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Cultural Communication Strategies of Guangxi Hengzhou Jasmine Tea in the Digital Media Era

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ABSTRACT

The digital transformation of cultural heritage communication has created new opportunities and challenges for the sustainable transmission of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). This study investigates the digital communication ecology of Hengzhou jasmine tea culture within the context of media convergence, with particular attention to how cultural meanings are constructed, negotiated, and disseminated across digital platforms. Adopting a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, the research integrates Likert-scale surveys involving five stakeholder groups—tea producers, consumers, policymakers, ICH inheritors, and new media practitioners—with in-depth interviews, content analysis, and social network analysis.

The findings reveal a significant structural dissonance between heritage preservation and digital innovation. While producers and governmental actors demonstrate strong cultural literacy and commitment to heritage conservation, their communication strategies are often ineffective in engaging younger audiences, who prefer interactive, experiential, and participatory digital content. Conversely, ICH inheritors exhibit profound cultural attachment but limited digital adaptability, whereas new media practitioners possess advanced platform competencies yet frequently lack sufficient cultural understanding. This supply–demand mismatch constrains intergenerational cultural transmission and weakens the conversion of cultural value into sustainable brand equity. The study advances the body of knowledge by proposing a Digital–Cultural Dual Helix Model, which conceptualizes the dynamic interaction between cultural authenticity and platformized communication in the digital age. The model contributes to media convergence and glocalization scholarship by explaining how traditional cultural resources can simultaneously maintain heritage integrity and adapt to evolving digital ecosystems. Practically, the research highlights the importance of integrated

digital communication platforms, multi-stakeholder co-creation mechanisms, and narrative innovation through short-video storytelling and participatory media practices. By situating Hengzhou jasmine tea culture within the broader framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, the study offers a transferable framework for enhancing the global visibility, sustainability, and cross-cultural dissemination of intangible cultural heritage in contemporary digital environments.

1. Introduction

Cultural heritage constitutes an important component of social identity, collective memory, and sustainable cultural development. In recent decades, increasing globalization and digitalization have transformed the ways in which cultural heritage is preserved, communicated, and interpreted. Traditional forms of heritage transmission, which were largely dependent on localized social networks and place-based cultural practices, are increasingly being supplemented or replaced by digitally mediated communication environments. Consequently, understanding how cultural heritage can maintain its authenticity, visibility, and cultural significance within digital contexts has become a critical research concern.

Hengzhou jasmine tea represents a distinctive form of cultural heritage that integrates agricultural knowledge, artisanal craftsmanship, ecological resources, and regional identity developed through a long historical process. Beyond its function as an agricultural commodity, Hengzhou jasmine tea embodies symbolic meanings associated with local traditions, collective memory, and cultural continuity. Its cultural value is manifested through the intergenerational transmission of production knowledge, the refinement of scenting techniques, and the ritualized practices through which tea culture is reproduced and sustained within local communities (Chen, 2018). As a result, Hengzhou jasmine tea functions not only as a product of economic significance but also as a cultural carrier that reflects the historical relationship between people, place, and traditional knowledge systems.



Figure 1. National Geographical Indication (GI) Certifications. (a) GI Protection Product Certificate for Hengzhou jasmine flower (2006). (b) GI Product Protection Demonstration Zone Certificate (2014) covering jasmine tea and associated local specialties. Source: AQSIQ.

Historically, the transmission of Hengzhou jasmine tea culture relied primarily on localized production practices, interpersonal relationships, and region-specific market

