**. An ICH element can possess not just an intrinsic value for the community, but also has the potential public value in representing a national cultural identity, and the economic value of collaborating with different industries (Francioni 2012). Therefore, as a bearer of ICH, one of the essential premises of conveying the values of ICH is to figure out who is your target audience, and what purpose you are trying to achieve.

Maags (2018b) pointed out that the Chinese government is trying to find a way to attain ICH's intrinsic, public, and economic values simultaneously when promoting it. When a cultural practice in the community is officially recognized as an "intangible cultural heritage", the value of such cultural practice is legitimized and the inherent nature of ICH is changed (Zhu and Maags, 2020). In other words, the creation of a cultural practice as "heritage" is an "instrument for adding value" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995, p.374), the initial intrinsic value of the cultural practice to the community is extended to another value, a public value. Under such logic, Krep (2012, p.179) concludes that the more authentic an ICH product is believed to be by the public, the greater the increase of its economic value. Yet authenticity is often valorized mainly for its intrinsic value, which is usually discussed "outside" the market (Maags, 2021). Therefore, in China, we can observe a tension between the discourses about the preservation of ICH authenticity and ICH marketization; as Maags (2021) noticed the different coexisting values ascribed to ICH make it simultaneously an object that requires protection against the market and a commodity that relies in the market to be sold.

Therefore, the safeguarding purpose of ICH is volatile due to the paradox in the practice. Take traditional craftsmanship for example: the 2003 UNESCO Convention underlines that efforts should be focused on inspiring artisans to keep making crafts and passing on their skills and knowledge to others, especially within their own communities. ←→It is important to motivate artisans and craft inheritors to keep innovating and adapting their products to the market demands both at home and abroad. To move from a supply to a demand strategy, the practitioners and local communities require technical and financial support (Mignosa & Kotipalli, 2019). However, many local governments are trying to protect ICH from "the market" to conserve its authenticity during the early phase of the practices (Maags, 2021) and in this case, inheritors of some ICH, especially those with less awareness and few marketing channels, are facing challenges including less demand of their products than that of more 'popular ICH' products, as well as competition from "fake", or non-handmade, commodities due to the development of technology. Such a difficult situation may decrease



the intrinsic motivation of artisans to continue staying in the craft sector, which harms the initial purpose of safeguarding ICH.

In general, although many Chinese scholars who oppose ICH commodification keep emphasizing that the authenticity and integrity of cultural heritage will be harmed through over-commodification (Jiang & Li, 2012; Kang, 2011; Liu, 2004a, 2004b; Wang, 2006; Zeng, 2011), ICH is widely accepted as the 'heritage that is embodied in people rather than in inanimate object' (Logan, 2007, p.33) and the changeability of ICH is its basic characteristic (Su, 2019). This indicates that once the practitioner is making a living from the ICH, it is inevitable to intersect ICH preservation with 'market' practices. And now when Chinese policymakers are gaining more understanding of ICH values, the government practices are also improved in order to adapt to the nature of different cultures. After all, a more fundamental question that lies behind the discussions of authenticity and commodification is how ICH is understood as it and its values change with time (Su, 2019).

### 2.2.3 *Traditional Craftsmanship in the Creative Industry*

Creativity has been perceived as an efficient and effective tool for problem-solving, revitalizing culture, cities, and industries under the context of safeguarding cultural heritage (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 1998; Florida, 2005; Landry, 2000; Lysegård, 2012; G. Richards, 2014; G. Richards & Wilson, 2006) because it is a renewable, sustainable, and boundless resource that can be found anywhere in the world. The definition of "creative industries" can be quoted from what is commonly used by United Nations Conference on Trade and Commerce (UNCTAD, 2008, page?):

*Creative industries can be defined as the **cycle of creation, production, and commercialization** of products and services that uses **knowledge and intellectual capital as primary inputs**. They deal with the interplay of various sub-sectors ranging from traditional crafts, books, visual and performing arts to more technology-intensive and services-oriented fields such as the music and film industries, television and radio broadcasting, new media and design.*

Nowadays, the creative economy is one of the fastest-growing industries in the globe, contributing to 3% of the global GDP. According to the statistics from UNESCO, in 2015, the value of the global market of creative products more than doubled compared to 2002, indicating that the Creative Economy has expanded to become one of the greatest economic 'power banks' of our day (UNESCO.ORG, January 2021) – this fact is aligned with the Chinese government's shifting focus on the economic value of ICH. Meanwhile, due to the noticeably growing economic impact of ICH on its safeguarding operations and the enhanced economic

dimension of ICH, in 2019, the Evaluation Body of the Convention recommended formulating guidance for Member States to balance economic development and safeguarding measures, to maximize its potential to benefit heritage bearers and local communities while avoiding over-commercialization (UNESCO, 2021). Under the premise of preservation and non-excessive commodification, the ICH cultural products from different sectors of the creative industry can become the optimal medium for ICH to permeate the general consciousness and increase public awareness (Huang, Lyu, 2018). Therefore, the discussion of safeguarding ICH should inevitably be combined with the discussion of the development of the creative economy and ICH commercialization.

Petronela (2016) asserted that safeguarding ICH is a significant source for the economy since everywhere in the globe, individuals who recognize the values of ICH have their own ways of disseminating their knowledge and skills, generating economic values through the processes. Along with the development of China's ICH practices in recent years, it is observed that China's ICH legislation and administration have been increasingly taking ICH as a resource for economic growth since the mid-2000s, which indicates the Chinese government's increased focus on the economic value of ICH. Such a shift is an evident sign that the government support for the cultural industries is also growing (Keane 2013). In this case, not only ICH inheritors but also other practitioners in the cultural and creative industries are encouraged to utilize ICH, in a "reasonable" manner, as a resource to develop cultural products and services (Maags, 2021).

As already mentioned, the UNESCO Convention (2003) lists five main forms of Intangible Cultural Heritage, there the significance of Traditional Craftsmanship has been formally acknowledged by the international community. Traditional craftsmanship, as one of the main categories of ICH, is recognized to constitute a substantial portion of the cultural and creative economy (Henry, 2007). According to UNESCO's most recent study on the creative economy, the craft sector accounts for more than half of all cultural and creative production. That is because traditional craft products usually take handcrafted forms that make extensive use of materials including glass, fabrics, wood, metal, paper, and ceramics, which covers and overlaps a great number of topics and practices in the creative industries, such as fashion, visual art, and so forth. Previous ICH marketization was commonly seen in the tourism industry, especially in the form of traditional craftsmanship commodities. Now with the increasing collaboration between the creative industries and craft sector, it would be valuable to use Traditional Craftsmanship as a representative category and take a deeper look at how ICH contributes to the creative economy, and how the creative industries innovate the ways of interpreting ICH values through marketization.

With the rapid progress of mass urbanization, traditional craftsmanship and other forms of ICH are facing challenges in skill transmission and sustainable development; meanwhile, many cultural practices, knowledge, rituals, and languages are suffering from different levels of destruction as globalization develops (Lu et al., 2019). Mass manufacturing, whether by global businesses or small, local cottage industries, may easily provide products needed for everyday living at cheaper costs, both in terms of money and time, than handmade manufacture. Many artisans state that they find it difficult to keep up with the pace of such change (UNESCO - Traditional Craftsmanship, n.d.). Moreover, although traditional handcraft is one of the most tangible representations of ICH, the 2003 Convention focuses primarily on the preservation of skills and knowledge involved in craftsmanship rather than the craft goods themselves (UNESCO - Traditional Craftsmanship, n.d.). Therefore, it is necessary to find the answer of how traditional craft products, as tangible forms of the intangible culture, could achieve both their intrinsic and economic values under the context of globalization and urbanization.

Mignosa and Kotipalli (2019) asserted that the explanation of “creative industries” has important ramifications for the creative craft sector. *Firstly*, Individual innovation, skills, and talent are the foundation of the creative economy, regardless of whether one lives in a developing or developed nation, or is wealthy or poor — creativity is the one resource that is spread evenly around the globe. The disparity, however, resides in whether or not there is an environment that is favorable to the stimulation, development, and promotion of the creativity of artisans, which requires efforts by all the stakeholders, including not only government institutions, but also private enterprises, NGOs, crafts associations, and so forth. *Secondly*, innovative craft-development initiatives may be established in collaboration with other creative sectors, such as music, cinema, and television, for the co-creation of cultural products (Mignosa & Kotipalli, 2019). This is aligned with the previous point that innovation in the practices of safeguarding ICH requires the cooperation of all beneficiaries in the creative industries. *Moreover*, Mignosa and Kotipalli (2019) also pointed out that craft development projects should also consider the value chain: Creation-Production-Distribution-Consumption, whereas, unfortunately, interconnections in the chain are frequently ignored in practice. Therefore, we can infer that one of the main challenges, but also opportunities, of ICH commercialization in the creative industry is to find a way to communicate and integrate the different parts within the value chain. Here I argue that the development of technology might provide a sustainable approach for such cross-sector collaboration.

### **2.3 Short Video Platforms and ICH Promotion in China**

From the previous part, we can infer three main facts regarding the current Chinese ICH practices. Firstly, the change of ICH is inevitable as it is rooted in communities that evolve with time. Therefore, the interpretation of ICH values should respect local communities and bearers, while also be consistent with cultural development patterns. Failure to do so may lead to the marginalization and disempowerment of ICH bearers and communities. Secondly, in the process of promoting ICH, the Chinese government seeks to concurrently highlight its intrinsic value, public value, and economic value. However, due to divergent purposes among various stakeholders, conflicts can arise during the actual implementation of these values. Lastly, integrating ICH with the creative industry proves to be an effective approach for innovative ways of supporting ICH preservation. However, in practice, the interconnections within the value chain, Creation-Production-Distribution-Consumption, are often neglected. However, with the advancement of technology, the aforementioned issues are gradually being addressed and resolved.

