

PROMOTION APPROACHES FOR INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN CHINA (2020-2025): A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract. Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is characterized by living transmission, and its continuation relies on the continuous transmission of knowledge and skills in the community. Relevant research not only focuses on the preservation of ICH but also on external factors such as public awareness, participation, and institutional support. The focus of Chinese ICH research has gradually shifted from documentation and organization to dissemination and promotion, and platform-based media are reshaping the visibility of ICH and how it is accessed by audiences. In recent years, relevant research has grown significantly, but the expression and categorization of promotion related concepts are fragmented, and there is no unified organization of standards. Following the PRISMA process, this study searched and screened the English language journal literature from 2020 to 2025 in the Web of Science and Scopus databases and used structured coding to categorize publication information, Chinese ICH items, places of origin, and promotion related elements. This study found that the publication sources of the selected studies are scattered and interdisciplinary; many studies only provide an overview of Chinese ICH; digital platform related practices appear frequently across multiple types of studies and often constitute the promotional arrangement alongside offline activities or venue experiences. This study proposes a reviewable categorization and coding framework that provides a basis for subsequent evidence integration and cross study comparisons.

Keywords: *Chinese intangible cultural heritage, public awareness, participation, dissemination and promotion*

Introduction

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is often defined in heritage research as non-material cultural expressions and practices, whereas tangible heritage is valued mainly through physical objects. For ICH, value is grounded in the ongoing practices, knowledge, and skills that circulate within communities (Vecco, 2010; Ahmad, 2006). Since ICH is not anchored to a specific material carrier, living transmission depends on continuous cultural creation, reproduction, and regeneration (Bowitz and Ibenholt, 2009; Skounti, 2008). Consequently, promoting and safeguarding ICH involves more than protecting discrete cultural elements; it also engages cultural diversity, identity, and public governance (Lenzerini, 2011; Kirshenblatt-gimblett, 2004). In China, research and practice therefore need to prioritize inheritance processes and their enabling conditions, including improving public awareness and understanding, sustaining the engagement of inheritors, and building effective support mechanisms from government and social institutions (Alivizatou-Barakou et al., 2017). As a globally recognized continuous challenger in the protection of ICH, China lacks systematic standards for target scenarios, methods, and tools in promotion research. If it remains at the conceptual level and cannot form operable and evaluable paths, the sustainability of Chinese ICH will be reduced. Drawing on knowledge translation and implementation

research, promotion studies should explain how knowledge is converted into action by detailing concrete strategies and implementation pathways, and by reporting measurable indicators of implementation outcomes. Such specification is essential for conducting systematic assessments of the effectiveness and reproducibility of different promotional tools (Proctor et al., 2011; Graham et al., 2006).

The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage defines ICH as “practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills, as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith (Lenzerini, 2011; UNESCO, 2003)”. China’s extensive cultural history has produced a substantial and diverse portfolio of ICH items (Song et al., 2020). In order to better record and classify ICH, China has formulated detailed explanations in line with the fields of UNESCO. In 2011, the "Law of the People's Republic of China on Intangible Cultural Heritage" was promulgated, classifying Chinese ICH into 6 categories: “traditional oral literature and the language that serves as its carrier; traditional fine arts, calligraphy, music, dance, drama, performing arts and acrobatics; traditional performing arts, medicine and calendars; traditional rituals, festivals and other folklore; traditional sports and amusement games; and other intangible cultural heritage” (Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People’s Republic of China, 2011). Recently, the research trends of ICH in China have changed, shifting from document protection to relying on the public for guided dissemination and promotion. To inherit living heritage so that it can be seen and easily understood, public active participation is also needed. While digital preservation has become a significant tool, existing literature highlights ongoing challenges related to standardization, resource organization, and sharing (Zhou et al., 2019). The establishment of lists recognizing ICH, along with the identification of various projects, has contributed to the growth of the tourism sector while simultaneously fostering the development and dissemination of local cultural brands (Tan et al., 2023). In a growing number of cases, dissemination channels are dependent on platforms. YouTube has both official and user-generated videos that people use to archive ICH (Pietrobruno, 2013). On Douyin (Chinese TikTok), ICH artisans have gained agency and entrepreneurial opportunities through diverse content creation, transforming the recognition and promotion of ICH (Yi, 2023). Consequently, a systematic compilation of Chinese ICH promotion methods is essential to provide a clear reference for comparing and optimizing future ICH promotion tools.

