

Research on Sustainable Development Strategies for Folk Culture in Rural China: Based on the Experiencing Perspective

Badania nad strategiami zrównoważonego rozwoju dla kultury ludowej na obszarach wiejskich Chin: w oparciu o perspektywę doświadczenia

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Abstract

This study explores sustainable development strategies for folk culture in rural China from the experiencing perspective, aiming to propose practical and context-specific pathways tailored to China's unique conditions. Rooted in rural communities, folk culture represents a significant component of Chinese cultural heritage and holds unique value across social, economic, and environmental dimensions, serving as a vital cultural resource for rural revitalization. However, as urban modernization progresses, folk culture faces challenges in transmission and innovation. By integrating the experiencing perspective with the inheritance and innovation of folk culture, and leveraging the rural revitalization strategy, this research examines sustainable development strategies and proposes multidimensional implementation pathways. These strategies include policy support, educational outreach, digital technology application, and integration with modern industries, promoting the continued transmission and development of folk culture in contemporary society.

Key words: folk culture, sustainable development, experiencing perspective, rural areas, strategies

Streszczenie

Niniejsze badanie analizuje strategie zrównoważonego rozwoju kultury ludowej na obszarach wiejskich Chin z perspektywy doświadczenia, dając do zaproponowania praktycznych i kontekstowych ścieżek dostosowanych do unikalnych warunków Chin. Zakorzeniona w społecznościach wiejskich, kultura ludowa stanowi istotny element chińskiego dziedzictwa kulturowego i posiada wyjątkową wartość w wymiarze społecznym, ekonomicznym i środowiskowym, stanowiąc istotny zasób kulturowy dla rewitalizacji obszarów wiejskich. Jednak wraz z postępem modernizacji miast, kultura ludowa staje przed wyzwaniem w zakresie transmisji i innowacji. Integrując perspektywę doświadczenia z dziedzictwem i innowacyjnością kultury ludowej oraz wykorzystując strategię rewitalizacji obszarów wiejskich, niniejsze badanie analizuje strategie zrównoważonego rozwoju i proponuje wielowymiarowe ścieżki wdrażania. Strategie te obejmują wsparcie polityczne, działania edukacyjne, zastosowanie technologii cyfrowych oraz integrację z nowoczesnymi gałęziami przemysłu, promując ciągłą transmisję i rozwój kultury ludowej we współczesnym społeczeństwie.

Slowa kluczowe: kultura ludowa, zrównoważony rozwój, perspektywa doświadczenia, obszary wiejskie, strategie

1. Introduction

Chinese folk culture serves as a crucial carrier of national spirit, wisdom, and history, representing a distinctive form of traditional cultural expression. As an integral part of Chinese culture, folk culture encompasses a wide range of traditional arts, folktales, festivals, rituals, and customs. It not only embodies profound national emotions but also reflects a harmonious relationship between humans, nature, and society. In recent years, with the rapid advancement of modernization and the impact of globalization, folk culture has encountered significant challenges in inheritance and preservation. To address these issues, the government has introduced relevant policies at multiple levels to promote the transmission and sustainable development of folk culture.

The sustainable development of folk culture involves more than cultural preservation; it also concerns the comprehensive coordination of social, economic, and ecological dimensions (Anjali and Reddy, 2023, Wu et al., 2024b). According to the *Rural Revitalization Strategic Plan (2018-2022)*, the rural revitalization strategy emphasizes the importance of strengthening rural cultural development and promoting the protection and utilization of traditional culture (Government of the People's Republic of China, 2018). As an essential component of rural culture, folk culture holds irreplaceable value, particularly in rural areas. Promoting the inheritance and innovation of folk culture can facilitate the overall development of rural society and provide unique cultural support for rural revitalization (Guo, 2023, Xu et al., 2023). Therefore, a mutually reinforcing relationship exists between folk culture and rural revitalization: the preservation and development of folk culture contribute to rural revitalization, while rural revitalization creates a favorable social environment and resource support for the transmission of folk culture.

