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International Cultural Tourism Narrative Strategies for Local Intangible Cultural Heritage—A Case Study of Shaoxing Yue Opera and Rice Wine Brewing Techniques

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of integrated cultural-tourism growth, overseas communication for China's intangible cultural heritage (ICH) has moved past one-sided cultural output and leaned toward equal cross-cultural dialogue. This research integrates cross-cultural communication studies, narratology, and multilingual translation adaptation theories to study Shaoxing Yue Opera and Rice wine brewing techniques. A questionnaire survey with 193 overseas respondents whose native languages are English, Japanese, Spanish or Arabic was conducted to collect audience data. Statistical analysis proves that viewers with different native languages hold different preferences for ICH storytelling: English-speaking readers favor concise, fast-paced short-form narratives; Japanese participants gravitate toward slow, detail-rich immersive content; Spanish-speaking respondents prioritize live, participatory interactive narratives; while Arabic-speaking audiences tend to accept rigorous, history-focused origin narratives. Then, this study designs targeted, actionable storytelling schemes for the four language markets. The outcomes can serve both theoretical references and practical operational blueprints for local Chinese cities seeking multilingual overseas ICH promotion.

Keywords

Intangible Cultural Heritage; Multilingual Communication; Cultural Tourism Narrative; High-Context and Low-Context Culture; Shaoxing

1. Introduction

As living cultural assets deeply rooted in Chinese regional life, ICH projects face far more severe cultural discount risks than mainstream pop cultural products during global dissemination. Shaoxing currently holds 26 national-level, 97 provincial-level and 301 municipal ICH entries, ranking among top prefecture-level cities nationwide in terms of ICH resource reserves. Yue Opera and Rice wine brewing

craftsmanship were included in the very first national ICH directory back in 2006, standing as Shaoxing's two most internationally recognizable cultural calling cards. However, Shaoxing's ICH overseas publicity has long been trapped in three interlocking bottlenecks. First, unbalanced multilingual content supply. Nearly all official overseas ICH materials from Shaoxing are produced in English. Second, homogenized single-mode storytelling. Most existing overseas ICH materials ignore varied cognitive habits across cultural backgrounds. Third, obvious disconnect between academic theory and industrial practice. Domestic scholars have discussed ICH translation strategies, yet most existing literature failed to link analysis to real cultural tourism communication scenarios.

Hence, this paper centers on one core research question: how to design localized cultural tourism narrative plans for Shaoxing's ICH that fit the cultural and linguistic traits of different global audiences? This research combines established cross-cultural communication theories with original questionnaire data to offer targeted, evidence-based solutions for this practical industry problem.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Domestic and International Research Status

Scholarly discussions surrounding cross-border communication of Chinese ICH can be sorted into three mainstream domestic research directions.

The first branch focuses on translation practice for overseas ICH publicity. Chen and Sun (2024) adopted Lasswell's 5W communication model to analyze ICH cross-border promotion cases in Xuzhou, putting forward suggestions covering government leading roles, optimized content production and multi-channel resource integration. Feng (2023) summarized frequent difficulties appearing during ICH external translation work, and proposed feasible solutions including wider new media deployment, standardized ICH translation systems and innovative translated content forms. However, their analytical scope stays limited to written translation texts without expanding into full-set cultural tourism narrative design.

The second research stream covers ICH cultural tourism narrative studies. Lu (2025) examined the shaping of local cultural identity through ICH, arguing that embedding heritage into modern everyday life breaks down collective cultural identity into online micro-communities and connects offline spaces with digital channels for global cultural dissemination. Meng et al. (2025) built a self-compiled corpus of ten years' ICH news articles from *China Daily* international edition to extract three core narrative elements for overseas heritage reporting: heritage-centered value frameworks, records of inheritors' persistence and creative innovation, and unified national emotional tones. However, its research object carries distinct stylistic differences from cultural tourism promotional narratives targeted at leisure travelers.

The third domestic research direction addresses multilingual communication

construction. Chen and Lou (2025) took Shaoxing Rice Wine Museum as a specific case to develop a multilingual audio guide map powered by digital intelligent technology, which directly targets Shaoxing's local ICH multilingual promotion reality. Still, the study ignores systematic full-link narrative strategy construction covering videos, live streams, printed handbooks and offline events.

