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# Exploring the Integration Path of Intangible Cultural Heritage Revitalization and Commercial Innovation: A Case Study of the "Rhythm of Dye: Blind Collection" Tie-Dye Blind Box Project

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## KEYWORDS

## ABSTRACT

*Intangible Cultural Heritage;*

*Tie-dye;*

*Blind Box Economy;*

*Cultural Capital Transformation;*

*Business Model Innovation;*

Against the backdrop of cultural industry innovation and consumption upgrading, the revitalization of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) faces a transitional need from "protective inheritance" to "innovative development." Taking the "Dye-Charm Blind Collection" tie-dye blind box project as a case study and employing qualitative research methods, this paper systematically explores innovative pathways for integrating ICH with the blind box economy. The research finds that the project achieves the commercial transformation of tie-dye cultural capital through a three-dimensional innovation system encompassing "product reconstruction (cultural symbols + functional extension + experience design), technological empowerment (process optimization + digital design + standardized production), and ecosystem construction (online-offline integration + domestic-overseas markets + experience-sales synergy)." Practice demonstrates that the project has not only achieved significant economic benefits (projected revenue of 1.7 million RMB for 2025, with a repurchase rate of 40%) but also generated positive social impacts in areas such as rural revitalization and cultural dissemination. This study proposes that ICH revitalization should, based on Cultural Capital Theory and Scene Consumption Theory, construct a sustainable development model of "culture-commerce-society" synergistic symbiosis, providing theoretical reference and practical guidance for the innovative development of ICH.

## INTRODUCTION

As a vital carrier of the excellent traditional Chinese culture, the protection and inheritance of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) has always received significant national attention [1]. However, within the macro-context of globalization, digitalization, and shifting consumption cultures, many ICH skills are facing a survival crisis characterized by "generational breaks in transmission, product-market disconnect, and market contraction" [2 – 4]. Sole reliance on salvage documentation and static preservation can no longer sustain their vitality. Exploring pathways for revitalization through "protection in development and inheritance in innovation" has become a shared concern for both academia and industry [5,6]. Tie-dye, a representative of China's traditional textile dyeing

and printing techniques, was inscribed on the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2006 [7]. Its core technique of resist-dyeing through tying and binding with threads produces natural, infinitely varied visual beauty, carrying rich regional culture, folk beliefs, and aesthetic philosophy [8]. However, similar to many traditional handicrafts, tie-dye is trapped in challenges such as outdated product forms, an aging consumer base, and a fragmented, small-scale industry [9,10]. Therefore, researching how tie-dye techniques can integrate into contemporary life through creative transformation and innovative development holds significance not only for supplementing ICH protection theory but also for offering concrete references for cultural industry practice.

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## 1. Research Methods and Case Selection

This study adopts a qualitative case study method, employing participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis to conduct longitudinal tracking of the "Dye-Charm Blind Collection" project. This case possesses typicality and foresight: Firstly, it directly confronts the core inheritance challenges of tie-dye skills; Secondly, it innovatively integrates the "blind box," a highly representative new consumption model; Thirdly, it has established a complete value chain from R&D and production to marketing, achieved preliminary market validation and social resonance, and thus meets the mature conditions for in-depth study.

## 2. Analysis of Development Dilemmas and Market Opportunities for ICH Tie-Dye

### 2.1. Multidimensional Dilemmas: Systemic Challenges in Inheritance, Product, and Market

The contemporary survival dilemma of tie-dye skills is a systemic issue, primarily manifested in three dimensions:

#### 2.1.1. Inheritance and Dissemination Dilemma: Singular Channels and Audience Disconnect.

The inheritance of tie-dye skills has long relied on "oral transmission and personal demonstration" within families or master-apprentice relationships, along with local festival exhibitions, resulting in a limited dissemination radius. In today's world dominated by digital media for information dissemination, this traditional model struggles to reach the younger generation, the future mainstay of consumption. Surveys indicate that youth aged 18-30 predominantly hold stereotypical perceptions of tie-dye as "tourist souvenirs" or "outdated handicrafts," lacking understanding of its cultural depth and craft aesthetics, leading to weak emotional connection. Consequently, the inheritor group is aging severely, facing a shortage of successors.