Current research on folk culture primarily focuses on cultural definitions, value exploration, transmission models, and innovative development. For instance, the researcher argues that the protection of folk culture goes beyond mere *preservation* and involves the transmission of cultural vitality (Semerickaja, 2022). Fang et al. (2023) suggest that the innovative development of folk culture in the context of modernization, particularly during rural revitalization, can effectively stimulate local economic growth and play a significant role in rural tourism and local cultural industries. By comparing the experiences of various countries in protecting folk culture, Shuran et al. (2024) identify several effective strategies for cultural preservation and utilization, such as integrating folk culture with the tourism industry to promote local cultural revival and development.

Meanwhile, many scholars have highlighted the challenges faced by folk culture in the context of globalization and modernization. How to achieve the sustainable development of folk culture in rural regions through innovative approaches has become an urgent issue that requires effective solutions. For example, Bajrami (2024) proposes that the preservation and transmission of folk culture can be enhanced through digital means, leveraging modern technologies to revitalize these cultural resources. Some specific strategies for protecting folk culture in rural areas, emphasizing the importance of community engagement and cultural education in strengthening cultural identity and vitality (Yu and Wu, 2024).

Against this backdrop, this study adopts an experiencing perspective, grounded in the rural revitalization strategy, to explore sustainable development strategies for folk culture in rural China. Drawing on successful domestic and international experiences, it examines how to preserve the essence of traditional folk culture while promoting its integration with modern society, thereby achieving long-term protection and development.

The innovation of this research lies in its attempt to explore a sustainable development strategy for folk culture from the experiencing perspective, one that is both practical and tailored to China's specific context. This strategy not only aims to enhance social awareness of folk culture but also provides unique cultural support for rural revitalization, facilitating the modern transformation of traditional culture.

2. Related concepts

2.1. Rural Revitalization Strategy

The *Report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China* proposed the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy, aiming to comprehensively enhance the modernization of agriculture and rural areas, reduce the urban-rural gap, and promote urban-rural integration. This strategy focuses on five key areas: industrial revitalization, talent revitalization, cultural revitalization, ecological revitalization, and organizational revitalization. The *2018 Government Work Report* explicitly pointed out that folk culture is an essential component of Chinese culture, and its creative transformation and innovative development should be deeply integrated into rural revitalization. The *Report of the 20th National Congress* further reinforced this objective by calling for comprehensive revitalization in the aforementioned five areas, emphasizing the need to deepen the rural revitalization strategy.

As an important part of intangible cultural heritage, folk culture represents the essence of China's rich traditional culture and plays a critical role in maintaining national identity and cultural memory (Yang, 2020, Zheng et al., 2024). Against the backdrop of rural revitalization, promoting the creative transformation and innovative development of folk culture is particularly significant. A key challenge lies in how to inspire cultural holders to develop

cultural consciousness and actively engage in the transmission and development of folk culture, ensuring its long-term protection.

2.2. Experiential perspective

The experiential perspective is both a research method and a conceptual framework that emphasizes understanding and analyzing phenomena through personal experience and direct practice, rather than solely relying on abstract theories or indirect cognition (Batat, 2023, Ingman, 2023). According to this perspective, knowledge and understanding are not only acquired through rational thinking and theoretical deduction but are also deepened through direct participation, perception, and action.

In cultural research, the experiential perspective is particularly important, as it stresses fieldwork, direct interaction, and participatory engagement to explore the essence and nuances of cultural phenomena (Fairchild et al., 2022). Specifically, it encourages researchers to gather firsthand data from real cultural settings, focusing on individual perceptions, emotional responses, and social interactions within cultural practices to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of cultural dynamics and multi-layered meanings.

In the study of folk culture, the experiential perspective helps researchers uncover the intrinsic value and cultural logic of folk activities by immersing themselves in traditional cultural practices (Semotiuk et al., 2022). By participating in festivals, folk art creation, and oral history collection, researchers can capture cultural details that cannot be fully conveyed through theoretical analysis alone, offering a richer and more concrete understanding. This perspective not only facilitates the understanding of the historical transmission of folk culture but also sheds light on its contemporary recreation and evolution.