Internationally, Hall (1973) clarified that low-context societies rely fully on explicit linguistic symbols to deliver complete information, hence preferring straightforward, logic-driven storytelling, while high-context cultures embed most implied meaning into shared social backgrounds, interpersonal relations and unspoken subtext, leading audiences to favor implicit, emotion-focused narrative styles. Selmanovic et al. (2020) selected the traditional bridge-diving custom in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina as their research subject. The experimental data proved that digital VR tools simultaneously achieve ICH inheritance and overseas value dissemination, without raising users' perceived operation difficulty, and effectively lift audiences' recognition of cultural heritage digital projects.

Hence, three obvious research gaps emerge. First, no unified cross-paradigm research framework has been built to connect multilingual adaptation, cultural tourism narrative and regional ICH practice. Second, existing Shaoxing ICH multilingual research lacks differentiated narrative schemes classified by different global language markets. Third, current academic outputs rarely produce operable implementation plans that leverage comprehensive foreign language faculty resources to serve local city cultural tourism industrial development. This paper fills the gaps through theoretical sorting and original questionnaire empirical research.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

Three core theoretical systems are integrated to build the paper's unified four-dimensional analysis model. First, Hall's high-context and low-context cultural differentiation theory. In low-context societies, nearly all core information is directly expressed through literal language, so local audiences demand narratives that are clear, direct and logically arranged. In contrast, high-context cultural communities place most implicit information into shared life contexts and tacit mutual understanding, making indirect, emotion-driven storytelling far more acceptable to local readers. Second, cultural tourism narratology. It centers on four core research questions: who tells the story, what story content is delivered, what narrative methods are adopted, and through which channels stories reach target audiences. Third, multilingual translation adaptation theory. Eugene Nida's (1964) functional equivalence theory sets a core standard: overseas readers' emotional and cognitive reactions toward translated ICH content should align with native Chinese audiences' perceptions of the original material. Thus, researchers must lock fixed, unchanged ICH cultural core symbols and emotional themes first; afterward, adjust narrative rhythm, media formats and channel operation plans flexibly accordingly.

3. Research Design and Data Collection

3.1. Questionnaire Survey

The questionnaire contains 17 separate items covering single-choice questions, multiple-choice selections, matrix scale questions, ranking questions and open-ended written feedback blanks. Every test item takes Yue Opera and Rice wine brewing craftsmanship as its exclusive research objects without involving other local heritage projects to guarantee data concentration. We selected overseas respondents whose native falls into four categories: English, Japanese, Spanish and Arabic. The four groups are chosen based on two reasons: each language zone represents a distinct type within Hall's high-low context cultural spectrum; tourist markets corresponding to these language families constitute both existing core inbound visitor groups and high-potential emerging markets for Shaoxing's cultural tourism industry.

The questionnaire was distributed through the Wenjuanxing online survey platform via snowball sampling and convenient sampling. Distribution channels include overseas cooperative universities partnered with Zhejiang Yuexiu University, on-campus international student communities in Shaoxing, and inbound tourist service points within local scenic areas. All data collection work was completed in July 2026. After eliminating invalid responses, we obtained 193 fully valid questionnaires with a 100% effective response rate.

3.2. Basic Sample Statistical Characteristics

The sample gender distribution stays relatively balanced, with 89 male respondents and 104 female participants. Age distribution concentrates heavily on young and middle-aged groups: respondents aged 18 to 35 take up 62.18% of all samples, matching the demographic traits of mainstream global cultural tourism consumers who actively browse overseas cultural short videos and travel overseas. Sample numbers across the four language groups are evenly allocated: 50 English, 48 Japanese, 48 Spanish and 47 Arabic native speakers. Balanced sample sizes guarantee reliable comparative statistical results between different language audiences during cross-tabulation analysis. The distribution of respondents' contact history with Shaoxing also maintains even proportions across four subgroups, providing solid data support to analyze how real local experience affects overseas audiences' awareness of ICH projects.

4. Major Findings

4.1. Audience ICH Awareness and Main Content Access Channels

For Yue Opera, 50.26% of participants stated they understood basic artistic content, 39.90% only knew the project's name without specific details, and merely 9.84% had never heard of Yue Opera at all. For Shaoxing Rice wine brewing techniques,

53.89% grasped core craft knowledge, 37.31% only knew the name, while just 8.81% reported zero prior exposure. Both heritage items maintain baseline global recognition, and Rice wine achieves slightly higher audience familiarity (3.63% higher on the "understand basic content" metric). We infer this gap arises because Rice wine circulates as a consumer commodity in global supermarkets and catering scenarios, creating casual exposure opportunities unavailable for stage art Yue Opera.

