

# **Study on Intangible Cultural Heritage Brands from the Perspective of Ecological Protection**

Haimeng Li

School of music, Hubei Normal University, Huangshi, 435002, China

**Keywords:** ecological protection, intangible cultural heritage, brands

**Abstract:** China has abundant intangible cultural heritage resources. However, economic development brings pressure to ecological environment, changes of which have direct influence on the protection of intangible cultural heritage. At current stage, due to lack of strong consciousness of intangible cultural heritage protection in many regions in China, a part of intangible cultural heritage is in imminent danger. Establishment of intangible cultural heritage brands means inheritance and development of intangible cultural heritage, and is also a way of intangible cultural heritage protection. This paper mainly studies on intangible cultural heritage brands from the perspective of ecological protection with an example of protection of intangible cultural heritage in Southeastern Hubei Province.

As intangible cultural heritage has tourism value, various countries begin to attach importance to tourism development of intangible cultural heritage. However, unreasonable development is caused for many factors, which cannot inherit or develop intangible cultural heritage but lead to frequent problems in its protection. Establishment of intangible cultural heritage brands is an important way of intangible cultural development as well as inheriting and carrying forward Chinese culture, and formation of intangible cultural heritage brand advantages is the key of enhancing the competitiveness of Chinese cultural enterprises.

## **I. Connotation of intangible cultural heritage**

In 2003, definition of the concept of intangible cultural heritage by the UNESCO was fully demonstrated in Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage: intangible cultural heritage refers to “a variety of practices, forms of expression, performances, knowledge and skills, and relevant tools, material objects, crafts and cultural places that are regarded as cultural heritage by groups, teams and individuals.” According to definition of the UNESCO, intangible cultural heritage mainly includes legends passed down by word of mouth; forms of performance; manners, customs and etiquette etc formed at different social stages; practical achievements of human beings in conquering the nature and exploring knowledge; and traditional handicrafts. In 2004, China also joined this Convention. In 2005, China also issued relevant documents, which provided work of China to be implemented in protection of intangible cultural heritage including principles, objectives and methods etc, and various regions had also declared regional intangible cultural heritage for rating, and these intangible cultural heritage was made public in the form of directory.

From an international perspective, intangible cultural heritage is an important performance of national culture, and represents characteristics of local cultures from a national aspect. With respect to the current situation of some intangible cultural heritage being in imminent danger, increasing efforts in protection of intangible cultural heritage is one of main ways for a country to inherit its traditional cultures. The country, government and individuals shall improve their protection awareness of inheriting Chinese outstanding culture and retaining Chinese cultural connotation.

## **II. Ecological protection of intangible cultural heritage**

Ecological protection is actually cultural ecological protection. Cultural ecology is first put forward by Steward from the U.S., who has elaborated cultural ecology in detail in his work Theory of Culture Change, which points out that cultural ecology is a special system in which culture

interacts with culture and ecology interacts with culture, and ecology mainly includes physical geography, survival mode, means of production, technological means, social structure, economic forms and ideology etc that can affect the development of culture directly. It is systematic, open and dynamic.

The development of Chinese economy and tourism affects Chinese cultural ecology, threatens the survival environment of intangible cultural heritage, shortens its survival space, and endangers some intangible cultural heritage. However, with the improvement of people's ideology, people gradually have awareness of ecological protection, which is the premise of protection of intangible cultural heritage. China has also done a lot in protection of intangible cultural heritage, and establishes national cultural ecological reserves. It is of important significance to protect intangible cultural heritage from the perspective of ecological protection so as to achieve coordinated development of cultural environment and natural environment, develop tourism of intangible cultural heritage under the guidance of ecological protection concept, and establish intangible cultural heritage brands with national or local characteristics.