The primary challenge in promoting Chinese ICH relies not on the availability of communication channels, but on achieving a sustainable balance between preserving authenticity and expanding dissemination. The algorithmic distribution and shareability of social media platforms favour brief, rapid content, simplifying complex skills and cultural backgrounds into symbolic representations, which increases the risk of narrative bias and misunderstanding (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Appel et al., 2020). In the past days, promotion of Chinese ICH usually depended on offline scenarios, such as tourism, exhibitions, and experience activities. Events like the pandemic have changed the travel and in-person exhibition industry, requiring a shift to online promotion, and are limited by resources (Gössling et al., 2021; Zenker and Kock, 2020). Digital technology can expand the dissemination scope of cultural heritage in tourism, but cross-disciplinary cooperation and the coordination of multiple stakeholders make effective implementation relatively complicated. For the purpose of determining the real effects of these promotion efforts, there is an immediate requirement for indicators that are both apparent and quantifiable (Gretzel et al., 2020). The research on promoting Chinese

ICH is currently scattered across various platforms and cases, lacking an overall summary and classification of promotion methods. This fragmentation hinders the comparability analysis of research carried out under a unified framework of directly referable promotion strategies (Liang et al., 2021). A systematic review of the governance of China's cultural heritage shows that it is mainly dominated by the government, and community participation is relatively low. Research often focuses on the description of policy projects, and there are less details about the division of labor, participation models, processes, and effect evaluation in implementation, the summary of promotion method operations is of no practical use (Li et al., 2020). Although the research has identified a correlation between national policy support and tourism growth, there is insufficient evidence on the specific promotion mechanisms from the audience's initial contact, in-depth understanding, participation to continuous dissemination (Tan et al., 2023). Most studies take participation, interaction or intention as the main outcome variables, but lack a strong evaluation framework and quantifiable promotion effect indicators. Comparative studies across modalities and channels are also rarely discussed (Hu et al., 2024; De Oliveira Santini et al., 2020; Kumar and Dhir, 2020). In accordance with PRISMA, this study systematically sorted out and used the method of bibliometric analysis to try to find out the main themes, common practices and limitations in the promotion research of ICH in China, so as to point out a clearer direction for future research.

Materials and Methods

PRISMA statement

This study uses a systematic literature review (SLR) to summarize the research on the promotion of ICH in China. This study is carried out in accordance with the PRISMA statement, which enhances transparency and reviewability. The PRISMA flow chart shows the records and reasons for exclusion at each stage (Page et al., 2021). Systematic searches were conducted in the Web of Science and Scopus databases, the retrieval is carried out through 4 steps: identification, screening, eligibility, and data extraction. The PRISMA flowchart summarizes the number of records and screening results at each stage (*Figure 1*).

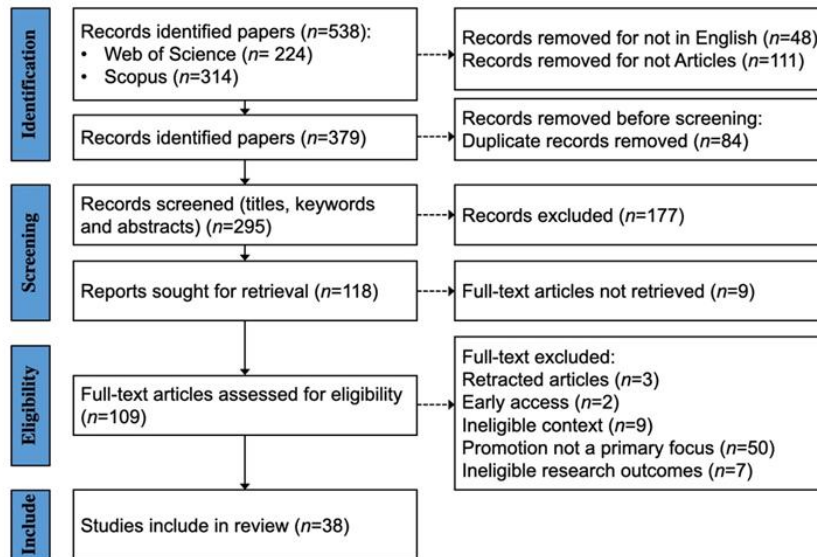


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram.