When asked about habitual channels to access Shaoxing heritage content, overseas social media platforms ranked first with a 50.78% selection rate. Chinese domestic social media platforms came second at 40.41%, followed by offline scenic spot visits at 37.31%. Only 9.84% of all respondents reported never seeing any Shaoxing ICH-related materials anywhere. We also spotted clear channel preference gaps across language groups: 62.00% of English-speaking respondents rely primarily on overseas social media to browse cultural content, while 47.92% of Japanese audiences gain heritage knowledge through in-person site visits, a trait tied to frequent Sino-Japanese cultural exchange activities and high Japanese tourist willingness to travel to Zhejiang Province. This means multilingual communication plans must adopt differentiated platform operation strategies: English-language promotion should prioritize global short-video platforms, while Japanese ICH materials need to strengthen multilingual on-site guide services within Shaoxing local venues.

4.2. Cross-Linguistic Differences

For English-speaking audiences, short, fast-paced narrative content ranks first with a 42.00% preference rate. Global short-video consumption data also proves English market users spend massive daily time on TikTok and YouTube Shorts, forming fixed viewing habits toward high-density, concise short-form content. When designing English ICH narratives, we recommend a fixed three-stage content structure: opening with a straightforward curious question, followed by fast-cut immersive experience footage, and ending with clear actionable travel booking information.

Japanese native respondents select immersive, detail-focused narratives at the highest share of 47.92%. Intricate Yue Opera costume embroidery and slow footage capturing rice soaking procedures during Rice wine brewing become core emotional carriers for Japanese audiences to perceive Chinese traditional craftsmanship. Therefore, Japanese multilingual ICH materials must reserve sufficient footage and layout space to display delicate craft and artistic details.

Spanish-speaking participants prioritize interactive, experience-centered narratives with a 43.75% selection ratio. Though Spanish cultural zones belong to low-context systems in information logic, local populations carry extremely high emotional expression tendencies and value group participation and festival collective

atmosphere. Cultural customs including Spanish wine festivals, Mexican Day of the Dead celebrations and Argentine tango social activities all center on public shared participation instead of passive viewing. For this audience group, real-time live streaming interaction, hands-on craft challenge short videos and festival-themed promotional clips edited to upbeat Spanish regional music achieve far better communication effects than plain explanatory documentaries.

Arabic-speaking audiences pick authoritative, history-origin focused narratives as their top choice at 48.94%. Arabic cultural communities under deep influence of Islamic traditions are typical high-context societies that attach high credibility to content released by academic scholars, formal cultural institutions and long historical inheritance records. When developing Arabic ICH materials, producers should adopt solemn, rigorous overall tone, and invite cross-cultural Chinese-Arab scholars and heritage researchers to co-participate in content creation to boost narrative authority through multi-party academic endorsement.

4.3. Diagnosis of Cross-Border Communication Barriers

Surveyed barriers form an obvious tiered structure that reflects progressive communication loss during cross-cultural information transmission. The first-tier core obstacles are insufficient overseas platform exposure (67.88%) and inadequate multilingual text/subtitle resources (55.44%), two infrastructure-level deficiencies forming the primary bottleneck of Shaoxing's ICH overseas outreach. Without enough overseas platform distribution, target audiences cannot encounter heritage content at all; even if foreign viewers locate relevant videos or articles, missing native-language translation blocks basic literal understanding. Second-tier obstacles include deep cross-cultural comprehension gaps (40.93%) and monotonous boring content (29.02%). Even after audiences find and literally understand multilingual heritage materials, deep cultural value differences may block emotional resonance between foreign readers and Chinese ICH connotations; rigid textbook-style introduction scripts also easily trigger early video exit rates and low article reading completion. Third-tier limiting factor is insufficient offline overseas experience activities (22.28%), with lower selection frequency. 24.87% of all respondents have never set foot in China, so offline on-site experience only exists as an expected ideal condition rather than a personally encountered limitation for most participants.

Looking at respondents' most favored improvement measures, supplying multilingual narration & subtitles ranks number one (61.14%), followed by expanded social media deployment (58.03%) and short video production (46.63%). This ranking directly sets priority sequences for local cultural bureaus and tourism enterprises to allocate limited promotion resources during multilingual ICH content construction.