#### 2.1.2. Product Innovation Dilemma: Fixed Forms and Context Disconnect.

Most tie-dye products currently circulating in the market remain traditional categories like scarves, clothing, and wall

hangings, with design styles tending towards formulaic patterns, often emphasizing "ethnic style" or "retro feel." This creates a significant gap with the aesthetic preferences (e.g., simplicity, personalization) and usage scenarios (e.g., office, social gifting) of modern urban life. Intense homogenized competition, coupled with a lack of functional extension and emotional added value, means these products can only maintain limited premium pricing relying on "handmade" or "ICH" labels, resulting in a low market ceiling.

#### 2.1.3. Industrial Development Dilemma: Non-standardized Production and Cost Paradox.

Tie-dye production mostly relies on family workshops or small-scale studios. Production processes, dye formulations, and quality control depend heavily on artisan experience, lacking standardized systems, which leads to inconsistent product quality. Simultaneously, purely handmade production is inefficient with high labor costs, causing product pricing to be generally high (common clothing items often priced above 200 RMB), exceeding the psychological expectations for daily mass consumption. This creates an awkward situation of being "praised but not purchased," hindering industrial scaling and branding development.

Dilemma Dimension	Specific Manifestations	Innovative Countermeasures
Inheritance & Dissemination	Singular channels, audience disconnect	Blind Box Carriers + Social Dissemination to Reach Young Demographics
Product Innovation	Fixed forms, context disconnect	Cultural symbol translation + functional extension, adapting to modern scenarios
Industrial Development	Non-standardized production, high costs	Technological optimization + standardized production, reducing costs
Market Expansion	Domestic limitations, low	Cross-border cultural narrative

	international recognition	+ platform synergy, expanding overseas markets
Data Source	Industry research and literature review	Project practice summary

**Table.1.**Comparative Analysis of Tie-Dye Industry Development Dilemmas and "Dye-Charm Blind Collection" Innovative Countermeasures

## 2.2. Literature Review and Research Gap

In recent years, cross-disciplinary research on the revitalization of intangible cultural heritage and commercial innovation has become a prominent topic in the field of cultural industries. Existing studies have laid a theoretical foundation for this paper, yet there remains considerable scope for further expansion. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, promoting the creative transformation and innovative development of excellent traditional Chinese culture has become a crucial direction. ICH, as a vivid witness of Chinese civilization, is being integrated into modern life through commercialized innovation, becoming a cultural driving force for high-quality economic and social development.

In foundational theoretical research on ICH revitalization, "productive protection" was an early core paradigm. Gao [11] proposed that ICH protection needs to maintain the living inheritance of skills in production practice, avoiding static preservation. However, this theory does not clarify the path connecting production with market demand, making it difficult to solve the disconnect between traditional skills and contemporary consumption. Li [12] further proposed the concept of "innovative development," emphasizing that ICH should integrate into modern life scenarios, achieving value regeneration through design innovation and functional reconstruction. However, her research focuses more on macro-level conceptual interpretation, lacking operational frameworks for specific industry integration. Liu and Leng [13] defined China's ICH protection approach of "productive protection" as a unique Chinese path, highlighting its practice-oriented nature, but the discussion on commercial mechanisms remains relatively weak.