Identification: search strategy and sources

The retrieval strategy of this study is based on 4 core concepts in Table 1: (1) the object of study is ICH; (2) the research topic addresses promotion or dissemination; (3) the content must support the generalization of promotion pathways and implementation methods; and (4) the geographical focus is China. This systematic search was conducted in the Web of Science (WOS) and Scopus databases. Details of the search are provided in Table 1. The search timeframe was limited to 2020–2025. Results were sorted by relevance, title, abstract, and keywords to maximize the retrieval of pertinent articles. A total of 538 results were obtained from both databases. Preliminary screening excluded non-English records (n=48) and non-Article documents (n=111), resulting in 379 records. These records were subsequently processed using the PRISMA deduplication and screening procedure.

Table 1. Database and search process followed in this study.

Database	Search terms	Search criteria
WOS	"intangible cultural heritage" (All Fields) AND (promot* OR communicat* OR disseminat*) (All Fields) AND (strateg* OR approach* OR method* OR channel*) (All Fields) AND (China OR Chinese) (All Fields)	all fields; Year:2020-2025 SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI; English; Article; 224 initial results;
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY("intangible cultural heritage" AND (promot* OR communicat* OR disseminat*) AND (strateg* OR approach* OR method* OR channel*) AND (China OR Chinese))	all fields; Year:2020-2025 English; Article; 314 initial results;

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

An initial content screening was conducted on deduplicated records by evaluating titles, keywords, and abstracts. The screening criteria required inclusion of the Chinese ICH and a clear focus on promotion as the study's purpose. As a result, 177 records were excluded as obviously irrelevant, leaving 118 documents for full text review. At the full text access stage, nine full text articles could not be obtained (full text articles not retrieved), and finally 109 full text articles were assessed for eligibility. This study

relied on clear, reviewable full text inclusion and exclusion guidelines for eligibility judgments to ensure that the final selected studies could directly support the generalization and comparison of studies on Chinese ICH promotion methods. Specific guidelines were as follows: (1) The research scenario must be about Chinese ICH (either program specific or broadly conceptualized as “Chinese ICH”); (2) The objectives of the study must focus on the promotion of Chinese ICH (e.g., promotion strategy, diffusion, promotion mechanism, promotion performance and impact, etc.), and exclude studies that only discuss the significance of preservation, cultural value, or general digitization, but not promotion as a research objective; and (3) The results of the study must be able to be translated into actionable promotion directions or paths. If the full text is limited to the principal elaboration or macro initiatives, or cannot be distilled into actionable promotion means and scenarios, it will not be included in the final results. Based on the above full text screening criteria, this study will select articles that can be refined into clear promotion practices, paths, or mechanisms as the final research results.

Data extraction

In the initial data extraction phase, the final list of selected studies was reviewed to ensure compliance with relevant requirements and to confirm the appropriateness of each selection. Structured information was then extracted and summarized for the 38 articles included in the final results (*Table 2*). The selected articles were organized by year of publication, and content was extracted according to the objectives of this review: Chinese ICH projects, Chinese ICH regions, promotion directions, promotion implementation paths, and promotion enhancement strategies. The list of selected studies was subsequently summarized using both descriptive statistics and thematic analysis.

Table 2. Selected studies in this systematic literature review.

IDs	Title of include studies	Reference
S1	KiteMR: An Interactive Mixed Reality System for Preserving and Experiencing Traditional Chinese Kite Craftsmanship	Zhang et al. (2025)
S2	Understanding viewers' purchase of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) products: a perspective of the Means-End Chain (MEC) framework	Zhang and Zhang (2025)
S3	Sustainable Design on Intangible Cultural Heritage: Miao Embroidery Pattern Generation and Application Based on Diffusion Models	Yu et al. (2025)
S4	Enhancing intangible cultural heritage dissemination through digital experience: an Affective Events Theory approach	Yi et al. (2025)
S5	Empowering intangible cultural heritage with digital intelligence: a multi-method qualitative study on Su embroidery	Xue et al. (2025)
S6	An Analysis on User Needs for the Design of Liaocheng Canal's ICH Serious Game	Xu and Dolah (2025)
S7	Tourists' perceptions and loyalty of nanyin traditional music in chinese music tourism	Wu et al. (2025)
S8	Cultural commodification as cultural sustainability: a case study of the Xiangxi Tujia Bai Shou dance	Wen et al. (2025)
S9	Configuring factors for effective dissemination of intangible cultural heritage on Douyin: an fsQCA approach	Wang et al. (2025)
S10	Using masao facial makeup in software interface interaction design from the perspective of digital communication	Wang (2025)
S11	Understanding continued use intention of digital intangible cultural heritage games through the SOR model	Wang and Men (2025)
S12	New media-based strategies for the global dissemination of hainan danjia salty water songs	Wang and Xia (2025)
S13	Inheriting Cultural Heritage: The Application of Virtual Reality Technology in the Display of Peking Opera Costumes	Su (2025)
S14	Ideological presentations in official promotion of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) on short-form video platforms: a multimodal content analysis	Liu and Qiu (2025)
S15	Preserving China's Intangible Cultural Heritage through AR/VR storytelling, social media, and AI narratives	Liu et al. (2025)