4.4. Transformation Path

We sorted participants' self-reported willingness to join Shaoxing ICH offline experience activities. Visiting Rice Wine Museum paired with wine tasting achieves the highest participation willingness at 70.98%, followed by live Yue Opera stage performances (63.73%) and hands-on Rice wine DIY brewing workshops (62.18%). The activity with slightly lower willingness is Yue Opera makeup and traditional costume trial, at 54.92%. Regarding respondents' willingness to recommend Shaoxing ICH travel experience to friends and relatives, 18.13% selected "will definitely recommend" and another 37.82% chose "will probably recommend", combining for a total positive recommendation rate of 55.95%. 22.28% remained uncertain about recommendation intentions, while 21.77% leaned toward negative feedback. The over-half positive word-of-mouth ratio proves Shaoxing's ICH already owns foundational overseas reputation potential for organic viral communication. We also discover strong positive correlation between offline local experience and recommendation willingness: respondents currently staying in Shaoxing record a 72.92% positive recommendation rate, while participants who have never visited China only hit 39.58%. This contrast verifies that real on-site immersive experience acts as the most powerful driver for overseas audience word-of-mouth spread.

4.5. Dual Demand Structure of Multilingual Content Language

When asked which language respondents hope to see used in ICH promotional materials, English took first place with a 57.51% selection rate, followed by Japanese (31.09%), Spanish (27.46%) and Arabic (23.83%). Meanwhile, content recorded in original Chinese with native-language subtitles ranked second overall at 35.75%. This result reveals a dual-layer demand structure among overseas audiences. On one hand, high-quality English ICH content can cover not only native English audiences but a large volume of global second-language English consumers. On the other hand, over one-third of respondents accept original Chinese audio paired with foreign-language subtitles, reflecting overseas audiences' pursuit of authentic original cultural atmosphere alongside readable translation assistance. Tourism content producers can properly adopt Chinese original footage with multilingual subtitles to balance cultural authenticity and cross-cultural comprehension efficiency.

5. Differentiated Narrative Strategy Systems

All four sets of language-specific strategies follow a unified logical construction sequence: core cultural trait judgment→cross-cultural adaptation principles→ specific translation & narrative design methods→recommended media formats→ matched multi-subject storyteller combinations.

5.1. Narrative Strategies for English-Speaking Audiences

Core cultural traits: typical low-context culture, individualism value orientation,

preference for direct, logic-centered information expression. Adaptation guiding principles: simplify complex cultural hierarchical logic, prioritize practical travel information, fully highlight participatory offline experience highlights. Cultural core translation methods: frame *The Butterfly Lovers* as China's local counterpart to *Romeo and Juliet* to leverage English audiences' existing classic literary cognitive foundation for quick resonance; condense Rice wine craft into two easy-to-memorize quantitative markers—222 manual working procedures and a full 280-day brewing cycle—to simplify complicated traditional craft introduction. Recommended narrative media forms: 1–3 minute short videos adopting question opening, experience demonstration, practical travel information closing three-part structure; video titles should highlight experiential action verbs such as Try, Experience, Challenge to attract click rates. Primary operation channels include YouTube Shorts, TikTok and Instagram Reels, supplemented by offline cultural tourism exhibition participation and English cultural travel podcast cooperation. Narrative subject matching plan: three-level collaborative storytelling team consisting of official Shaoxing cultural tourism accounts, overseas cultural KOLs, and on-camera heritage inheritors.

5.2. Narrative Strategies for Japanese-Speaking Audiences

Core cultural traits: typical high-context culture, collectivism values, strong aesthetic pursuit of delicate craft textures and subtle implicit emotion. Adaptation guiding principles: dig deep into fine craft and artistic details, build comparable cultural reference points with Japanese traditional arts, adopt restrained, mild emotional expression logic. Cultural core translation methods: set up parallel comparison frameworks between Yue Opera and Japanese Kabuki & Noh theatre from dimensions including stylized performance moves, virtual stage aesthetics and master-apprentice inheritance systems to build cross-cultural dialogue entry points; connect Shaoxing's winter brewing tradition with Japanese sake cold-brew custom to form shared craftsmanship value identification rooted in mutual agricultural brewing philosophy. Recommended narrative media forms: detailed printed illustrated handbooks with frame-by-frame decomposition diagrams of Yue costume patterns, makeup steps and water-sleeve movement techniques; slow-paced 3–5 minute short videos focusing on soft natural lighting and material texture close-ups; bilingual in-depth interview programs featuring Chinese and Japanese sinologists as hosts. Main distribution channels cover Japanese domestic tourism platforms, Japan regional TikTok cultural columns and local Japanese travel print magazines. Narrative subject matching plan: official cultural tourism platforms + bilingual Sino-Japanese cultural bloggers + Japanese sinologists. Three storytellers take distinct roles as information disseminators, field experience recorders and cross-cultural interpreters to generate multi-layered intertextual narratives.