At the level of research on practical actors and pathways for ICH revitalization, scholars focus on multi-agent

collaboration and cross-border integration trends. Research indicates that diverse actors including veteran artisans, new-generation inheritors, cultural and creative platforms, and commercial enterprises work together, opening new paths for ICH inheritance and innovation. Among them, new-generation inheritors, with their acute market perception, are adept at combining modern elements with ICH skills; cultural and creative platforms play a bridging role, connecting market demand, designers, and artisans. For instance, "Wang's Handicraft" integrates Miao embroidery and other skills with blind box formats, creating popular innovative products; commercial enterprises promote ICH industrialization through digital technology empowerment and industry chain integration. In terms of specific pathways, ICH commercial innovation has formed four main directions: product iteration, category expansion, IP creation, and technology empowerment. These involve updating product content and form, broadening application scenarios, shaping cultural IPs, and leveraging cutting-edge technologies to transform ICH from traditional crafts into marketable products. Wang and Cao [14], from a design perspective, pointed out that the key to ICH revitalization lies in translating traditional symbols through modern design language to enhance contemporary aesthetic value, but did not address emerging forms like "ICH + new consumption models." Liu and Zhang [15] explored the application of AI and big data in ICH inheritance, arguing that digital technologies can optimize production efficiency and expand dissemination scope, but did not delve deeply into the synergistic mechanism between technology and business logic.

In studies related to blind box economics and cultural consumption, Zhang and Yang [16] argues, based on the consumption psychology of Generation Z, that the "unpredictability" and "collectibility" of blind boxes align with the emotional needs and social demands of young consumers, thereby offering a novel medium for the dissemination of cultural products. According to the 2025 China Digital Entertainment Industry IP Development Report, blind box products have driven a year-on-year growth of 62.8% in the market size of cultural and creative derivatives, with emotional experience consumption among Generation Z rising to 68.05%, reflecting a trend toward greater specialization, segmentation, and emotional engagement in the cultural and creative market. Cases such as the derivative blind boxes of the 15th National Games

mascot demonstrate that blind box products integrating traditional cultural elements possess strong market appeal, with their core competitiveness stemming from the emotional value attached to the unboxing process and the collectible nature of the products. However, existing research has predominantly focused on analyzing blind box marketing models or describing individual cases, leaving a gap in exploring the deep integration mechanisms between blind boxes and intangible cultural heritage (ICH) crafts, as well as a lack of systematic investigation into the full-chain commercial logic of the "ICH + blind box" model.

Regarding the application of theoretical tools, Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theory provides an important analytical perspective for ICH value transformation. This theory divides cultural capital into three forms: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized, offering theoretical support for interpreting the transformation process of ICH from skill inheritance to commercial product [17]. Chen and Yan [18] explored innovative pathways for ICH revitalization from a scene consumption perspective, while Zhou and Xiao [19] analyzed the commercial transformation mechanism of ICH based on Cultural Capital Theory. However, existing research has yet to combine these perspectives to systematically explain the adaptation logic between ICH and the emerging consumption scene of blind boxes.

In summary, existing research exhibits three notable gaps: Firstly, most studies on ICH revitalization focus on single actors or single paths, lacking systematic analysis of multi-agent collaboration and multi-dimensional innovation, particularly neglecting the deep integration mechanism between new consumption models and ICH. Secondly, for emerging forms like "ICH + blind box," a complete academic discussion encompassing product design, technological support, and business model construction has not yet been formed, and research on their emotional consumption logic and cultural dissemination value remains insufficient. Thirdly, existing research often emphasizes macro-level concepts or single-case descriptions, lacking deep integration between theoretical tools and empirical cases, making it difficult to form replicable generic models. Based on this, this paper takes the "Dye-Charm Blind Collection" tie-dye blind box project as a case study to systematically explore innovative pathways for integrating ICH with the blind box economy, aiming to fill the gaps in existing research.

### 3.The Three-Dimensional Innovation Practice System of the "Dye-Charm Blind Collection" Project

The project has constructed a three-in-one integrated innovation system with product innovation as the front-end carrier, technological innovation as the middle-platform support, and model innovation as the back-end engine.

#### 3.1.Product Innovation: From "Single Handicraft" to "Diverse Experience System"

The project completely transcends the physical definition of tie-dye as merely "fabric decoration," redefining it as a "cultural experience medium" that is collectible, experiential, and usable. Based on Symbolic Interaction Theory, the products achieve deep interactive identification between consumers and ICH culture through a triple construction of "visual symbols + functional symbols + knowledge symbols." This process also represents the activation of tie-dye cultural capital from a "tacit" to an "explicit" state.