2.3. Sustainable development of folk culture

Sustainable development of folk culture refers to the protection, transmission, and innovation of traditional folk culture guided by the principles of sustainable development, aiming to achieve coordinated progress in cultural, social, economic, and ecological dimensions (Jiang, 2024, Anjali and Reddy, 2023). Integrating the concept of sustainable development into folk culture involves protecting and inheriting traditional cultural practices while ensuring ecological friendliness and broad social participation to sustain cultural vitality (Hao, 2019).

This approach emphasizes the harmonious coexistence of humans with nature and society, focusing on both the historical continuity and diversity of folk culture, as well as its adaptation and continuation in modern society (Zhang, 2024, Wu et al., 2024a). Therefore, the sustainable development of folk culture is not only a crucial aspect of cultural preservation but also a key factor in promoting social harmony and ecological balance (Zhu et al., 2022).

3. Logical compliance of sustainable development of folk culture

3.1. The relationship between folk culture and sustainable development

There is a close relationship between sustainable development and folk culture. Folk culture, as a product of local history, natural environment, and social practices, carries a wealth of traditional knowledge and life wisdom. It provides a cultural foundation for sustainable development by conveying the concept of harmonious coexistence between humans, nature, and society (Mbelebele et al., 2024). For example, many traditional agricultural techniques, seasonal customs, and nature-worship practices reflect ancient understandings of ecological balance, offering valuable insights for modern ecological civilization. Folk culture is closely linked to the sustainable development of the rural economy, serving not only as a source of local specialty industries but also as a driver for the growth of rural cultural tourism and handicraft industries (Hu, 2022). By integrating folk culture with modern industries, new economic growth points can be created while ensuring the preservation of local cultural characteristics. The commercialization of traditional festivals, folk arts, and handicrafts can not only stimulate economic development but also improve social welfare and employment, contributing to the economic revitalization of underdeveloped regions.

In terms of social sustainability, folk culture strengthens rural community cohesion through festivals and rituals, promoting harmony and development in rural regions (McClinchey, 2020). However, the transmission of folk culture faces challenges from globalization and modernization, with many traditional customs gradually being replaced by modern lifestyles. Therefore, cultural protection and innovation have become urgent tasks. Overall, folk culture plays a vital role in advancing the economic, social, and ecological sustainability of rural areas. It not only provides cultural support for contemporary society but also serves as a valuable resource for cultural diversity and innovation. Through effective protection and innovation, folk culture can maintain its vitality in rural regions and contribute significantly to sustainable rural development.

3.2. The relationship between the sustainable development of Chinese folk culture and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Figure 1 illustrates the close relationship between the sustainable development of Chinese folk culture and the United Nations SDGs. The SDGs emphasize the balance of social, economic, and environmental dimensions, and as a key cultural resource, folk culture is crucial for achieving these goals (Zhu et al., 2022). First, the SDG goals of *ensuring that everyone has access to cultural opportunities* and *promoting inclusive, equitable, and sustainable societies* are directly related to the protection and transmission of Chinese folk culture. Folk culture reflects the unique history, customs, and values of various regions, enhancing social identity and unity while promoting cultural diversity and social harmony. Promoting the sustainable development of folk culture contributes to the social dimension of the SDGs, particularly in terms of cultural participation, social inclusion, and shared development. Second, the sustainable development of folk culture is critical to economic sustainability. One of the SDGs emphasizes achieving more equitable economic growth by promoting economic development, increasing employment opportunities, and driving regional sustainability. As a core component of local cultural industries, folk culture can stimulate local economies through cultural tourism, traditional crafts, and the development of regional specialty products. By integrating folk culture with modern economic activities, it is possible to foster economic growth while preserving and transmitting traditional culture, achieving dual sustainability in both economic and cultural dimensions.