We are currently in one of those periods of rapid change when digital technology, devices, and communication are renovating and reshaping knowledge sharing and information dissemination. Convergence in digital communications, especially mobile Internet, has altered how people work, how finances are distributed to production, the kind of initiatives that receive funding, and how information is managed (Keane, 2016). With the upgrading and transformation of IT technology, the cultural industry presents a trend of industrial convergence, with five main representing characteristics: cultural revitalization, functional value transformation, symbol value enhancement, technical value expansion, and regional value development (Xiang, 2015). It can be anticipated that the development of the cultural and creative industry in the next stage will focus on adapting to keep up with the industrial converging trends along with such IT technological upgrading and driving forward internal industrial innovation. And this new ecological background of the cultural and creative industry is the main premise for us to discuss the innovation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage.

The emergence of new media, as a branch of the creative industry, has provided convenience for the dissemination, inheritance, and preservation of ICH. Among the various possibilities here we focus on the rapid growth and widespread adoption of digital platforms, such as YouTube, Instagram, and WeChat, which are profoundly reshaping cultural production worldwide.

Short video platforms, among all these types of new media platforms, have offered an innovative and efficient instrument for promoting ICH and other creative productions online. The length of a short video is usually less than 5 minutes. The content is refined and rich,

adapting to the fast-paced life, and the suggesting vertical-video format that fits the screen of smart phone also suits the using habits of mobile users. The interaction is more active, and the maturity of artificial intelligence technologies such as face recognition makes short videos more interesting and entertaining. The rapid development of short videos gives rise to short video marketing. In China, particularly, the topic of how short video platforms contribute to the promotion of ICH arise with the popularity of short video platforms.

Firstly, with the advent of the 5G era in China, the mobile Internet environment has witnessed significant advancements, leading to transformative changes in people's lifestyles. Mobile technology, coupled with the development of smartphones and reduced mobile data costs, has facilitated the proliferation of short videos. According to the White Paper on the Development of China's Digital Economy (2021), the scale of China's digital economy has reached 39.2 trillion Yuan in 2020, accounting for 38.6% of GDP, and becoming a key driving force for stable economic growth (White Paper, 2021). Therefore, China's thriving mobile technologies and digital economy market have provided a solid foundation for the widespread adoption of short video applications.

Secondly, the market of short video platforms has become increasingly mature. Notably, China's social short video industry has experienced a rapid growth: with the advancement and evolution of media technology and the fast proliferation of wireless and mobile devices, online video consumption has become an integral component of the daily lives of the majority of young people. Statistics show that, as of June 2019, the number of Chinese users of Short-Video Platforms (marketers generally agree that any video under 60 seconds is short-form, with the best duration between 31 to 60 seconds) reached 648 million, covering 78.2% of mobile users. The usage rate of Short-form Streaming Video, for the first time, exceeded that of Online (long) Video, becoming the communication form with the highest usage rate and high usage viscosity (Statistical Report on China's Internet Development, 2019). It can be seen that Chinese short video platforms have amassed significant loyal user groups, and have fundamentally transformed people's lifestyles, serving as a crucial form of social interaction. Douyin (Chinese version of TikTok), as a representative short video platform, stands out and ranks at the top in the App Store free ranking (Ma & Wang, 2018). As of May 2019, Douyin had boasted 300 million daily active users (DAU), and generated a substantial advertising revenue of 2.6 billion, solidifying its position as the most popular mobile application in China (Huang & Lin, 2019).

*The "Algorithm Recommendation + Short Video" Model for ICH Marketing*

Various consuming behaviors are generated from what we do in our everyday life and from the differences in our personalities, hobbies, or even geographical environment. These are the variables that brands and businesses are trying to understand and grasp. Managers used to rely on experience and intuition to make business decisions, such as selling umbrellas before the rainy season or advertising vehicles and hotels at airports. However, these methods of information distribution and user management have proved to be inefficient and unreliable when dealing with market segments in the digital era (Xiao, 2021). Therefore, relying on multidimensional consumer data to assist in the management, improve operational efficiency, and reduce operational and marketing costs has become an urgent need for businesses. By inputting these massive consumer variables into computers as data information and uploading them to cloud storage, a database is formed. Then, mathematical models are used to calculate and organize vast amounts of data, ultimately providing multidimensional, relatively objective, and visualized data indicators. This is the basic logic of big data (Xiao, 2021).

E-commerce and content social platforms use "tags" to define and categorize the user profiles of each individual, which enables the customization of diverse content to meet users' needs for information, entertainment, product, and service consumption. Every attempt of online interaction and status update regarding recommended content by users is instantly relayed back into the system. Over time, billions of interactive data points assist algorithmic logic in growing and optimizing the user profiles in the database, enhancing the accuracy of recommendations. This ongoing process ultimately achieves intelligent recommendation capabilities. Moreover, recommendations based on algorithmic logic innovate the way information is distributed, from indiscriminate one-way communication to an interactive "point-to-point" approach. For users, the content they are interested in is prioritized and presented in a continuously extending information flow interface. This not only helps avoid uninteresting information but also provides a real-time updated interface where the volume of content and page capacity is virtually limitless.

Therefore, as Wang (2021) pointed out, for the promotion of ICH in China, the advantages of the "Algorithm + Short Video" model are evident, primarily encompassing the following three points:

First, the algorithmic recommendation logic not only breaks the geographic limitations but also expands the scope of information dissemination. Through information and digital construction, the dissemination of ICH can break the boundaries of time and space and achieve a faster and wider range of development (Qi, Wang & He, 2022). Xiao (2021) explains that the use habits of mobile users have shifted from actively seeking for information and reading in segmented sections on traditional media to passively receiving information and

"scrolling through the information stream" (source?) on digital platforms. Since most users rarely encounter ICH content in their daily lives, they rarely proactively search for ICH keywords, which hinders the dissemination of ICH and restricts users' access to ICH information. However, short video platforms based on recommendation algorithms can designate tags such as traditional culture, history, collectibles, etc. to ICH content and distribute it to users who are interested in those tags (Xiao, 2021). Through the interaction and perusing of these users, the content can be recommended to an even larger audience. Recommendation algorithms, therefore, allow niche ICH content to reach a broader user base, thereby facilitating its dissemination.

Secondly, the "Algorithm Recommendation + Short Video" model is gradually seen as an efficient and cost-effective solution for ICH promoters. Despite ongoing efforts by governments across China to safeguard ICH, with increased financial investment and offline activities aimed at promoting and educating about ICH, the limited budget for promotion has restricted its reach and effectiveness to a small scale (Wang, 2021). Moreover, due to limited forms of traditional promotion, the dissemination of ICH lags far behind the rate at which ICH is disappearing. However, the emergence of short videos has effectively mitigated this issue due to the low entry barriers and low production costs. ICH practitioners can simply use a smartphone to complete the filming and post-production processes, allowing them to share their work anytime and anywhere. This enhances the protection and promotional effectiveness of ICH.

Lastly, short video platforms have innovated the marketing form of ICH and ignited its commercial potential. Some ICH elements ultimately find themselves in a dilemma of being overlooked and discarded, not only due to a lack of protection by the government but also because of the absence of a market. Under the pressure to survive, when the practice of ICH practitioners is unable to sustain their basic livelihood, it becomes more likely for a discontinuity in the transmission of ICH to occur. Short videos have activated the market for ICH, generating not only the social value of ICH but also its economic value. For example, some craftsmen and artisans have created their own personal brand with the title of "ICH inheritor", attracting a large number of followers on short video platforms. This not only increases their public exposure and reputation but also results in more orders for ICH products.

#### *Short Video Platform as Multi-sided Market*

Short Video Platforms are a typical case of multi-sided markets in the creative industries, which we define as aggregators of institutional connections that serve as intermediaries between end-users and content and service providers (Poell et al., 2021). Multi-sided platforms have become prominent in the cultural industries, as well as many other industries. TikTok, Spotify, and Netflix are examples of multi-sided online platforms in the cultural sectors. According to Evans and Schmalensee (2016), a platform's function is to act as a "matchmaker" between various stakeholders in a platform market, including customers or "end-users," enterprises, governments, organizations, and others. With the collaboration among different stakeholders, short video platforms provide an approach to mitigate the failing of the interconnection within the value chain of ICH practices (Mignosa & Kotipalli, 2019).

It is hardly possible for individual ICH practitioners to connect to the industry chain on their own, which has been one of the main obstacles to the long-term market development of ICH. The streaming short-video platforms not only significantly boost the popularity of ICH topics, providing educational benefits to users and the market as a whole, it also plays a vital role in linking various stakeholders in the industry, including inheritors, product designers, manufacturers, online content creators, and e-commerce operators. This enables all the parts of the collaboration to find their respective positions within the industry, collectively exploring the cultural value of ICH, preserving traditional skills, producing culturally creative products, and promoting their ICH products. Additionally, by utilizing recommendation algorithms, platforms can match interested consumers with relevant products, thereby forming a complete value chain (Xiao, 2021).