### **III. Overview of intangible cultural heritage in Southeastern Hubei Province**

The Southeastern Hubei Province is the main part of Wu and Chu in ancient China with a long history and distinctive features, and has diverse folk cultures as the representatives that show local characteristics. Besides, this region has a lot of intangible cultural heritage, which is briefly introduced below with examples of some intangible cultural heritage:

#### **(I) Yangxin Caicha Opera**

Yangxin Caicha Opera is a type of opera with local characteristics that is popular in Yangxin County of Hubei Province, and its music consists of mellow tune, percussion and Cai tune. The mellow tune includes Wuhan accent, Siping accent, and northern accent etc, and has a structure of plate accent with beautiful melody and great plasticity, while Cai tune mainly includes a lot of folk songs, such as mountain songs, folk love songs and lantern songs etc, which provide creation materials for Yangxin Caicha Opera. Yangxin Caicha Opera mainly expresses real lives and feelings of laboring people in the form of opera. In 2008, Yangxin Caicha Opera was included into National Directory of Intangible Cultural Heritage as the representative local feature of Yangxin and also became an intangible cultural heritage brand with the most cultural value in Yangxin County.

#### **(II) Wenqu Drama**

Wenqu Drama is originated in Taibai Lake District, i.e. the border of Wuxue City and Huangmei County in eastern Hubei Province, and is also a quite popular drama type of Hubei Province. Wenqu Drama is developed on the basis of seated singing, and its tunes mainly include mellow tune and tune name. Mellow tune includes Nanci tune, Wenci tune, four-plate tune, plane-plate tune and Qiujiang tune, while there are more than 80 types of tune names with very strong local characteristics. Wenqu Drama is mostly related to people's life, and is provincial intangible cultural heritage.

#### **(III) Chu Opera**

Chu Opera is a type of local tunes of Han Ethnicity integrated with mountain songs, folk rap and bamboo hobbyhorse etc, and is popular in the eastern Hubei Province, Huangpi District of Wuhan City and Xiaogan City with profound influence in Hubei. It was included into National Directory of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2006. Chu Opera is quite close to life, and has diverse techniques of expression and strong inclusiveness. However, Chu Opera faces a lot of difficulties at current stage, which shall be fully concerned in protection of intangible cultural heritage in the Southeastern Hubei Province.

### **IV. Establishment of intangible cultural heritage brands**

#### **(I) Practical significance of establishing intangible cultural heritage brands**

Establishment of intangible cultural heritage brands can enhance the popularity. For the same

type of intangible cultural heritage, why one item is well-known, while the other is not, because no brand is built and the features are not publicized. Thus, establishment of intangible cultural heritage brands is very important for improving popularity. Yangxin Caicha Opera in Southeastern Hubei Province has quite profound influence in local region, but is not known to people in other regions of China, mainly because it is not publicized and hasn't its brand, resulting in not high popularity. Without a brand and enough concern, troubles are resulted in protection of intangible cultural heritage, and some are even facing extinction.

The establishment of intangible cultural heritage brands is also the key of regional competition of culture industry. Establishment of brands for intangible cultural heritage would make cultural enterprises contribute actively to protection of intangible cultural heritage, improve people's protection awareness, lay a legal foundation for intangible cultural heritage and make it gain legal protection.

Intangible cultural heritage is a performance of local culture, and establishment of intangible cultural heritage brands is actually to inherit and carry forward local culture. Meanwhile, brand formation will also generate certain economic value to provide capital base for the protection. Besides, a brand shall be maintained in continuous innovation, and gain more vitality in innovation for intangible cultural heritage to make it continuous, so as to protect intangible cultural heritage.

(II) Key points of establishing intangible cultural heritage brands from the perspective of ecological protection

For brand building, an acceptable or refreshing name with featured cultural connotation and popularity shall be firstly selected. In terms of selection of name, aesthetics of the public shall be known, and then characteristics of intangible culture shall be combined to create an attractive name. To be attractive, a name shall contain corresponding cultural connotation. Each intangible cultural heritage has its generation process and background, and the background shall be concerned and extracted when naming a brand, which not only inherits intangible cultural heritage but also makes the name strongly attractive and influential.

In brand building, importance shall be attached to overall planning in accordance with types of intangible cultural heritage as China has a variety of intangible cultural heritage.