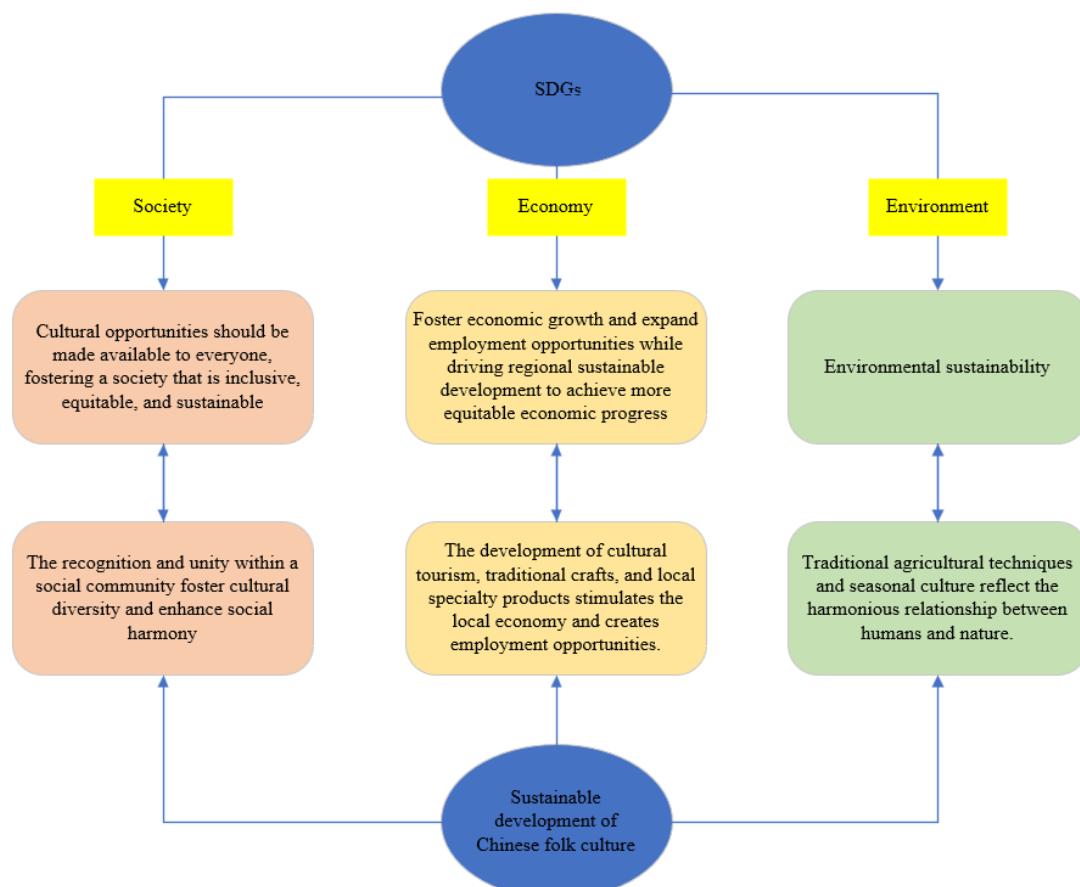


Figure 1. The Relationship Between Chinese Folk Culture Sustainability and the SDGs

Additionally, environmental sustainability is another key component of the SDGs. Many traditional customs and knowledge in Chinese folk culture are related to the natural environment and ecological balance, such as traditional agricultural techniques and seasonal customs. These cultural elements reflect a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. Despite the challenges posed by globalization and modernization, these traditional ecological practices remain relevant and can provide valuable guidance for building an ecological civilization in modern society. Protecting and transmitting folk culture related to environmental sustainability can contribute to ecological conservation and sustainable development.

In summary, the sustainable development of Chinese folk culture is closely linked to the SDGs. By protecting and transmitting folk culture, it is possible to promote coordinated social, economic, and environmental development, enhance cultural diversity, and foster a more sustainable future.

3.3. Opportunities provided by the Rural Revitalization Strategy for the development of folk culture

The rural revitalization strategy presents significant opportunities for the development of folk culture. As the strategy progresses, rural areas are witnessing improvements in infrastructure, economic development, and social governance, creating favorable conditions for the protection and transmission of folk culture. Rural revitalization emphasizes not only economic development but also the preservation and promotion of traditional culture. By integrating traditional culture with modern development, it provides new momentum for the sustainable development of folk culture.