#### *Cultural Intermediaries and MCN Agencies*

The 2019 Tiktok Data Report released by Tiktok showed that 1,275 of China's national ICH projects had registered IDs on Tiktok, with a coverage rate of 93% of Chinese ICH inheritors, and related content received 3.33 billion "likes" from users of the platform; on average, one ICH video is created every three seconds (TikTok Data Report, 2019). With such boosted usage of Video Streaming Platforms by ICH practitioners, questions, such as "How to use Streaming Video Platforms to effectively disseminate ICH", have become a new topic in the fields of cultural heritage and media marketing (Wang & Yang, 2019). Therefore, it is valuable to dig deeper and examine how these platforms are contributing to the craft sector and what specific motivations craft practitioners have for using Video Streaming Platforms as marketing tools, as opposed to other social media platforms.

Video Streaming Platforms, such as TikTok, are manifestations of **user-generated media (UGM)** because their foundation is content creation (Li et al., 2019). After all, UGM



would not thrive without user-generated materials. Theoretically, a video streaming platform that provides a substantial quantity of content could attract a large number of users to be online simultaneously. A platform where both users and content are vibrant can create an immersive reading and consumption experience that leaves users wanting more and provides a deep understanding of users' preferences. Some platforms even foster a culture of community. An open and diverse content ecosystem ensures a consistent flow of exposure to ICH content, enabling more individuals to learn, appreciate, and consume ICH culture and products. This aligns with the goals of ICH preservation and innovation. In this case, although the algorithm recommendation technology has solved the questions regarding user-preference learning, it is also necessary to examine how to ensure such a user-friendly environment, including learning what are the motivations of using streaming platforms by both consumer and content creators as their “users”.

Video Streaming Platforms have also changed the video-sharing economy, in which material is now made by an enormous number of users as opposed to a small group of media professionals (Khan, 2017). Shao (2009) explains that users engage with UGM in three aspects: Consuming (i.e., browsing, watching, reading, and seeing), Participating (i.e., liking, adding, sharing, posting, and commenting), and Producing (i.e.: creating and publishing personal content). Unlike other social media platforms, such as Instagram or Twitter, streaming short video platforms utilize a decentralized mechanism for content creation and distribution, and they are constantly hunting for innovative and appealing content without any privilege (Zhao, 2022). This means the more popular the video is, the more views it will win from the platform’s recommendation algorithm. With the combined cogent-generating model – the Professional Generated Content (PGC) + User Generated Content (UGC), users from the short video platforms are encouraged to produce creative videos. The development of UGM expands media usage now to a wider range of online activities (Shao, 2009). Referring to the U&G model by Gao and Feng (2016), when craft inheritors use video streaming platforms, they are usually taking the role of either the “end-users”, seeking for entertainment and information, or the “content generators” who tend to pursue social interaction, self-expression, or impression management. When ICH inheritors play the latter role, some of them may have the intention to outsource professional support in their video productions.

In the creative industries, the term “Cultural Producer” is broadly used to refer to “actors and organizations engaged in the creation, distribution, marketing, and monetization of symbolic artifacts” (Poell et al., 2021), p.9). Under such a definition, both individuals and professional agencies on the short video platforms can be seen as *cultural producers* since they are all the groups who keep providing content to attract end-users and ultimately increase the value of the platforms. Apart from the individual ICH craft practitioners, the MCN agencies

compose an essential part in facilitating the video content, which Timothy Havens (2014) describes as the *cultural intermediaries*: they “serve as one of the prime vehicles through which organizational priorities find their way into representational practices” (Havens, 2014), p.40). In China, such cultural intermediaries normally exist in the form of Multi-Channel-Network (MCN) agencies to facilitate content creation and information dissemination for ICH inheritors. In fact, there exists a rather complex value network among stakeholders on the short video platforms, as illustrated in a value map (Figure 1) created by Tang (2021). The value map indicates that craft ICH inheritors collaborate with MCN agencies in order to enhance their video qualities and gain access to more business resources, thereby achieving ICH commercialization (Tang, 2021). Therefore, Tang (2021) points out that short video platforms interconnect various stakeholders together, enabling the integration of the value chain of traditional handicrafts.

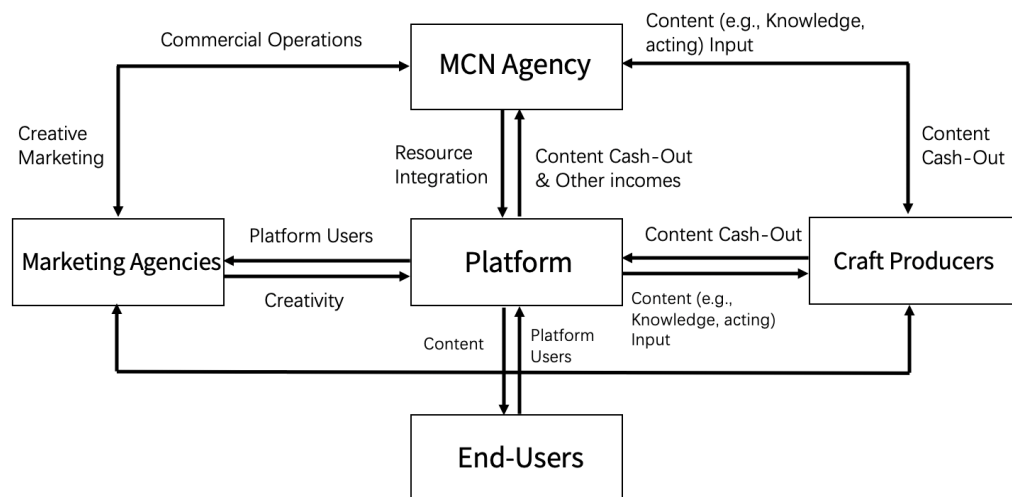


Figure 1. ICH Stakeholders on Short Video Platforms (Tang, 2021)

Therefore, when examining the topics regarding motivations and behaviors of ICH inheritors using short video platforms, it is necessary to combine the views of both the craft practitioners and the talent agencies together, because they are sometimes inseparable objects to discuss. It is valuable to discuss, from a combined perspective, questions such as how digital marketing affects the ICH practitioners’ motivations; what factors affect their choices of marketing strategies; and how ICH inheritors benefit by harnessing digital marketing tools. Little research exists regarding the motivations for using video-streaming marketing by ICH inheritors. Answering this question would not only help streaming platforms better understand the needs of the ICH inheritors group but also help Chinese policymakers to gain a better understanding of what is really needed by ICH inheritors to fulfil the aim of safeguarding ICH and providing more effective preservation support.

### **3. Methodology**

The previous chapter has discussed the government practices in safeguarding Chinese ICH and with the development of media technology, the swift expansion of the short-video market has introduced the Short Video Platforms to the ICH practitioners as a new tool for ICH promotion. Therefore, the tension between the intrinsic value of ICH for its bearers and communities and the economic values of ICH for other stakeholders in the industry might be intensified, because the short video platforms are continuously trying to construct a complete closed-loop that covers content, social interaction, and e-commerce, in which both end-users and content creators engage in the commodity-transaction process (Si, 2021). Therefore, the issue regarding how the economic value and intrinsic value (or authenticity) are well balanced in the ICH marketization, in line with the ICH safeguarding goals of the Chinese government, has arisen and is widely discussed.

Consequently, this qualitative study focuses on whether Short Video Platforms can play a supporting role in facilitating ICH safeguarding in China, and how ICH practitioners could practice with it. Therefore, the research question of this paper is formed: “To what extent can Short Video Platforms provide an additional way of facilitating ICH safeguarding in China”? The three subquestions are: 1) “What are the current practices of Chinese ICH”? 2) “Why do ICH practitioners use Short Video Platforms and how”? 3) “What problem do Short Video Platforms solve in the practice of ICH preservation”? This chapter elaborates on the research method used to investigate these questions. The sampling process is described in section 3.1, along with the rationale for selecting a qualitative approach and the clarification of selecting the qualitative content analysis. The sampling process and data collection are explained in section 3.2, followed by a description of the coding process 3.3. The last section of this chapter explains the logic of data analysis.

#### **3.0 Definitions**

##### *ICH Inheritors*

Similar to UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO 2020b), the Chinese government has established a more detailed and localized standard listing program in order to recognize and categorize the enormous ICH assets across the country. All domestic ICH practices and their corresponding practitioners are compiled at an ascending level: the county, municipal, provincial, and national levels (Svensson & Maags, 2018). In this research, unless specifically stated, the term ‘ICH Inheritors’ refers to the Chinese ICH practitioners who are officially recognized as the inheritor of a specific ICH practice.

### *ICH MCN Agency*

From the previous explanation in section 2.3, a Multi-Channel-Network (MCN) agency is a third-party creative-solution agency that helps facilitate content creation and information dissemination for streaming-video platforms. In China, regarding the ICH marketization, there are professional MCN agencies that focus on ICH Marketization practices through short video platforms, live streaming, and other channels. Therefore, in this research, we use ICH MCN Agency to refer to the MCN Agency that professionally conducts ICH communication and dissemination, mainly through the streaming-video platforms.

*Finally, in line with what has been stated before in section 1.2.2., it is important to note that this research will exclusively focus on Dutch art museums. This excludes specialized fashion museums, such as the Fashion for Good Museum. These museums will not be included in this research as the role of fashion seems obvious considering the fact that it is their only focus. In contrast, this research will focus on those Dutch museums that were founded as traditional art museums who have adopted fashion into their collections and exhibitions.*

### **3.1 Research Design**

A qualitative research methodology is adopted because qualitative analysis allows for a descriptive, open, and interpretative understanding of the selected data (Bryman, 2016). Conceptual insights, such as “value interpretation” and “attitudes” about a certain issue, could also be better measured and evaluated through qualitative data. In order to answer the questions of this research, two qualitative approaches are chosen: the document analysis and semi-structured interview. The previous literature review has indicated a contradiction between the concepts of “Marketization” and “Safeguarding” in ICH. Consequently, by introducing Short Video Platforms and investigating their role in mitigating the tension could not provide us with an assumption if the Short Video Platforms can play a positive or negative role in facilitating ICH safeguarding. Therefore, an inductive approach will allow the researcher to explore border topics, and examine the diverse patterns of Short Video Platforms’ roles between ICH marketization and preservation.