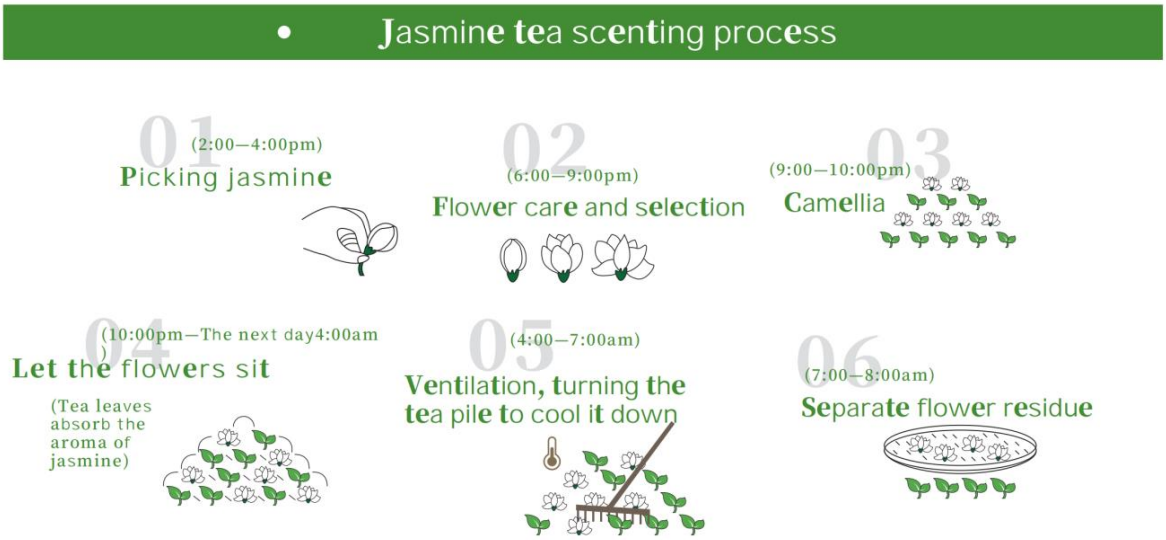
networks. Cultural meanings were circulated through face-to-face interactions, community-based rituals, and geographically bounded consumption contexts. While these mechanisms facilitated the preservation of local cultural identity, they also limited the visibility and accessibility of cultural narratives beyond their immediate geographical setting. Consequently, the dissemination of cultural knowledge remained constrained by spatial boundaries and relatively narrow audience reach. The rapid development of digital technologies has fundamentally altered this situation. Digital platforms, social media ecosystems, and data-driven communication systems have reshaped the processes through which cultural meanings are produced, distributed, and interpreted (Jenkins, 2019; Peng, 2020). Through online communication channels, cultural heritage can now reach geographically dispersed audiences, enabling broader cultural participation and cross-cultural engagement. For heritage products such as Hengzhou jasmine tea, digital communication provides new opportunities to enhance cultural visibility, strengthen cultural identity, and expand international influence. However, increased digital exposure does not automatically generate meaningful cultural understanding or sustained cultural value recognition. Existing studies suggest that digital communication environments may fragment cultural narratives, privilege visually appealing symbols over substantive cultural content, and encourage inconsistent interpretations across different media platforms (Zhang, 2017; Sun, 2020). In many cases, heritage-related communication strategies emphasize promotional and branding objectives while neglecting the deeper cultural meanings embedded within traditional practices. As a result, cultural narratives may become diluted, simplified, or disconnected from their historical and social contexts, thereby weakening the long-term effectiveness of heritage communication. Despite growing scholarly interest in digital heritage communication, limited research has examined how traditional tea culture can effectively construct coherent cultural narratives and sustainable communication mechanisms within contemporary digital environments. In particular, insufficient attention has been devoted to understanding the communication pathways through which intangible cultural values are transformed into meaningful digital experiences and recognized by diverse audiences. This gap is especially evident in the context of Hengzhou jasmine tea, whose cultural significance extends beyond product branding to encompass broader issues of heritage preservation, cultural identity formation, and regional cultural development.

Therefore, this study investigates the digital cultural communication of Hengzhou jasmine tea from the perspective of cultural heritage dissemination. By examining the interaction between traditional cultural resources and digital communication technologies, the study seeks to identify the key factors influencing cultural transmission effectiveness and to explore strategies for enhancing the coherence, authenticity, and sustainability of heritage narratives in digital spaces. The findings contribute to the theoretical understanding of digital heritage communication and provide practical implications for the preservation and international promotion of traditional cultural heritage in the digital era.