##### 3.1.1.Core Product Line: The "Xiaosheng" Series — Contemporary Translation of Cultural Symbols.

This series takes the traditional Chinese zodiac culture as its IP core and undergoes in-depth design transformation. The team collaborates with intangible cultural heritage inheritors to match the morphological characteristics and symbolic meanings of zodiac animals with traditional tie-dye techniques such as "spiral binding," "folding binding," and "clamp dyeing." For example, the "Tiger" design employs bold, angular binding to convey the animal's power, while the "Rabbit" design utilizes delicate "dot binding" to capture its agility. Each design undergoes over 12 rounds of pattern refinement and color calibration. The product innovatively incorporates capsules of natural plant-based fragrance, using slow-release technology to ensure the scent lasts for 6–8 months. This transforms the item from a static visual artwork into a multifunctional "ambiance product" that combines decoration, aroma, and symbolic blessing, seamlessly integrating into modern life scenarios such as car interiors, home spaces, and offices. The included "ICH Knowledge Card," which explains zodiac culture and tie-dye techniques in youth-oriented language, seamlessly bridges the gap between consumption and education.

### **3.1.2. Experience Product Line: "Player's Fun" Series – Lowering Barriers through Participatory Creation.**

To address the challenge of "high threshold for ICH experience," the project developed DIY kits containing pre-treated fabric, safe plant dyes, simple tools, and HD video tutorials. Users with no prior experience can complete a unique tie-dye piece within 2-3 hours. By organizing "hidden pattern challenge contests" and establishing a "work sharing platform," the project extends one-time purchases into continuous creative interaction and community exchange, significantly enhancing user stickiness and brand loyalty. This series has gained high recognition among young consumer groups.

### **3.1.3. Derivative Product Line: Contextual Expansion and B2B Customization.**

Centered on contexts like home, office, and gifts, products such as tie-dye notebooks, bedding, and tea mats were developed, leaning towards simple and modern styles. Simultaneously, collaborations with wedding companies for customized wedding favors and with enterprises for corporate gifts successfully tapped into the B2B bulk purchase market, broadening revenue streams.

## **3.2. Technological Innovation: Process Revolution and Efficiency Enhancement Empowered by Technology**

Adhering to the principle of "upholding authenticity while pursuing innovation," the project leverages modern technology to tackle industrial pain points while preserving the core handmade charm and eco-friendly philosophy of tie-dye. According to Technology Integration Theory, the project achieves complementary integration between traditional craftsmanship and modern technology, maintaining the core authenticity of tie-dye skills ("upholding authenticity") while addressing efficiency and cost issues through technological optimization ("pursuing innovation").

### **3.2.1. Process Optimization: Overcoming Efficiency and Environmental Bottlenecks.**

Addressing the low dye utilization rate (only about 60%)

and lengthy duration of traditional immersion dyeing, the team developed a "Precision Dyeing System using Atomized Dyes." This system uses ultrasonic atomization equipment to convert plant dyes into micron-sized particles for even adsorption onto tied fabric, increasing dye utilization to over 92% (based on in-house R&D process tests). The dyeing time per batch was reduced from 24 hours to 5 hours, with richer color gradations. For color fixation, an innovative approach using plant mordants combined with low-temperature gradient drying technology was adopted, achieving color fastness above Grade 4. Products show no significant fading after 50 standard washes, far exceeding industry averages.

### **3.2.2. Digital Design R&D: AI-Assistance and Personalized Customization.**

Collaborating with a tech company, an AI-assisted pattern design system was developed. This system, trained on thousands of classic tie-dye pattern datasets, can quickly generate new pattern proposals blending traditional charm with modern sensibility based on color trends and user preference keywords. The system also offers a simple customization interface for consumers. Users can input elements like name initials or commemorative dates to generate a preview of a unique pattern, achieving "a thousand patterns for a thousand faces" and flexible design, pushing ICH from "batch reproduction" towards "personal expression."