Firstly, linguistic intangible cultural heritage exists in the oral form. This type is invisible in reality, but exists as a cultural symbol. The original appearance of linguistic intangible cultural heritage shall be presented to people as much as possible when establishing brands, and do not change it in order to cater to consumers. For example, traditional lifestyle and customs of Manchu are currently fading gradually, and in particular Manchu language is endangered as increasingly less people could sing Shaman shrines in Shaman culture and thus shall be protected more intensively.

Secondly, intangible cultural heritage also includes social customs, interests and festivals etc, i.e. cultural heritage that people could only see in special days such as Western Huangshi Dragon Boat Festival and Picking the King up etc. Brands of such intangible cultural heritage can be established by celebrating festivals, and thus other relevant industries can be driven. For example, dragon boat will be raced in Dragon Boat Festival in Southeastern Hubei Province, and this activity can be fully used when establishing brands to drive the development of nearby food industry, tourism industry, folk arts and crafts etc.

Finally, traditional art can change invisible intangible cultural heritage into a material form through certain media, including Yangxin Cloth Paste and Huangmei Cross-Stitch Embroidery etc. Brands shall be established for such intangible cultural heritage with products that have strong ornamental value, high technologies and easy promotion according to local characteristics, so as to expand intangible cultural heritage. Particularly, in minority areas, brands shall be established for intangible cultural heritage in accordance with local characteristics, in order to form advantages in culture industry and promote the development of ethnic culture industry.

Intangible cultural heritage brands shall be promoted with attention to both depth and breadth. Breadth means promotion of intangible cultural heritage brands that are unknown to people. The success of a brand shall be based on the market, as a brand can only be truly established with advantages in market. Thus, it is very important to make exchanges between brands and consumers

reach emotional consensus during promotion. However, such exchanges shall not be too intentional to prevent opposite effects, but shall not only meet consumers' cultural needs, but also leave no trace so that consumers would fully trust in such brands. The depth of promotion refers that brands shall be remembered by people, and make people have a deeper brand recognition instead of a wrong understanding, which would make brands standstill, as each consumer has a different cognitive level. Thus, different ways of promotion shall be carried out according to consumers' different characteristics, and publicity shall not be suspended halfway to achieve persistent prosperity of intangible cultural heritage.

Intangible cultural heritage brands shall advance with the times constantly, and new elements shall be provided for intangible cultural heritage under constantly changing ecological environment and historical conditions, as intangible cultural heritage exists in modern society even with an extremely long history. With the development of the times, elements of the new era shall be added to establishment of brands in order to adapt to the development of the times. Intangible cultural heritage shall be inherited and maintain its epochal character, so as to truly protect intangible cultural heritage and make people understand cultural connotation of intangible cultural heritage brands, have an in-depth understanding of the value of intangible cultural heritage and form a consciousness of protecting intangible cultural heritage jointly.

## **V. Conclusions**

With the deepening of global cultural exchange, establishment of cultural industries with local characteristics is the key of being advantageous in competition of global cultural industry. The soul of a country or ethnicity is culture, while intangible cultural heritage is a form of culture that also reflects rich cultural connotation. Establishment of intangible cultural heritage brands under the concept of ecological protection is an important way to protect and develop intangible cultural heritage, and contains many key points that shall be concerned in particular. Culture shall be inherited and developed by establishing intangible cultural heritage brands with local and ethnic characteristics, doing well in brand promotion and publicity, and more importantly combining with the times, adding elements of the times, and selecting appropriate brand promotion methods according to constantly changing ecological environment.

## **Acknowledgments**

This paper is: 1. A Project of the Ministry of Culture: Establishment of Local Playlet "Field" Mechanism—Take Hubei Yangxin Caicha Opera as An Example, No. 12DB04; 2. A Social Science Research Project of Hubei Provincial Department of Education: Study on Rural Culture and Yangxin Caicha Opera, No. 2012Q13; and 3. A Project of the 12th Five-Year Plan Educational Planning of Hubei Provincial Department of Education: Field of Practice—Exploration and Experiment of New Quality-Oriented Music Education Mode for Middle and High Schools in Small and Medium-sized Cities, No. 2014B117.

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