2. Digital Cultural Communication Forms and Patterns

2.1 Current Forms of Digital Communication The digital communication of Hengzhou jasmine tea is dominated by visually oriented, platform-specific formats, especially short-form video and image-based storytelling. Quantitative patterns from this study indicate that these platforms have become primary points of cultural exposure for audiences, while qualitative interviews confirm that producers, enterprises, and institutions intentionally prioritize such formats to align with

contemporary consumption habits characterized by rapid scrolling, fragmented viewing, and mobile-first engagement (Chen, 2022). Survey results from 305 valid respondents indicate that digital and online media platforms constitute primary channels through which audiences encounter information related to Hengzhou jasmine tea culture. The distribution of digital exposure shows that daily exposure represents the largest group (27.9%), followed by frequent exposure (24.6%), never (24.3%), and occasional exposure (23.3%). Taken together, 52.5% of respondents report frequent or daily exposure, indicating that more than half of the sample encounters jasmine tea



cultural content on digital platforms at least weekly (Wu, 2025).

Figure 2 Traditional Scenting Process of Hengzhou Jasmine Tea （Six-Step Cycle）

2.2 Content Formats and Narrative Structures Respondents identified three main formats used in the digital dissemination of jasmine tea culture. First, a visual-oriented format emphasizes aesthetic presentation through images and short videos, showcasing tea gardens, scenting processes, tea-making practices, and consumption settings, making it well suited to image-based and short-video platforms (Liu, 2021). Second, a narrative-based format highlights cultural history, heritage symbolism, and craftsmanship through concise storytelling, presenting jasmine tea as a cultural practice rather than merely a product. Third, a platform-adaptive format tailors' content to platform affordances through short videos, fragmented narratives, and attention-oriented presentation strategies that support algorithmic distribution and engagement in fast-scrolling environments (Sun, 2020; Xu, 2019).

2.3 Platform Ecology and Communication Channels Interview data suggest that digital dissemination is strongly shaped by platform ecology. Respondents identified short-video and image-based social media platforms as dominant channels, influencing both content production and audience engagement. Cultural narratives are often condensed into brief, visually appealing formats that emphasize symbolic cultural elements and accommodate fragmented viewing

habits. Institutional representatives also highlighted the increasing role of official digital platforms and coordinated online campaigns in improving visibility, ensuring consistent cultural representation, and strengthening cross-platform communication (Guo, 2009). Across stakeholder groups, participants emphasized the importance of communicating the historical origins, traditional production techniques, and symbolic meanings of jasmine tea culture. Enterprise and production-sector respondents further noted that digital media help visualize craftsmanship by documenting scenting processes, production procedures, and tea-making environments, transforming intangible cultural practices into accessible visual experiences (Chen, 2022).

3. Global Communication Strategies

3.1 Cross-Cultural Dissemination Challenges Global communication refers to the transmission and circulation of cultural products across linguistic, cultural, and social boundaries, enabling locally embedded cultural forms to become visible and intelligible to international audiences. In the context of globalization, digital media infrastructures have significantly reduced barriers to transnational circulation, allowing regional cultural products to enter global attention networks through platform-mediated distribution (Appadurai, 1996; Xu, 2019; Lin, 2021). However, increased global visibility does not necessarily lead to cross-cultural understanding. Research on intercultural communication and global cultural flows suggests that effective dissemination requires adaptive narrative strategies, sensitivity to audience diversity, and sustained interpretive mediation to minimize meaning loss and cultural misrecognition. Quantitative findings from this study indicate that global-oriented dissemination practices are closely associated with multi-platform engagement and the use of overseas social media platforms among digital media practitioners.

3.2 Cultural Translation and Localization Intercultural communication scholarship emphasizes that global dissemination should be understood as a process of cultural translation rather than a one-way export of cultural products. Cultural translation involves the interpretive and representational work through which culturally specific meanings are rendered comprehensible to audiences operating within different symbolic systems, value frameworks, and consumption contexts. In the case of jasmine tea, cultural translation extends beyond linguistic translation. It requires the adaptation of cultural symbols, practices, and narratives—such as the traditional scenting process, the cultural significance of jasmine fragrance, and the place-based identity of Hengzhou—into interpretive frameworks that international audiences can readily understand. Without such translation, jasmine tea may be perceived merely as a generic commodity or an aesthetic lifestyle product, thereby weakening the transmission of its cultural and heritage value (Zheng, 2019; Smith, 2020).