In order to find answers to the subquestions 1) “What are the current practices of Chinese ICH?” and 2) “Why do ICH practitioners use Short Video Platforms and how?”, three industrial reports about ICH practices in China are analyzed in order to gain a general picture of the Chinese ICH market. One is provided by one of the Chinese think tanks regarding the Development Status of China's ICH so that data regarding ICH community practices can be retrieved to complement with the analysis of interviews for subquestion 1. Similarly, the second

and third reports are focusing on the data regarding ICH marketization in China so that the researcher can gain a brief understanding of the Chinese ICH market, and the data are adopted to complement the analysis of interviews for subquestion 2. The reports also allow the researcher of the paper to use quantitative data as a proof or reference to evaluate the subjective interview codes.

Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher of this paper. This is advantageous for this research because many interviewees, particularly the ICH inheritors, are not well-educated or experienced with the form of an interview. Therefore, this method not only creates a topic guide within a predetermined thematic framework but also provides greater openness between the researcher and the interviewee, which may lead to new dimensions to the topics and fill the knowledge gaps between the researcher and the interviewees since it allows for discussion, explanation, and extension to other topics (Ritchie et al., 2013).

### **3.2 Sampling and Data Collection**

Following the goals of the research, the data was gathered among both Chinese ICH craft practitioners who own at least one Chinese Short Video Platform account, such as Douyin, RED, or Kuaishou. As explained in the previous part, there are two typical types of content-creating methods in China: the inheritors manage their accounts themselves, and there are ICH MCN agencies collaborating with ICH inheritors in facilitating their video-making and dissemination. Therefore, when choosing interviewees, I divide the participants into two groups: ICH inheritors and ICH MCN agencies who cooperate with ICH inheritors for ICH promotion and dissemination.

The first sample group is the ICH inheritor. A non-probability purposive sampling was adopted to invite participants, following the criteria of currently being an ICH inheritor and are still practicing the skill. The difficulty of invitation of ICH inheritors is that it is difficult to conduct face-to-face interviews so that all interviews were conducted through online meeting software, which some elder inheritors find it hard to handle the meeting software. Therefore, the researcher has successfully invited 5 ICH inheritors who are from different types of craft: tie-dyeing, paper-cutting, handmade textile, wheat straw patchwork, and Tangka. An overview of Group 1 can be found in Table 3.1 in Appendix A.

The second sample group contains practitioners working as MCN agencies for both company and personal studios, adopting a non-probability purposive sampling approach. Group 2 is also interviewed through online meeting software and an overview of Group 2 can be found in Table 3.2 in Appendix A.

### 3.3 Coding & Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was adopted by using Atlas.ti after the interviews, trying to sort out the themes, or factors, that ICH practitioners value most in using short video platforms and what could be done in the future to make short video platforms an effective tool to support safeguarding ICH. As Braun and Clarke indicate, “A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (2006, p. 82). Meanwhile, the thematic analysis could also connect the research question to a broader discussion about ICH commercialization that is worth discussing in the future.

Interview data are processed following the thematic analysis steps from the initial step of familiarizing with the data to finding out the patterns revealed through coding. Eventually, all interview transcriptions were coded based on the coding scheme in Appendix B in English (since the original transcriptions were in Chinese). Eventually, there are 114 codes generated from the interview results, which are grouped into 15 categories. Thematic analysis was conducted through the code book in correspondent to the subquestions of this research.

## 4. Findings and Analysis

### 4.1 Current Community Practices in China

Before diving into the discussion of how Short Video Platforms facilitate ICH safeguarding, it is necessary in this section to start by examining the current ICH practices in China’s local communities in order to find out how Chinese ICH practitioners understand the values of ICH and its preservation. By answering these questions, we can further relate it to the following sections to discuss what current issues could be solved through the usage of the Short Video Platform, and for what purposes different stakeholders choose to adopt it.

The analysis of Chinese ICH community practices in this section contains both document analysis from the *Research Report on the Development Status of China's Intangible Cultural Heritage (2020)* (hereafter referred to as the “ICH Report”) to gain a macro view of ICH practices in China, and the thematic analysis from the interviewee's responses in order to obtain more insights from a micro perspective.

#### 4.1.1 ICH Inheritance

As introduced in section 2.2.1, referring to UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO 2020b), the Chinese government has established a more detailed and localized standard listing program in order to recognize and

categorize the enormous ICH assets across the country. All domestic ICH practices and their corresponding practitioners are compiled at an ascending level: the county, municipal, provincial, and national levels (Svensson & Maags, 2018). Until 2022, over 90 thousand Chinese ICH practitioners are officially recognized as the “ICH Inheritors” among different levels, 3062 of which are identified at the national level, which can be seen as the “masters” of their ICH practices. According to the data from *ICH Report*, the average age of Chinese inheritors shows a trend to become younger at national, provincial, and municipal levels (Table 4.1), which indicates a rising tendency in the number of ICH practitioners from the younger generation. Meanwhile, based on the survey about the inheritors’ educational background from the *ICH Report*, more than half of the surveyed inheritors obtained a college degree or higher, and 2.94% of them have a postgraduate degree or above. The change is particularly important for the ICH safeguarding practices in nowadays China because the elder generation of ICH practitioners was mostly living in rural communities with lower levels of education and was not able to engage in written transmission of their ICH practices. Therefore, the improvement of ICH practitioners’ education level suggests a potentially higher level of their learning, research, and innovative capabilities.

Table 4.1 also illustrates that the ICH inheritor group at the County Level exhibits an aging characteristic, with 20.7% of inheritors aged 61 and above. This gives rise to an issue of inheritance for those county-level ICH practices.

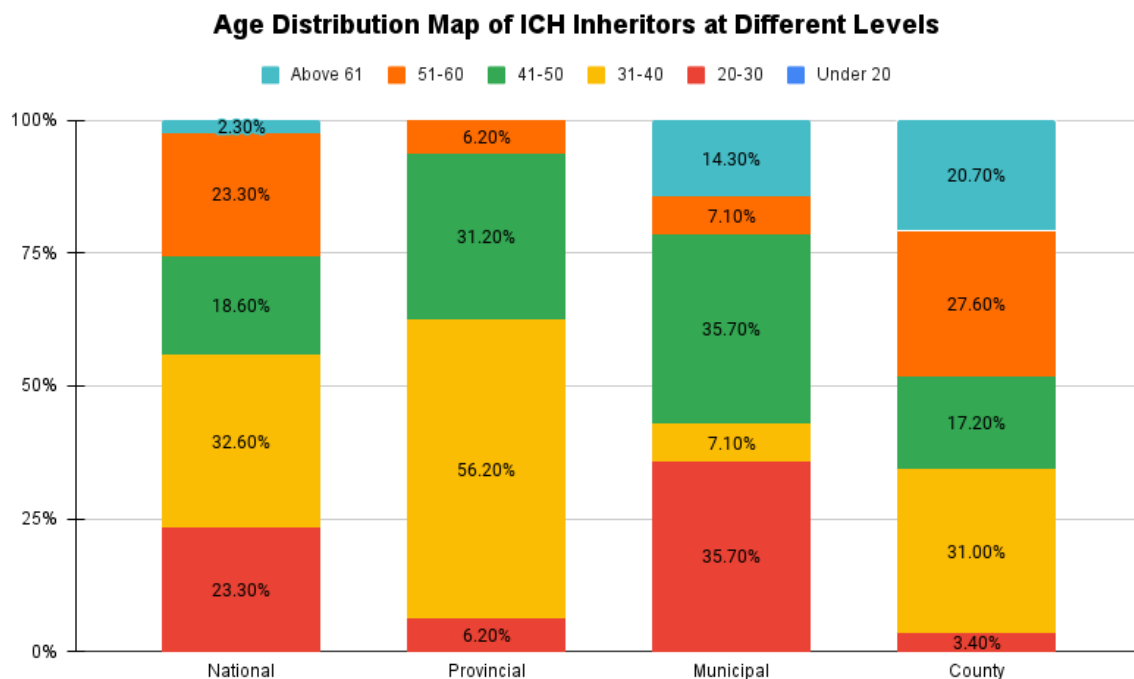


Table 4.1

Regarding the aging problem in the rural area, three respondents discussed it, and a practical issue is noticed in the community practice:

*“In my city, there is a provincial-level paper-cut inheritor who is very old, but his skill is really really exquisite. It is very regret that only a few local people know that he can do paper-cut.”* (R3:I)

Although the Chinese government is actively proceeding with the ICH preservation and documentation, the elder-generation ICH inheritors sometimes find it difficult to effectively connect and communicate with the general public, which hinders the education and transmission of ICH skills. Therefore, solutions for efficient communication between ICH inheritors and the general public could be further investigated regarding skill-passing from one generation to the next.

#### 4.1.2 Government Guidance

Both report data and interview results reveal the important role of government in providing education opportunities for current and potential ICH inheritors in the communities and raising public awareness of ICH. This section will discuss the government’s role in education guidance, and the latter role will be elaborated in section 4.2.

There are mainly four ways to inherit ICH (Table 4.2), based on the *ICH Report*: over 60% of ICH inheritance occurs through Societal Inheritance, breaking the constraints of past approaches that limit in blood relatives or family connections. This approach expands ICH inheritance to the broader potential inheritors, which increases the success of safeguarding specific ICH practices.