### **3.2.3. Standardized Production Management: Building a Quality Control System.**

Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and intelligent monitoring equipment were introduced at key production stages for precise control of parameters like dye concentration, temperature, and time. A full-process quality traceability system from raw material intake to finished product delivery was established, ensuring stability and consistency in product quality, laying the foundation for branding and scaling.

### **3.3.Model Innovation: Constructing an Omni-Channel Ecosystem Integrating Online-Offline and Domestic-Overseas**

The project abandoned single sales channels, constructing a three-dimensional, interconnected business ecosystem that drives traffic mutually. Based on Value Network Theory, this ecosystem connects diverse actors including inheritors, consumers, rural communities, and overseas markets, forming a network system for value co-creation and sharing, breaking through the limitations of the linear value chain in traditional ICH industries.

#### **3.3.1.Online Matrix: Content-Driven Strategy and Social Diffusion.**

On platforms such as Douyin and Xiaohongshu, live-streaming sessions featuring "ICH inheritors + influencers" deeply demonstrate the tie-dye craftsmanship and product narratives, transforming the production process into a viewable and interactive "content commodity." Initiatives such as the hashtag challenge "#OpenABlindBoxLearnICH#" encourage users to create unboxing and DIY process videos, forming a substantial pool of user-generated content (UGC). This approach achieves low-cost, high-trust social diffusion. The online store and reservation system are seamlessly integrated, effectively channeling online traffic to offline experiential activities.

#### **3.3.2.Offline Touchpoints: Immersive Experience and Spatial Empowerment.**

In cultural and creative districts of major cities, experiential stores named "Rhythm of Dye" have been established, creating integrated cultural complexes that combine exhibition, hands-on workshops, retail, and salon activities. Concurrently, through partnerships with rural areas in Yunnan and Sichuan, which are the origins of tie-dye craftsmanship, "ICH Study Bases" have been set up. These bases facilitate the development of "ICH-Themed Tours," directing consumers toward the cultural source. This approach has established a positive cycle of "urban traffic generation and rural benefit," effectively linking metropolitan engagement with regional cultural sustainability.

### **3.3.3.Cross-Border Expansion: Cultural Storytelling and Platform Synergy.**

The overseas promotion strategy adheres to the principle of "Culture First." On platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, short videos are used to narrate the historical background, philosophical concepts, and intricate craftsmanship of tie-dye, shaping a brand image for Chinese culture that is premium, distinctive, and profound. On the sales front, leveraging e-commerce platforms like Amazon and AliExpress, the brand offers a "Complete Cultural Product Package" that includes an English-language cultural handbook. Furthermore, collaborations with overseas Chinese Cultural Centers and museums to host workshops have effectively established an overseas conversion pathway from "cultural awareness" to "product purchase."

## **4. Comprehensive Evaluation of Project Implementation Outcomes**

### **4.1.Economic Benefits: Diversified Revenue and Rapid Growth**

The project has established a healthy financial model. C-end retail (blind boxes, derivatives) contributes the main revenue, with a repurchase rate reaching 40% (project Q1 2024 sales data). The core "Xiao Sheng" series maintains stable monthly sales exceeding 3,000 units. B-end customization and cross-border sales have become new growth engines. Total revenue for 2025 is projected to surpass 1.7 million RMB (based on industry growth rates and project channel expansion plans), with net profit margin maintained above 25%. The first round of financing has been initiated, with reasonable valuation and a clear equity structure, preparing sufficient capital for subsequent expansion.