3.3 Platform Deployment and Global Reach Quantitative evidence from digital media practitioners demonstrates that global-oriented dissemination strategies are strongly associated with multi-platform deployment. Survey results show that 66.7% of practitioners use WeChat, Weibo, and other domestic social media platforms, while an equal proportion (66.7%) utilize overseas platforms such as YouTube and Instagram. Additionally, 53.3% employ short-video platforms such as Douyin and TikTok, and 53.3% maintain self-built websites or blogs. Despite the adoption of diverse dissemination channels, practitioners identified several challenges that constrain global outreach. Algorithmic exposure limitations were the most frequently reported obstacle (73.3%), followed by cross-cultural communication barriers

(60.0%) and content fragmentation associated with short-video platforms (53.3%). These findings provide a quantitative overview of practitioner-perceived constraints and correspond with qualitative themes identified in previous research, particularly those related to cultural discount and governance coordination challenges (Smith, 2020).

4. Strategic Recommendations

4.1 Non-Linguistic Cultural Symbols as Entry Points Both the survey findings and interview data indicate that international audiences engage more readily with sensory and experiential cultural elements than with linguistically dense historical narratives. Music, soundscapes, ritualized gestures, and embodied tea-making practices function as affective anchors that facilitate intuitive understanding beyond language barriers. Accordingly, global communication strategies should place greater emphasis on shared sensory experiences as entry points, reducing cultural discount while preserving cultural authenticity. Practical implementation may include translating core tea-making processes into short-form audiovisual narratives tailored to international social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube Shorts. Sound-oriented content, including ambient recordings of tea harvesting and traditional workshops, can enhance immersive engagement, while ritualized gestures and embodied practices can serve as visible markers of authenticity without requiring extensive textual explanation (Zhou, 2019).

4.2 Multisensory and Experiential Digital Narratives The findings suggest that cultural recognition increases when communication extends beyond static visual branding toward multisensory and experiential forms of representation. Content that combines visual imagery, auditory elements, and coherent narrative rhythm can strengthen emotional engagement and improve memory retention among international audiences (Jenkins, 2019). Based on this evidence, this study advocates the development of multisensory narratives that allow jasmine tea culture to be experienced rather than merely observed. Implementation strategies may include producing immersive short documentaries and experiential video content, experimenting with interactive technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) to recreate tea-making environments, integrating music and rhythmic editing to evoke cultural atmosphere, and adapting narrative structures to platform-specific consumption habits while maintaining symbolic coherence (Liu, 2021; Lin, 2021).

4.3 Narrative Coordination and Cross-Platform Coherence The findings reveal a communication paradox: increased visibility does not necessarily lead to deeper cultural understanding. Fragmented narratives and inconsistent symbolic framing across platforms were repeatedly identified as barriers to sustainable cultural transmission. Addressing this challenge requires strategic narrative coordination that balances platform adaptation with the preservation of stable cultural meanings. Implementation approaches include establishing a unified symbolic framework for Hengzhou jasmine tea culture, centered on themes such as purity, craftsmanship, and ritual temporality, to guide global content production. Greater coordination among government agencies, tea enterprises, and digital media practitioners can reduce narrative fragmentation and ensure consistency across communication channels. Furthermore, content should be sequenced from sensory engagement to contextual explanation, enabling audiences to progress from emotional connection to deeper interpretive understanding (Guo, 2009).