## Methods of ICH Inheritance

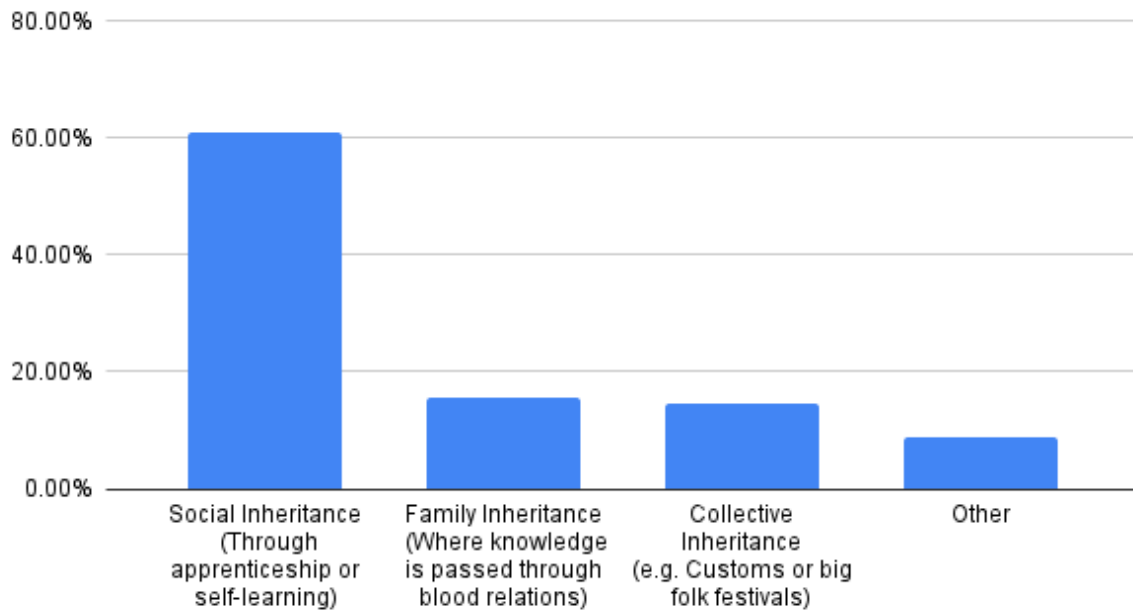


Table 4.2

*“In our county, there are many training programs organized by the county government and local cultural departments, and they invite me to teach wheat straw patchwork (an ICH practice). There are two types: general and practical training. General training usually takes a few days, but practical training is more intensive, lasting at least one week or even up to 11 days. I teach this training session every year, teaching about two to three hundred students. There are also individuals who come to my studio to learn my skill. Kindergarten teachers, for example, came to learn so that they can teach kids in kindergarten. Kids get to know this ICH from a very young age, which is good for at least knowing this practice.” (R4:l)*

All respondents from the ICH Inheritor group are engaging in at least one type of teaching activity organized by governmental institutions, such as local colleges, community workshops, and other paid or voluntary events. It can be observed from the respondents that they share an enthusiasm and sense of responsibility in participating in such educational activities, both for teaching and studying, and they also share a feeling of worries about the lack of inheritor for their ICH practices. The various forms of ICH training programs in China correspond to the UNESCO Convention’s (2003) description of the global government’s responsibility in facilitating legislation, researching, awareness-building, and supporting local communities in safeguarding their unique cultural heritage. Such action by the Chinese government has guaranteed a mass exposure of local ICH practices to their communities and even a broader group of audiences from society.

#### 4.1.3 ICH Marketization

Although the Chinese government appears to effectively head toward the sustainable goal of ICH education and inheritance, there exists another key obstacle that hinders the inheritors to remain in the industry — the economic sustainability of ICH inheritors. 50.98% of surveyed inheritors from *the ICH Report* admitted a lack of financial support in their ICH practices, which is proven by the inheritor respondents in the interviews of this research.

*“There is a standard annual government funding for all provincial-level inheritors as 6000 Yuan, and 3000 Yuan for the municipal-level inheritors, and there is not even designated funding for the county-level inheritors.”* (R3:I)

*“It is very little, we can’t live just depending on the government stipend.”* (R1:I)

Apart from educational programs for the talent cultivation of inheritors, the development of safeguarding ICH requires substantial financial support from the government or society in a number of aspects, including ICH promotion and publicity efforts, and other costing associated with producing and promoting heritage products. As discussed in Chapter 2.2, since the UNESCO Convention (2003) did not involve chapters regarding ‘marketization’, Maags (2021) points out that the Chinese government, closely referring to UNESCO’s recommendation, also ignored the role of marketization in their early legislation and inheritor programs. In this case, the importance of marketization, as a complementary way to support ICH safeguarding, should not be neglected, particularly in the craft sector where craft commodities are inseparable parts of the cultural practices and rely on being sold through the market. All inheritor respondents have shared their experiences in selling their ICH commodities within and outside their communities, and how it is important to remain craft business in their daily practices.

Through the interviews, the researcher of this paper has observed three main features when ICH inheritors engage in business practices of their own. Firstly, the production of ICH crafts for commercial purposes is usually taken in small-scale home-based workshops in rural communities, with limited output and distribution channels. Secondly, a collective workshop where people (mostly women) in the village collectively produce a certain type of craft products is regularly seen in most Chinese ethnic minority communities. These workshops are usually led and organized by a skilled and experienced individual, often referred to as a “leader” or “foregoer”, who is responsible for coordinating internal production and managing external sales. The researcher of this paper discusses that these community leaders are the key players in safeguarding ICH, for they are usually the ones in the community who proactively seek a way out for their craft commodities; they are open-thinking, possess an entrepreneurial

mindset, and show more passion to explore new possibilities to promote and sell their ICH products. Thirdly, it is less to expect such community-based workshops to be managed as an enterprise in China, because many practitioners, especially lower-level ICH inheritors, consider the ICH skill as an alternative source of income since their main job is still farming.

*“This studio, in fact, is in a very humane operation mode, and we do not want to operate like a company in our rural areas, especially in our minority communities. Because for the people in the village, handicraft textile is an alternative income in addition to farming. That is to say, our main work in the village is actually farming, and then we raise some livestock, poultry. People engage in textile crafts in their spare time, so it is an alternative income for women.”* (R1: 1)

It can be inferred that it is costly, both in time and energy, for many ICH practitioners to operate and sell their craft products as a business due to the particularity of Chinese craftsmen in rural areas. Therefore, solutions for the less-costly way of connecting the ICH practitioners and potential consumers should be introduced to mitigate the inefficiency of the value chain, Creation-Production-Distribution-Consumption (Mignosa and Kotipalli, 2019), of the community craft marketization in China.

## **2. Value Interpretation: Understandings and Perceptions**

The ‘values’ of ICH are discussed in section 2.2.2, which introduces four co-existing values of cultural heritage: intrinsic value, economic value, cultural value, and public value (del Barrio et al. 2012; Francioni 2012). Maags (2018b) points out that the Chinese government is attempting to simultaneously highlight the ICH’s intrinsic, public, and economic values when conducting ICH promotion. Therefore, this section will further investigate, through the interviews from both inheritor and MCN agencies’ perspectives, how different ICH practitioners value their ICH practices.

### **4.2.1 Identity and Authenticity: Value Interpretation by ICH Inheritors**

From interviewing ICH inheritor groups, the discussion of respondents regarding ICH values mainly concentrates on how they adapt to their identity shifting (from ICH practitioner to ICH inheritor) and how they accept their ICH practices change with time.

#### *Identity*

“Social Responsibility”, “Official Recognition”, and “Personal Brand” are the common codes that arise from the interviews of all respondents.

*“I think official recognition is quite useful. Firstly, when commercial cooperation with many partners, they’d like you to have some kind of official title. It’s your personal brand, and it actually has commercial value. If you have such official or authoritative recognition, they may perceive the cooperation as reliable. Also, personally, I feel being recognized as the “ICH Inheritor” gives me a greater sense of responsibility to promote my ICH culture to the public as a representative. I take it as an incentive or motivation for myself.” (R2: 1)*

As an ICH inheritor of the tie-dye technique, respondent 2 is also the CEO of her tie-dye enterprise focusing on providing tie-dye experiences and classes in one of China's most visited tourist villages. The sense of social responsibility has brought an intrinsic motivation for ICH inheritors to promote and communicate their culture with more audiences. The public value of official recognition by the Chinese government empowers the ICH practitioners with an increasing economic value of their personal brand. When they conduct ICH practices now, they tend to emphasize their title as ICH inheritors. In this case, the intrinsic value, economic value, and public value of ICH are achieved simultaneously.

While official recognition brought change to the social status of ICH practitioners from ordinary craftsmen to cultural representatives, the public shows a higher expectation, or misunderstanding, of ICH inheritors.

*“For example, when Lanxu (the tie-dye brand) was doing a co-branding cooperation with NBA, they deemed that I have a design background to do the design work, which is not always necessary as an ICH inheritor. So that makes me start to think about how to transfer from a craft-skill bearer to a designer in order to fit the new demand with the shift of my identity. And I think it inspired me to rethink my identity as an “ICH Inheritor”. The title is not a limitation, but a process of complementing and moving forward.” (R2: 1)*

This brings to a discussion about the meaning and value of becoming an ICH inheritor. Is it a continuation and unchanged inheritance of a specific craft skill? Is it an educator and connector between the public and the community culture? Or is it a part of market stakeholders that keep fitting and changing to meet the needs of modern consumers? ICH safeguarding practices have now put ICH practitioners in a new context and provide them with new identities, which urges every ICH inheritor needs to reevaluate what role they are playing in the safeguarding of Chinese ICH.