### **4.2.Social Benefits: Empowering Rural Areas and Promoting Employment**

The project practices the principle of "Business for Good." Its self-owned workshop in Dali provides stable employment for 15 local artisans, whose average monthly income exceeds the local average by 30% (project HR statistics). Through an order-based agriculture model, long-term procurement agreements have been signed with over 50 households cultivating dye plants, increasing their average annual income by more than ¥10,000 (data from partner

household surveys). The intangible cultural heritage (ICH) study programs have stimulated local consumption in catering and accommodation, injecting new tourism-driven momentum into rural revitalization. Furthermore, the project's public welfare training courses have cumulatively trained over 200 individuals, including rural women and persons with disabilities (project charity activity records), fostering inclusive transmission of traditional craftsmanship.

### **4.3. Cultural Benefits: Revitalizing Inheritance and International Dissemination**

The most profound impact of the project lies in the activation of cultural value. Through fashionable and engaging reinterpretation, tie-dye has emerged as a symbol of "Guochao" (China-Chic) on social media, captivating young audiences. Over 70% of the project's official account followers are under the age of 35 (platform backend data). More than 80% of consumers reported having "reconnected with tie-dye culture" through the products (consumer survey results). Internationally, the project has become a regular feature in cultural exchange events in countries such as Belarus and Kazakhstan, with products sold in over ten nations. It now serves as a significant vehicle for narrating Chinese stories and conveying Eastern aesthetics.

## **5. Insights into Pathways for ICH Revitalization and Commercial Innovation**

The success of the "Dye-Charm Blind Collection" project is not accidental. It systematically validates a viable pathway for ICH revitalization, offering profound insights for both theory and practice:

First, value reconstruction is the core premise. The revitalization of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) must go beyond superficial adaptation; it requires a contemporary reinterpretation of its cultural value. By elevating tie-dye from a mere "craft" to a "narrative medium embodying zodiac culture" and an "experiential tool for creating a better life," the project has fundamentally reconstructed its value.

Second, integrated innovation demands systematic advancement. Isolated innovations in products or marketing are seldom sustainable. By synchronizing innovation across three dimensions—product, technology, and model—the project has established an interlocking and mutually reinforcing "innovation matrix," building a robust competitive barrier.

Third, the business model should foster an ecosystem of symbiosis. A successful ICH commercial project should function as a value network connecting inheritors, consumers, rural communities, and international markets. Through online-offline integration, urban-rural interaction, and cross-border dissemination, the project has constructed a multi-stakeholder ecosystem that shares value, ensuring sustainability and social impact.

Fourth, social responsibility and commercial interests can be mutually reinforcing. The project demonstrates that deeply integrating rural revitalization, employment promotion, and environmental stewardship into the business logic not only enhances brand reputation but also secures policy support and community resources, achieving a "dual-drive" of commercial and social value.

The core finding of this study is that the essence of ICH revitalization lies in the contemporary transformation and contextual reconfiguration of cultural capital. The success of the project stems from its symbolic conversion of cultural capital through product innovation, the enhancement of production efficiency of cultural capital through technological innovation, and the expansion of realization scenarios for cultural capital through model innovation. Ultimately, this has forged a synergistic mechanism integrating "cultural value—commercial value—social value," providing a replicable theoretical framework for similar ICH revitalization projects.

Nonetheless, the project faces challenges, such as the ongoing pressure for product iteration, the need to deeply adapt to cultural differences in overseas markets, and balancing scale expansion with artisanal quality. Future exploration could delve deeper into areas like digital collectible development, virtual experience creation, and collaborations with international designers.

In summary, the case study demonstrates that the revitalization and transmission of ICH is a systematic endeavor requiring the synergistic application of cultural insight, design creativity, technological application, and business acumen. It outlines a vision where ICH, while respecting its authenticity, can be revitalized in modern societal life through thoughtful commercial design, achieving a multi-faceted win for cultural preservation, industrial development, and social well-being.

## Conclusion

From the practice of "Dye-Charm Blind Collection," we see that tradition is not a burden for progress but a source of innovation. Enabling ICH to "live" in the present, "flourish" in daily life, and "walk" towards the world requires not only sentiment but also a set of scientific methods and business models that transform cultural wisdom into modern value. This is perhaps the most solid and charming step in promoting the creative transformation and innovative development of China's excellent traditional culture.

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