4.4 Integrated Implementation Roadmap To operationalize the recommendations outlined above, stakeholders should institutionalize a multi-layered implementation

framework consisting of shared content standards, editorial review mechanisms for cultural accuracy, and coordinated campaign schedules involving public institutions, enterprises, and media actors (Zhou, 2019; Wu, 2025). Such governance functions as a form of cultural stewardship, ensuring coherence, credibility, and continuity across digital environments while supporting the progressive pathway from sensory entry to experiential immersion and, ultimately, to deeper cultural understanding. In addition, digital participation and user-generated content (UGC) should be guided through shared narrative frameworks and culturally grounded prompts to ensure that audience engagement reinforces rather than dilutes core cultural meanings. Meaning-centered participation mechanisms may include guided UGC campaigns, interactive quizzes, cultural badge systems that reward knowledge acquisition, and community moderation strategies that safeguard cultural accuracy while encouraging creative reinterpretation (Peng, 2020

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the sustainability of Hengzhou jasmine tea culture in digital environments depends not merely on visibility but on the strategic construction, stabilization, and coordination of cultural meaning. The findings reveal a platform-ecological shift in which short-form video platforms and visually oriented social media have become primary channels of cultural engagement, transforming tea culture into modular narratives optimized for circulation and visibility. Although these formats increase accessibility and audience reach, they also intensify narrative compression and fragmentation, potentially weakening contextual cultural understanding when adequate interpretive support is absent.

The results further demonstrate that audience engagement is shaped by more than exposure frequency or interactive affordances. Digital engagement becomes culturally meaningful when content provides effective meaning scaffolding by connecting symbolic representations with craftsmanship ethics, ritual practices, and historical-cultural contexts. Such scaffolding facilitates both emotional resonance and deeper interpretive understanding. In contrast, unguided participation and platform-driven content compression may lead to symbolic flattening, generating interaction without fostering sustained cultural recognition or appreciation. The study also finds that global dissemination can be enhanced through the combination of cross-platform narrative coherence and culturally adaptive entry points. In particular, non-linguistic cultural symbols—including soundscapes, embodied practices, and ritualized gestures can reduce cultural discount and improve cross-cultural accessibility. Effective digital cultural communication therefore depends on the alignment of content depth, participatory design, and institutional coordination, enabling audiences to move from recognition to interpretation and from temporary attention to lasting cultural identification. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to digital cultural communication scholarship by proposing the Digital-Cultural Dual Helix Model, which explains how traditional cultural heritage negotiates the tension between authenticity and platformization in digital environments. From a practical perspective, it offers a replicable framework for the revitalization and sustainable transmission of intangible cultural heritage. Through integrated digital platforms, multi-stakeholder co-creation mechanisms, and innovative short-video storytelling strategies, Hengzhou's century-old jasmine tea culture can achieve broader global visibility while maintaining cultural depth, continuity, and authenticity.

Body of Knowledge

This study advances digital cultural communication theory by proposing the Digital–Cultural Dual Helix Model (DCDH Model), which explains how traditional cultural heritage can achieve sustainable transmission in digital environments through the dynamic interaction between cultural authenticity and platformized digital communication.

The findings reveal that the sustainability of Hengzhou jasmine tea culture depends not only on digital visibility but also on the strategic construction, stabilization, and coordination of cultural meaning across platforms. Digital media platforms, particularly short-form video and visual social media, function as primary channels for cultural dissemination. However, while these platforms increase accessibility and audience reach, they may also fragment cultural narratives and weaken contextual understanding.

The study identifies three core mechanisms that facilitate effective cultural communication:

1. Meaning Scaffolding – Connecting cultural symbols with historical heritage, craftsmanship ethics, and ritual practices to deepen audience understanding.

2. Cross-Platform Narrative Coherence – Maintaining consistent cultural narratives across multiple digital platforms while adapting content formats.

3. Culturally Adaptive Engagement – Utilizing non-linguistic cultural symbols such as soun dscapes, tea-making rituals, embodied practices, and visual aesthetics to reduce cultural barriers and enhance global accessibility.

Furthermore, sustainable digital cultural communication requires collaboration among multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, tea enterprises, cultural inheritors, media practitioners, and audiences. Through coordinated participation, cultural authenticity can be preserved while simultaneously adapting to the logic of digital platforms.