### *Authenticity*

Authenticity is often discussed mainly for its intrinsic value (Maags, 2021). When asked about the attitudes and interpretation of ICH safeguarding, two respondents mentioned that

the over-commodification to fit the demand of the younger generation has harmed the authenticity of the traditional ICH, and some changes in the practices have damaged the intrinsic value of ICH.

*“Our Chiping paper-cutting has its unique local and regional characteristics, it includes a distinctive paper-cutting language. What is paper-cutting language? In my opinion, it is the message that the artist wants to convey to the audience through the paper-cutting. Every paper-cutting ICH in different area got their own culture behind.” (R3:1)*

Locality and regional uniqueness are mostly discussed regarding the topic of authenticity in the interviews. All inheritor respondents mentioned the regional uniqueness of their ICH practices and emphasized that their practices cannot be found in other areas of China. Regardless supporting the ICH marketization or not, all respondents treasure the intrinsic value of their ICH practices that represent their community cultures. Therefore, any innovation in safeguarding any ICH practice should not neglect and discard the part where the community's culture is lying.

#### 4.2.2 Economic Value: Value Interpretation by Agencies

It is no surprise that agency respondents are all focusing on the economic value of ICH. Their interpretations of the economic value of ICH lie in two main angles: the marketization potential and the cash-out logic.

For all agency respondents, the revitalization of ICH essentially is the process of ICH commercialization. Those with higher marketization potentials naturally have a chance to survive, while those with a lack of market demand and that fail to survive in the business competition will eventually become a piece of history and be preserved in the museums. From their point of view, the economic value serves as the foundation of safeguarding ICH, and its cultural value serves as the empowerment of its economic value.

*“It is actually a filtering system. For all these dying cultures, the market offers them a last chance to give it a try before they become the history presented in the museums. It is very simple, just through the test of the market. Personally, I think the process is alike Evolution Theory, the point is who can fit the system.” (R8: A)*

As the founder of China's biggest ICH MCN agency, respondent 6 shared his experiences of ICH commodification and indicates that different types of ICH practices have different cash-out logic, which provides ICH with multiple ways to find its most appropriate presentation through commercialization.

*“When my company commercializes ICH, we first categorize ICH into several domains: such as clothing, food, housing, interests, and so on. Let’s take Guqin (a traditional Chinese musical instrument) for example, there are ICH inheritors who play Guqin and some inheritors who make Guqins, which leads to completely different commercialization approaches. In the case of making Guqin, the commodity is the instrument, but when it comes to playing Guqin, the commodity turns to the performance itself. The cash-out logic for different commodities is quite different. Even within the same ICH type, the strategies can also differ from each other.”*  
(R6: A)

Serving as ICH MCN agencies, all respondents show an appreciation for the intrinsic value and regional uniqueness of ICH, not only because it is the marketing gimmick that increases the economic value of their ICH commodities, but also because they share a sense of social responsibility as well for safeguarding ICH, but with a different approach from ICH inheritors. After all, for MCN agencies, the preciousness of an ICH craft skill can be reflected through the price of its product.

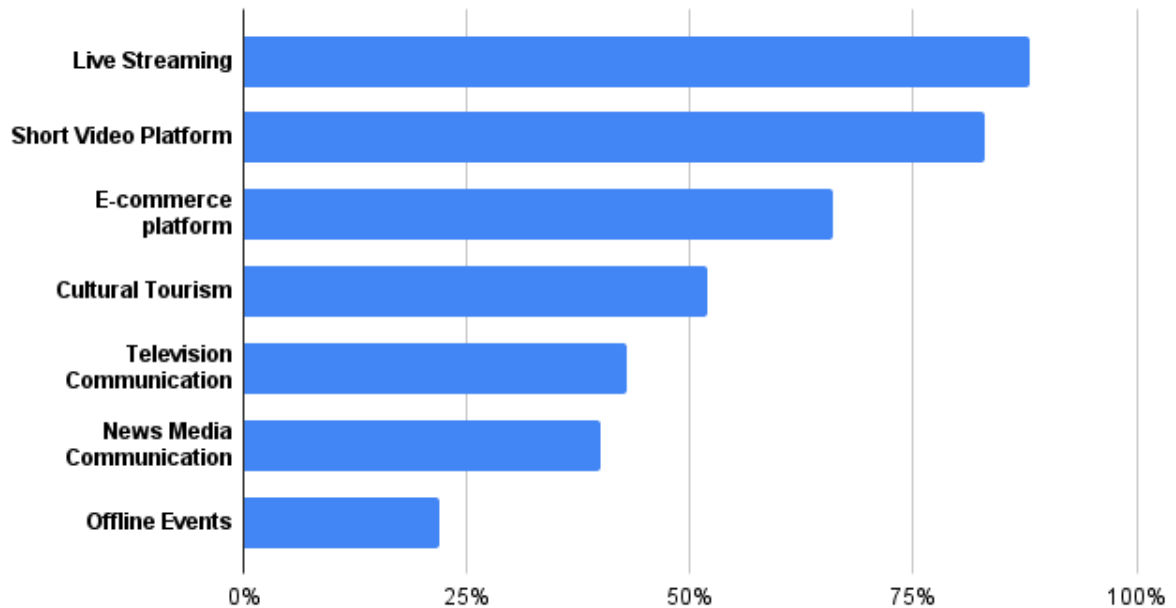
### **3. Short Video Platforms for Safeguarding ICH**

In order to answer the research question of this paper, “To what extent can Short Video Platforms provide an additional way of facilitating ICH safeguarding in China?”, this section will continue to use document analysis from “2022 *Intangible Cultural Heritage Consumption Innovation Report*” (hereafter referred to as the “Consumption Report”) and “2022 Tiktok intangible cultural Heritage White paper” (hereafter referred to as the “White Paper”) to obtain an overview of Chinese Short Video Platform market. Meanwhile, the thematic analysis from the interviews will also be adopted to investigate 1) why and how Chinese ICH practitioners are currently using Short Video Platforms in China, and 2) What problems Short Video Platforms can solve in the practice of ICH preservation?

#### **4.3.1 Short Video Platform Market Overview**

With the popularisation of the mobile Internet and the development of media technology, it is observed that the channels for information dissemination and product consumption are diversifying. Different online communication channels have become the new battlefield of marketing and advertising, for all purposes. According to the data from the *Consumption Report*, the Short Video Platform has become one of the most influential communication channels in China (Table 4.3).

## Influence of Different Chinese Communication Channels



According to the *White Paper*, in 2022, the number of ICH-related topics on Douyin (China's version of TikTok) was constantly increasing, surpassing 10,000, and the total views of these topics exceeded 8 billion. These numbers illustrate that not only there is a rising number of short-video-platform end-users who show interest in ICH-related topics, but also there are increasing number of ICH content creators participating on the other side of the platform. Meanwhile, in 2018, the market scale of China's ICH industry has risen to 335 billion Yuan (about 4.69 billion USD), which indicates a strong ICH consumption power of Chinese consumers and a booming trend in ICH marketization.

### 4.3.2 Short Video Platform: Advantages

All respondents agree that it is a trend for ICH practices to embrace the Short Video Platform as a tool to promote their craft products. Generally, they appreciate the following three main features of the platforms:

**Fast Information Dissemination:** The Chinese government and mainstream news media have been making efforts on promoting Chinese ICH for educational purposes, as respondent 1 addressed: "There is never a lack of promotion of ICH." However, no matter what types of traditional online promotion, such as documentary film, news, or social media posts, it takes time for the information to be disseminated to reach potential audiences from days to even years.

*“The dissemination speed of these platforms is really fast. If you have a video that catches a current hot topic, it can quickly spread like wildfire and make everyone aware of it in an instant. If you keep doing it, you are the new hit.” (R9:A)*

This feature corresponds to the problem in the current community ICH practices, discussed in section 4.1.1, that efficient communication between ICH inheritors and the general public is lacking. With the swift expansion of Short Video Platforms, such an issue is mitigated to a great extent.

**Wider Audience Group:** Based on the AI algorithm recommendation and big data technology, the Short Video Platforms can intelligently explore the potential audiences for ICH practitioners. As discussed in section 2.3, the algorithmic recommendation logic not only tackles geographical limitations but also extends the scope of information dissemination. ICH practitioners can benefit from this feature for both economic and educational purposes on short video platforms.

*“I've been thinking about what kind of content I should post on the platform to attract more people to get interested in paper cutting. When I started posting videos, they are simply showcasing my paper-cut works. One time, I created a tutorial video on paper-cutting by chance, and I received a lot of "likes" and comments below. Then I realized teaching video is more suitable for my paper-cutting ICH.” (R3: 1)*

*“You know, the feature of short video platforms is short, high-frequency, and fast-paced, coupled with an AI recommendation algorithm, which makes it easier to catch the attention of potential audiences and consumers who are interested in that particular cultural field. Therefore, as long as your content is sufficiently focused on a certain field, the algorithm will recommend your content to the end-users who could be transferred to paid customers.” (R6: A)*

Successful individual ICH content creators (such as Respondent 3) and MCN agencies (such as Respondent 6) share the same logic in content-creating on the Short Video Platform. Horizontally, through online interaction and content co-creation, Short Video Platforms enable ICH inheritors to find their most suitable content-creation style, gaining insights into the content tastes of their target audiences, which can effectively and precisely promote their ICH practices and achieve further marketization goals. And vertically, the ICH practitioners are making their video content sufficiently focused on a certain cultural field, such as paper-cutting teaching, so that the platform will label the account as a paper-cutting teaching account, and the algorithm will recommend it to broader audiences with potential interests. Such a process



saves time and energy for both content creators and end-users and also increases the enjoyment of using the platforms.