The rural revitalization strategy has prompted local governments and communities to prioritize the protection and transmission of folk culture. Many regions have begun to implement policies and measures aimed at safeguarding traditional festivals, folk arts, and traditional handicrafts. Moreover, rural revitalization has driven the construction of cultural facilities and the organization of cultural activities, offering platforms for the display and dissemination of folk culture.

The strategy also provides greater opportunities for combining folk culture with local economies. By developing cultural tourism, specialty agricultural products, and traditional handicrafts, rural areas can achieve economic growth while promoting the dissemination and preservation of folk culture. Folk culture has become a valuable resource for attracting tourists, with traditional festivals and folk arts offering immersive cultural experiences that enhance tourists' understanding of local traditions. This not only stimulates rural economic development but also creates a mutually beneficial relationship between culture and economy.

Furthermore, rural revitalization has facilitated the reconstruction and strengthening of rural community culture. With the advance of modernization, many traditional folk practices face the risk of being lost. By emphasizing community participation and collective cultural activities, rural revitalization enhances residents' sense of identity and pride in folk culture. Community members actively participate in traditional festivals and cultural events, which strengthens cultural transmission and vitality while promoting social harmony and stability.

In conclusion, the rural revitalization strategy provides a broad platform for the development of folk culture. Through policy support, economic development, and community building, rural revitalization not only promotes the protection and transmission of folk culture but also creates more opportunities for its innovation and development, injecting new vitality into the sustainable development of rural areas.

4. Strategies for the sustainable development of Chinese folk culture

Achieving the sustainable development of Chinese folk culture requires comprehensive planning across multiple dimensions to ensure its preservation and innovation amid modernization.

4.1. Policy support as a key driver of sustainable development

Policy support is critical for the sustainable development of folk culture, particularly in the context of China's rural revitalization strategy (Guo and Li, 2024). The government should introduce more detailed policies that clarify the goals and pathways for folk culture protection and explicitly incorporate them into rural revitalization initiatives. Increased financial investment and policy guarantees are essential to promoting the revival of local culture. The rural revitalization strategy emphasizes cultural confidence and heritage preservation, and within this framework, the government can support the development of traditional cultural industries through dedicated funding and tax incentives, fostering the industrialization and modernization of folk culture.

Moreover, policies should encourage local governments and communities to actively participate in the protection and promotion of folk culture, ensuring the transmission and innovation of regional cultural heritage. As rural revitalization creates new opportunities for folk culture, the government should formulate supportive policies to encourage rural areas to leverage their unique cultural resources to drive economic development and cultural renewal. Additionally, cultural tourism and rural cultural activities should be promoted to integrate folk culture with rural revitalization, thereby advancing both cultural preservation and revitalization.

4.2. Enhancing education and popularization of folk culture in rural areas

Strengthening the education and popularization of folk culture in rural areas is a crucial approach to promoting its sustainable development and a key component of cultural revitalization within the rural revitalization strategy. Through education and outreach, rural residents' sense of cultural identity and pride can be strengthened, motivating them to actively participate in cultural transmission.

First, folk culture should be integrated into the rural basic education system. By introducing courses related to folk culture, students can be systematically taught local folk knowledge, helping them understand the region's traditional culture and customs (Li, 2019). Schools can organize experiential activities, such as traditional festival celebrations and handicraft workshops, allowing students to experience the charm of folk culture firsthand. Additionally, local educational materials can be developed, and cultural competitions can be held to foster students' interest in indigenous culture and inspire a sense of responsibility for its protection and transmission (Achille and Fiorillo, 2022, Sandoval-Rivera, 2020).

Second, rural community education should play an essential role. By organizing folk culture lectures, cultural exhibitions, and skill training workshops, more rural residents can gain a better understanding of folk culture and learn traditional skills. For example, regular training in traditional crafts such as embroidery, weaving, and pottery can be conducted in rural cooperatives or cultural centers, which not only helps preserve traditional skills but also creates economic value for the community (Mbeshu-Mhlauli, 2024). Additionally, cultural outreach should leverage modern communication methods, such as radio, the internet, and social media platforms, to expand the reach of folk culture and enhance its influence (Adekaa et al., 2024).