5.3. Narrative Strategies for Spanish-Speaking Audiences

Core cultural traits: low-context information logic paired with extremely high emotional expression tendency, collective festival participation as core social activity demand. Adaptation guiding principles: focus on emotional resonance construction, integrate narrative content with festival collective atmosphere, adopt high-impact visual shot design. Cultural core translation methods: link the butterfly rebirth ending of *The Butterfly Lovers* with life cycle rebirth themes widely seen in Latin American folk culture to build deep emotional cross-cultural connection; analogize Shaoxing winter opening brewing rituals to Spanish local wine festival celebration customs to trigger shared collective celebration emotional identity. Recommended narrative media forms: real-time interactive live streams with opera performers and brewing masters teaching water-sleeve movements or wine tasting knowledge online; fast-cut short videos edited to upbeat Spanish regional music rhythms. Core operation channels are TikTok Spanish regional zone and Instagram Latin American accounts, paired with interactive experience booth arrangement during tourism expos held in Spain and Mexico. Narrative subject matching plan: official cultural tourism accounts + Spanish local travel & cultural internet influencers + heritage inheritors with standard Spanish subtitles. Overseas KOLs undertake frontline live interactive hosting work, while inheritors provide professional cultural interpretation content as background supporting materials.

5.4. Narrative Strategies for Arabic-Speaking Audiences

Core cultural traits: typical high-context culture, collectivism & clan value priority, high sensitivity toward religious cultural taboos, strong trust in historical authoritative academic content. Adaptation guiding principles: adopt historical origin tracing as core narrative thread, avoid sensitive cultural taboos, center collective inheritance and community shared values. Cultural core translation methods: emphasize master-apprentice succession and intergenerational family inheritance mechanisms of Yue Opera and Rice wine craftsmanship to match Arabic society's respect for lineage and community continuity; extract loyalty and commitment spiritual themes from *The Butterfly Lovers* to correspond with local core social values. When introducing Rice wine craftsmanship, deliberately downplay beverage drinking attributes and shift narrative focus entirely to ancient manual brewing technical aesthetics; draw parallel technical comparison with Middle Eastern traditional fermented date drinks while strictly separating craft technical discussion from religious value judgment boundaries. Recommended narrative media forms: formal bilingual 15–20 minute documentaries tracking heritage historical origins; neatly printed cultural handbooks adopting Arabic calligraphy decorative layout, maintaining solemn, non-entertaining overall visual tone. Main distribution channels include Middle Eastern local tourism platforms, official Sino-Arab cultural exchange projects and Arabic-language cultural official websites. Narrative subject matching plan: official cultural & heritage institutions +

cross-cultural Chinese-Arab academic researchers + ICH specialized research institutes. Joint academic participation elevates the historical authority of all narrative content to fit local audience trust preferences.

6. Conclusion

This paper proves that overseas audiences hold stable, non-random differences in ICH storytelling preference: English viewers favor concise fast short-form content, Japanese readers pursue slow detail-rich immersive narratives, Spanish participants prioritize participatory live interactive content, and Arabic audiences trust rigorous historical origin documentaries. Successful multilingual ICH cross-border storytelling must strike a balanced coordination point between fixed unified Chinese cultural core connotation and flexible language-targeted narrative design adapted to overseas cultural backgrounds. The research conclusions drawn from this paper can provide direct actionable operation guidance for Shaoxing local cultural tourism institutions, while offering references for other Chinese cities.

However, this research contains two objective limitations constrained by research conditions. First, the 193-person sample cannot further subdivide internal regional differences within each broad language zone. Second, this paper only completes theoretical strategy design without long-cycle post-implementation effect tracking data. Subsequent related research should arrange half-year and one-year interval follow-up surveys to quantitatively measure communication effect changes after multilingual narrative schemes are formally launched.

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