**Lower Entry Barrier:** Retrieving the discussion in section 2.3, the "Algorithm Recommendation + Short Video" model is seen as an efficient and cost-effective solution for ICH promoters.

*"The entry barriers for craftsmen are lowered since the rise of short video platforms and other online marketing channels. This is very important for artisans in rural communities. Without platforms like short video platforms and online stores, it may be financially challenging for craftsmen to afford a costly local store in tourist areas. Artisans can set up an online store where customers from nationwide with only a few thousand Yuan. Although the success of operations may vary from person to person, the short video platform is a place that allows for fair competition."* (R1: I)

The widespread use of short video platforms has significantly lowered the financial cost for artisans to kick-start the ICH business, increasing the possibility of a specific ICH being seen and inherited. Apart from the financial cost of marketization practice, the technical barrier is lowered because the mobile phone is becoming the main filming device, enabling everyone to become a channel of ICH promotion. This advantage of the Short Video Platforms can also relate to the discussion in section 4.1.3 where solutions for the less-costly way of connecting the ICH practitioners and potential consumers was yield.

#### 4.3.3 Short Video Platform: Disadvantages

Similarly, opinions are drawn from both inheritor interviewees and agency interviewees on the disadvantages of using the Short Video Platform. Although the two groups adopt the Short Video Platform through different logic, they share similar perceptions of the disadvantages through their practices of the platforms. Two dominant disadvantages are observed throughout the coding process, including the two main topics of Information fragmentation, and standardized video production.

##### *Information fragmentation*

Short Video Platform is featured by its video-streaming experience. In order to enhance the 'video-flow' enjoyment of end-users, the platforms recommend that content creators to designed and condense their content into a dozen seconds. The particular usage habits of short video platforms give rise to the problem of information fragmentation (information is

fragmented into short pieces with less structured design but summarized content so that users can quickly obtain the core message of each video). Consequently, under the same time of using social media, end-users of Short Video Platforms will receive much more information every day than users from other types of social media. However, it does not necessarily mean that users from Short Video Platforms can digest more information.

*“For example, let’s say we can only remember 10 important messages every day from social media, I could receive 1000 pieces of information from Short Video Platforms or 100 pieces from news media. It looks like I received more information from short video platforms, but the fact is the chance that I can remember a piece of ICH-related information get lower because it is more likely to be forgotten.” (R9: A)*

Respondent 9 pointed out one of the drawbacks of the information fragmentation issue – Information is forgotten even more quickly than before. Respondent 2 also added to this point that sometimes the cultural connotation of ICH conveyed from the short video Platform can be subjective or even misleading because end-users can only receive the fragmented piece of the ICH, and many content creators are not even practitioners of ICH. This results in a situation of information overload in that end-users find it difficult to distinguish the ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ information from the short video information.

*“Short videos may not systematically introduce the knowledge of a particular ICH for the audience Users’ understanding of ICH through short video platforms can only be limited to simple impressions of this ICH, such as ‘I like it’, or ‘I find it cute’. It is challenging to guide the audience to a deeper level of comprehensive understanding through just short video platforms.” (R6: A)*

Respondent 6 explains another disadvantage drawing from information fragmentation – the difficulty in systematically introducing ICH knowledge. Compared to long videos with structured content design, such as documentary films, the emphasis of short videos is on entertaining and informative purposes instead of educational ones. Therefore, respondent 10 discussed that if the short video content is generated by non-ICH practitioners or ICH MCN agencies, the content can be questioned as superficial or misleading.

#### *Standardized Video Production*

Standardized Video Production can be seen as both advantage and disadvantage on the Short Video Platform. This issue usually occurs in the operation of MCN agencies. As introduced in section 2.3, many Chinese craft ICH inheritors choose to collaborate with MCN agencies in order to enhance their video qualities and gain access to more business

resources, and thereby achieving ICH commercialization goals (Tang, 2021). MCN agencies are typical business agencies that are run through management logic and operate for profit maximization. Therefore, as a type of solution agency, MCN agencies are thriving to conduct market and user research in order to create video contents that generate the most attention.

*“Every ICH category of short videos has standardized shooting scripts, editing techniques, and even title copy. This is not only proven to attract the most audiences but also effectively reduces the production costs for the company.” (R6, A)*

Although the business mode of MCN agencies can efficiently generate an optimistic result for both ICH inheritors and the agencies in the short term, the standardized ICH video content may ultimately suffer from homogeneity and lead to user aesthetic fatigue and even user attrition. When different ICH practices are presented in similar content templates, the lack of creativity and originality makes it challenging to highlight the uniqueness of each ICH project. This may also result in a failure to showcase the cultural connotations of different ICH practices, thereby diminishing its cultural dissemination significance.

#### 4.3.4 Practical Difficulties in Using Short Video Platforms

When interviewing the two groups of ICH practitioners, the researcher of this paper has identified the practical difficulties of ICH practitioners when they are using short video platforms for different purposes (educational or commercial). This section will discuss some of the main practical difficulties, from both the inheritor and agency’s perspective, of using short video platforms and try to find out solutions for some of them.

##### From ICH Inheritors’ Perspective

*“Many of our elder ICH inheritors may not be able to handle [the short video platform] due to a lack of knowledge; more young inheritors can use it effectively.” (R1:l)*

Relating to the aging issue of ICH inheritance discussed in section 4.1.1, the first practical difficulty for the elder ICH inheritors is the technical issue, that they find challenging in using mobile phones to conduct video-making operations, such as filming and video editing. Meanwhile, their inexperience in filming and lack of filming knowledge has resulted in a less engaging and simple form of their short videos.

Respondent 3 is a primary school teacher, whilst she is also a Douyin content creator with over 2 million fans. However, the lack of a professional team makes it difficult for her to manage her account professionally, not to mention ICH marketization practices. As an individual content creator, it is effort-consuming to work on gaining followers, making creative

content, and finding a way to attract attention to their accounts. It is relatively easier to outsource professional assistance for a systematic account-operation strategy. Therefore, the solution to solving ICH inheritors' practical difficulties seems straightforward – collaborating with ICH MCN agencies could not only tackle the technical problems in platform operation, but the agencies can also link more resources and opportunities for their self-development.

Concern regarding collaborating with MCN agencies by some respondents lies in the worries of losing control of their lives, although they are amazed by the high quality of the professional videos they provide

“My friend who is skilled at making gourds mention her experience working with MCN agencies. She said videos were so good, like movies, but she found herself investing too much time in producing a video, which greatly invade her personal time for gourd creation. She also mentions that everything is profit-oriented, sometimes she has to sacrifice things that she really wants to create, and this contradicts her original intention.”

This situation is corresponding to the previous discussion in 2.2.2 where the economic value of ICH sometime may contradict to other values of it, which only the ICH practitioners can decide which value they treasure most at the moment, and make their own choices.

#### From Agencies' Perspective

Practical Difficulties of MCN Agencies' practices are all associated with the collaboration with ICH inheritors. Firstly, there exists a mutual-choosing filtering system when MCN and inheritors are deciding to cooperate with each other. From the side of MCN agencies, apart from a willingness to have their ICH craft marketized, potential inheritor partners are expected to have the capability to guarantee a stable output with a desired amount of production to fit the extremely large demand from online sales, which is usually difficult to achieve for many inheritors.

*“The output of handmade craft products is sometimes unguaranteed. For example, weather can be an affecting factor when we were working at Blue Dyeing studio. If the weather is not good, they may choose to delay, which we need to let the paid customers know about the situation timely.” (R7:A)*

ICH MCN agencies should be a long-termism when filming those ICH that takes a very long time to be finished, which consequently results in a long cash-out cycle of ICH MCN agencies compared with other types of MCN agencies. Meanwhile, from the ICH inheritor's side, many of them expect the cooperation relationship could be more flexible, and give them more control over content creation, which sometimes requires compromises for both groups.

## 4. Contradictions

The last section of this chapter will introduce some contradictory phenomena that the researcher of this paper has gained insights into through the interviews. These insights correspond to many discussions throughout the previous chapters and sections, which are worth taking a particular look at.

### 4.4.1 Contradiction 1: Business Ambition vs Individual Initiatives

Contradiction 1 and 2 both arise from the network effect generated by the Short Video Platforms featured as a multi-sided market. The network effect of a multi-sided market features that the increase of participation by at least one side of the agent boosts the platform's value for other sides of agents. Comparable to economies of scale on the demand side, direct and indirect network effect increases the value for all parties involved (Evans & Schmalensee, 2013).

This contradiction is mainly sensed by MCN agencies when collaboration with ICH inheritors is stable and heading to the next phase of scaling up.

*"The business model works for some ICH inheritors, and some don't, because some ICH inheritors don't share the same business vision with us, they just don't have that ambition."*  
(R6:A)

Not every ICH inheritors, from all levels, possess a business ambition as their MCN agencies do, which makes it difficult for a longer cooperating relationship between MCN agencies and the inheritors. It is risky for MCN agencies to cooperate with this type of inheritor if the agencies have invested a lot of effort and money in raising the inheritor's influence on the Short Video Platforms in the early phase and then the inheritor suddenly quit, which is often observed in China.

Consequently, it can be inferred that MCN agencies may tend to choose master-level or national-level ICH inheritors for long-term collaboration. As communication agencies, they need to guarantee the accuracy and authority of the content they provide, meanwhile, national-level practitioners are usually the industry leader who are the key players and standard-setters of the industry, which may ensure a sustainable relationship in their collaboration.