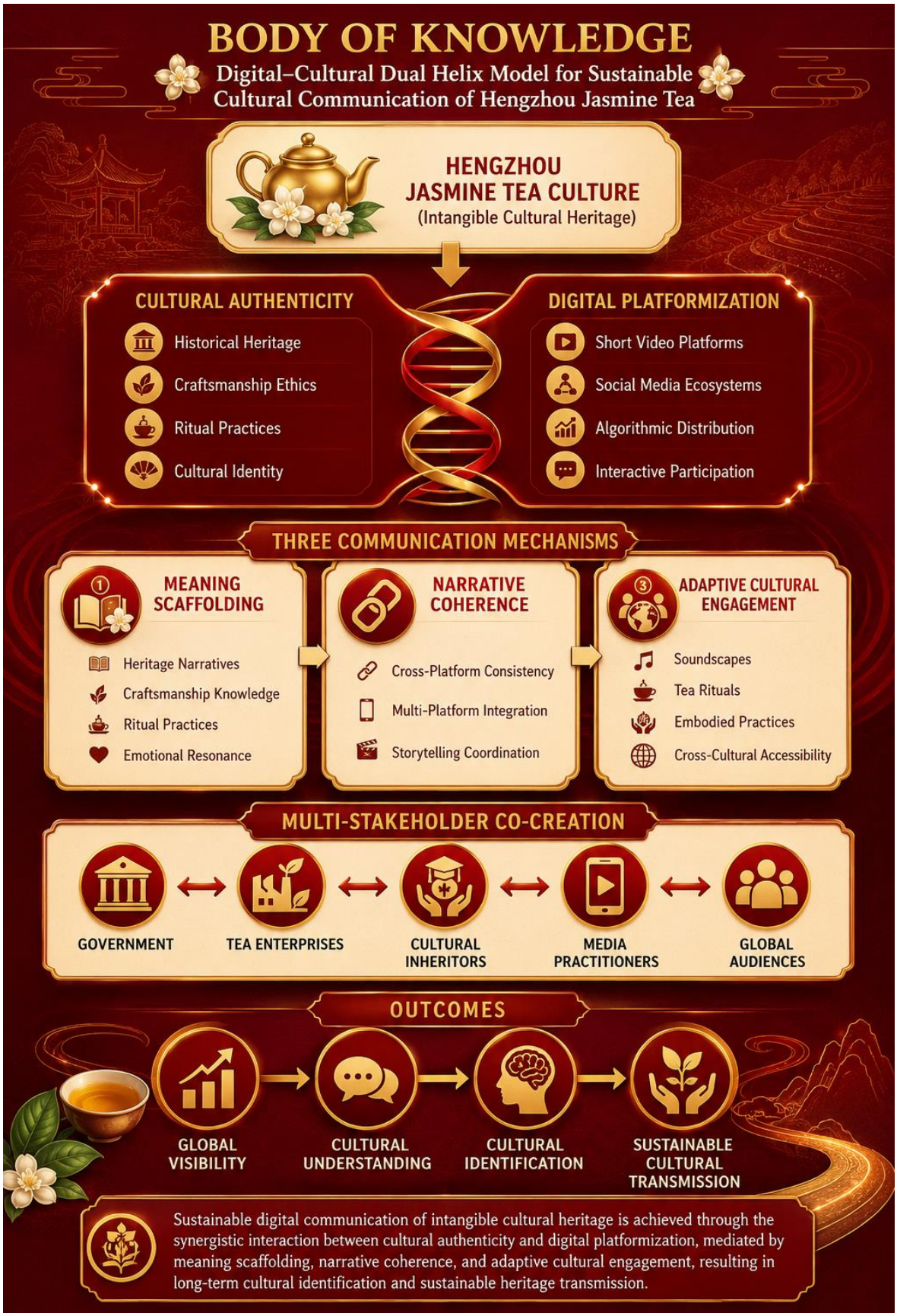


Figure 3 Body of Knowledge "Digital–Cultural Dual Helix Model for Sustainable Cultural Communication of Hengzhou Jasmine Tea"

Consequently, the Digital–Cultural Dual Helix Model provides both a theoretical framework and a practical roadmap for revitalizing intangible cultural heritage, enabling traditional cultural resources to move from visibility, engagement, interpretation, cultural identification, sustainable cultural transmission.

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