Finally, it is crucial to mobilize rural cultural leaders and elder cultural holders, who play a key role in the transmission of folk culture. Establishing a folk culture inheritor system, where those with rich cultural knowledge and skills receive support and incentives, can effectively promote intergenerational cultural transmission in rural areas (Zhang, 2022). These inheritors are not only cultural transmitters but also educational guides who can inspire younger generations to engage in learning and practicing folk culture through their example and leadership.

In summary, strengthening the education and popularization of folk culture in rural areas requires coordinated efforts from schools, communities, and cultural inheritors to build a systematic and sustainable cultural education framework. This approach not only enhances the cultural literacy and confidence of rural residents but also provides long-term momentum for the sustainable development of folk culture.

4.3. Promoting the integration and innovation of folk culture with modern industries in rural areas

Folk culture not only carries deep historical significance but also holds substantial potential for cultural industries. By integrating folk culture with rural tourism, film production, handicrafts, and gastronomy, new cultural consumption hotspots can be created. For instance, developing rural cultural tourism projects themed around folk culture can attract visitors to experience local traditions, thereby increasing public awareness and recognition of traditional culture.

At the same time, the industrialization of traditional rural handicrafts can transform folk art into marketable cultural products, enhancing their economic value. The production of rural-themed films showcasing folk culture can further highlight its charm and increase its social influence among the broader public.

Nevertheless, the protection and development of folk culture must adhere to the principle of *innovation alongside preservation* to prevent excessive commercialization and oversimplification. Ensuring that the unique cultural value of folk traditions remains intact is essential for preserving their original historical significance and cultural essence.

4.4. Leveraging digital technologies to revitalize folk culture in rural areas

Promoting the integration of rural folk culture into contemporary society through digital technologies is a crucial pathway for addressing the challenges of traditional cultural transmission. Under the pressures of modernization and globalization, many folk traditions face the risk of being lost. Digital technology offers an effective means for protecting and disseminating these cultural resources (Liu et al., 2024).

First, a systematic digital archive of folk culture should be established, using digital tools to comprehensively record traditional festivals, folk crafts, and regional operas through audio, video, and images. This not only prevents the loss of cultural heritage but also lays a foundation for future research and education. Second, emerging technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) can create immersive cultural experiences. For example, AR technology can merge traditional festivals with modern urban spaces, allowing the public to experience folk culture in their daily lives. VR technology can recreate endangered or lost traditions, enhancing their educational and promotional value.

Additionally, the widespread use of social media and digital content platforms provides broad avenues for the dissemination of folk culture. Through short videos, live streaming, and online courses, folk culture can reach a larger audience, especially younger generations, increasing their engagement and participation. In sum, digital technologies not only address the current challenges of cultural transmission but also breathe new life into folk culture, strengthening cultural identity and social cohesion.

5. Conclusion

Chinese folk culture is a vital carrier of national spirit, a key resource for maintaining social harmony, fostering cultural identity, and driving economic development. In the context of globalization and modernization, folk culture faces the dual threats of transmission disruption and value loss. Achieving its sustainable development has thus become a central concern for scholars and policymakers.

Based on the experiencing perspective, this study explores sustainable development strategies for folk culture in rural China and proposes multidimensional implementation pathways. Through policy support, educational outreach, digital technology application, and integration with modern industries, the sustainable transmission and development of folk culture can be effectively promoted. The sustainable development of folk culture requires coordinated efforts from policies, education, digital technologies, and industries. Under the framework of the rural

revitalization strategy, the transmission and innovation of folk culture can not only drive social and economic progress but also contribute to ecological conservation and cultural diversity. This process represents both the continuation of traditional culture and the promotion of cultural innovation and economic development in modern society.

In the future, by continuously improving policy frameworks, increasing investment in education and technology, and deepening industrial integration, folk culture will play an increasingly important role in advancing China's comprehensive sustainable development.

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