### 4.4.2 Contradiction 2: Supply and Demand

The second contradiction is aligned with the previous discussion of the disadvantage of short video platforms. With the help of MCN agencies, some ICH practitioners attained a

booming increase in the attention of their craft products, which led to a mismatch between demand and supply.

*“We had cooperated with Buyi ethnic group to help promote their traditional handmade cloth, it took the entire village 2 months to complete our order. They are quite happy, but the production cycle was too long for us.” (R7:A)*

This gives rise to a discussion about if Short Video Platforms are suitable for all ICH craft products. Since the aim and underlying logic of Short Video Platforms are to generate more and more end-users by providing customized content recommendations to fit their interests and then transform the public attention into economic or other benefits. However, due to the inherent feature of handmade crafts for limited output and long production cycle, MCN agencies and individual inheritors should consider if a short video platform is the most appropriate approach to promote it, and what other alternative benefits, instead of monetary, could be achieved through Short Video Platforms.

#### 4.4.3 Contradiction 3: Economic Value and Cultural Value

As we discussed in the previous section regarding the information fragmentation of ICH, some inheritor respondents stated that the cultural value of ICH cannot be effectively communicated through the Short Video Platforms because there still exists price competition between handmade product and machine-made products.

*“Take our Tie Dyeing for example, why is it beautiful? It starts from the ingredients, the making process...it is not a machine. But some sellers on short video platforms use machine-made tie-dyeing products in order to lower the price. But the consumers cannot tell the differences. So I think it has a negative effect on those who are truly dedicated to making real good tie-dyeing products.” (R2: 1)*

For craft inheritors, the cultural value is embodied in every step of the craft creation, instead of the commodity itself. However, the final step in the ICH value chain is consumption in the market, therefore, ICH marketization through short video platforms or other online channels may constantly facing with issues such as replacing handcrafts with machines. In this case, the researcher of this paper argues that for consuming cultural products, the educational process for consumers is important and indispensable since it is the basic step for consumers to understand the cultural value of the commodities. Overemphasizing the economic value of the cultural commodity will undermine its cultural value and indirectly harm the intrinsic motivation of the practitioners to engage in cultural practices.

## 5. Conclusion

The aim of this research is trying to involve marketization through the Short Video Platforms in the discourse of China's ICH practices and discuss the possibilities of ICH marketization as a complementary way in supporting ICH safeguarding. The research question is formed: *To what extent* can Short Video Platforms provide an additional way of facilitating ICH safeguarding in China? To answer this question, two qualitative approaches were adopted: 3 document analyses and 10 semi-structured interviews with two main stakeholders: the ICH inheritors and ICH MCN agencies. Four themes are identified: current community practices in China, understandings and perceptions of ICH safeguarding, short video platforms for safeguarding ICH, and Contradictions in practices. The first three themes were analyzed as preliminary sections, where subthemes were developed in correspondence to answer the subquestions of the main question: 1) "What are the current practices of Chinese ICH"? 2) "Why do ICH practitioners use Short Video Platforms and how"? 3) "What problem do Short Video Platforms solve in the practice of ICH preservation"? The fourth theme was the phenomena that were observed by the researcher intending to generate more discussion at a broader scope.

Regarding the current practices of Chinese ICH, the first theme has provided a brief picture of the current ICH practices in China's local communities and how Chinese ICH practitioners understand the values of ICH and its preservation. It is observed that the Chinese government is playing an important role in providing ICH educational opportunities for current and potential ICH inheritors. However, although the general average age of Chinese ICH inheritors is showing a pattern to become younger, the aging issue is still a problem that hinders the transmission of ICH practices. Meanwhile, it was found that more than half of Chinese ICH inheritors are lacking financial support in their ICH practices, which makes the discussion of ICH marketization even more important. The first theme has identified two problems that arose from China's ICH community practices: 1) The elder ICH inheritors find it difficult to efficiently communicate with the audiences outside the community due to the lack of effective ICH promotion; 2) Inheritors from the rural communities are seeking a cost-effective way to conduct their ICH marketization.

Through the second theme, the researcher is trying to find out how ICH inheritors and MCN agencies value the ICH safeguarding from different perspectives. It was observed that by being officially recognized as an ICH inheritor, ICH practitioners gained a sense of social responsibility to promote ICH as a culture representative, and some of them are adapting the new identity to a broader scope, such as designers and artists. Meanwhile, ICH MCN agencies introduced two angles to interpret the economic values of ICH- the marketization potential and its cash-out logic. From their point of view, there are various approaches for ICH to be

commercialized through different cash-out logic; ICH that fails to survive in the market may end up in museums.

The third theme also stood from two perspectives to investigate how ICH practitioners treat the Short Form Videos and where the problems lie. Regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the Short Video Platform, all respondents share an appreciation for its fast information dissemination, wider audience exposure, and lower entry barriers, which solves both issues regarding communication effectiveness and cost-effective way in ICH marketization arose from the community practices. As to disadvantages of Short Video Platforms, issues regarding information fragmentation and standardized Video Production were observed, which reveals that the format of short-video will hinder the presentation of more systematic knowledge-sharing and the standardized video-making procedure of MCN agencies will ultimately result in content homogeneity and aesthetic fatigue. Lastly, there was identified a mutual-filtering scheme between ICH inheritor and MCN agencies when they are deciding to collaborate with each other. The MCN agencies are expecting the ICH inheritors to possess the capability to guarantee the amount and stableness of production, whilst ICH inheritors require more flexibility in their cooperation.

In conclusion, as a mitigation between marketization and preservation of the ICH, the Short Video Platform has, to some extent, find a way to coincide the economic value, public value, and intrinsic value of the Chinese ICH. When safeguarding ICH practices was conducted in rural communities through traditional approaches such as tourism, government stipend, or document filming, the drawbacks of such practices are clear with restrictions by time, geography, energy, and so on Adopting Short Video Platforms can not only provide a solution to solve the previous problems but also innovate the way of achieving the goals if ICH marketization and safeguarding simultaneously. However, when practicing ICH marketization through a Short Video Platform, the complexity of it stakeholders may lead to conflicts in ICH's different values, particularly its intrinsic value and economic value, which practitioners should be fully aware of when they are using the platforms.



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## Appendix A

Respondent	Reference
Respondent 1	R1:I
Respondent 2	R2:I
Respondent 3	R3:I
Respondent 4	R4:I
Respondent 5	R5:I

*Table 3.1 Overview of Group 1*

Respondent	Reference
Respondent 6	R6:A
Respondent 7	R7:A
Respondent 8	R8:A
Respondent 9	R9:A
Respondent 10	R10:A

*Table 3.2 Overview of Group 1*

Appendix B

Categories	Description	Codes
<b>Community Practice</b>	Community Practics	Government Supporting; Safegurading Policies; Niche market; Small Scale Practices; Community leader; Flexible; Tourism products and servieces; Rural communities and villages; inheritace from last generation; education; offline channel
<b>Identity</b>	Participants indicate how their identity change with being recognized as ICH inheritor	Identity shifting; social responsibility; intrinsic motiovation; incentive; personal brand; official recognition; added value; resources; opportunities; personal development; necessity
<b>Attitude: ICH safegurading and promotion</b>	Attitude towards ICH safegurading	Appreciation of government supporting; Self-initiation; change and innovation; conservation of tradition; intrinsic value; adapt to youner generation;
<b>SVP: perception, practices &amp; value interpretation</b>	Value interpretation of short video platforms	Social interaction; self expression; Co-creation; additional channel
<b>SVP Advantage: Inheritor's perspective</b>	Inheritor's perspective of short video platform advantage	Big data recommendation; Communication efficiency; Information dissemination; Entry barriers; Cost; Presentation; Influence; Public awareness; digital documentation; inheritance
<b>SVP disadvantage: Inheritor's perspective</b>	Inheritor's perspective of short video platform disadvantage	Information fragmentation; Information overload; Misleading; value misinterpretation;
<b>Practical Difficulties (inheritor)</b>	Inheritors identify practical difficulties	Video making; Platform operation; Lack of professional team; Lack of financial support; Creativity;
<b>Value Interpretation: ICH safegurading (inheritor)</b>	Value interpretation towards ICH safegurading (inheritor)	Economic value; Public Value; Cultural Value; Intrinsic Value; Living heritage; Daily practices; Locality; community-based; personal interest; Authenticity
<b>Value Interpretation: ICH safegurading (agency)</b>	Value interpretation towards ICH safegurading (agency)	Business model; business logics; marketization degree; Everyday practices; consumption upgrading; adapt to change; commodification; positioning; inheritor ambition; economic value; system fitting;

		creativity; key player; intrinsic value; self-initiation; fear to change
<b>Tension</b>	Contradictions	Ambition; Motivation; Conservation; Intrinsic Value
<b>Co-branding</b>	Specific topic about co-branding	Influence; Improvement of ICH products; promotion channel; Product development;
<b>SVP Advantage: Agencies perspective</b>	Agencies' perspective of short video platform advantage	Customer education; efficiency; precise; focus; audience expansion
<b>SVP disadvantage: Agencies perspective</b>	Agencies' perspective of short video platform disadvantage	Standardized; Content Homogeneity; aesthetic fatigue; Superficial; Weak in education purposes; goal-driven; objective;
<b>Solutions in ICH practices (strength)</b>	Regarding solutions in the paper	Professional team; video-making; strategy; innovation; design; marketization; employment; narrative; storytelling
<b>Practical Difficulties(Agency)</b>	Agency's identification of practical Difficulties	Filter system; Output Capacity; Willingness to marketization; Unstable production; Lontermism;