S16	Constructing integrated ICH–leisure corridors for cultural dissemination: a case study of Shaanxi along the Silk Road	Liang and Peng (2025)
S17	Analysis of Cultural Perceptions of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Chinese Porcelain Inlay: An Investigation Based on Social Media Data	Li and Chen (2025)
S18	Virtual Reality Technology for the Digital Dissemination of Traditional Chinese Opera Culture	Jiang et al. (2025)
S19	"Heart Flows with Zen": Exploring Multi-modal Mixed Reality to Promote the Inheritance and Experience of Cultural Heritage	Guo et al. (2025)
S20	Factors affecting the development of Lipu Yi costumes: intangible cultural heritage tourism	Fu et al. (2025)
S21	AIGC empowers the sustainable development of traditional Chinese paper-cut	Chen and Cheng (2025)
S22	Exploring the promotion of musical intangible cultural heritage under TikTok short videos	Cao (2025)
S23	The Post-Effects of the Authenticity of Rural Intangible Cultural Heritage and Tourists' Engagement	Zuo et al. (2024)
S24	Sustainable tourism development for traditional Chinese drama's intangible cultural heritage	Zhao et al. (2024)
S25	The impact of traditional chinese paper-cutting in digital protection for intangible cultural herita	Zhao and Kim (2024)
S26	Enhancing the Sustainability of Intangible Cultural Heritage Projects: Obtaining Efficient Digital Skills Preservation through Binocular Half Panoramic VR Maps	Yang et al. (2024)
S27	Analysis of contemporary value and influence of intangible cultural heritage based on online review mining	Xu et al. (2024)
S28	A framework for students' digital heritage education in the classroom - a human-engaged computing perspective	Tan et al. (2024)
S29	Research on the Redesign of China's Intangible Cultural Heritage Based on Sustainable Livelihood—The Case of Luanzhou Shadow Play Empowering Its Rural Development	Sun et al. (2024)
S30	How are Chinese traditional handicraft skills inherited from master to apprentice	Song et al. (2024)
S31	Innovative design of agricultural tourism souvenirs to promote the inheritance and promotion of intangible cultural heritage	Qiu et al. (2024)
S32	Research on the Evaluation of the Effect of Tourism Revitalization of Intangible Cultural Heritage in China in the Context of New Media	Chen and Fu (2024)
S33	Can AI-generated art stimulate the sustainability of intangible cultural heritage? A quantitative research on cultural and creative products of New Year Prints generated by AI	Zhang et al. (2023)
S34	Kano-QFD-based analysis of the influence of user experience on the design of handicraft intangible cultural heritage apps	Li and Kim (2023)
S35	Promotion of VR Technology in Taijiquan Multimedia Edge Computing Technology	Xiao and Guo (2021)
S36	Using content analysis to probe the cognitive image of intangible cultural heritage tourism: an exploration of Chinese social media	Qiu and Zhang (2021)
S37	Bamboos for weaving and relevant traditional knowledge in sansui, southwest China	Luo et al. (2020)
S38	Dissemination of Marine History and Culture Based on Virtual Museum Technology	Guan et al. (2020)

Results and Discussion

Journals and annual number of publications

The journal sources are summarized as shown in *Figure 2*. The 38 articles analyzed in this study were published across 28 journals, with most journals represented by a single publication. Sustainability, npj Heritage Science, and Heliyon each featured three articles, while International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction, Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, Digital Scholarship in the Humanities, and Scientific Reports each included two articles. This distribution demonstrates the strong disciplinary breadth of the topic, which engages with multiple research traditions. Publications appear in journals focused on human computer interaction, information systems, heritage and cultural studies, sustainable development, and geographic information, indicating that the topic is inherently interdisciplinary. In terms of the number of publications per year (*Figure 3*), the number of journal articles included in the review is generally low and fluctuates very little from 2020 to 2023: 2 articles in 2020, 2 articles in 2021, no samples in 2022, and 2 articles in 2023, with a turnaround in 2024, when the number rises to 10, indicating a significant increase in the topic in the last two years. In 2024, the number rises to 10, showing that the topic has warmed up significantly in the last two years, and reaches a peak of 22 in 2025.

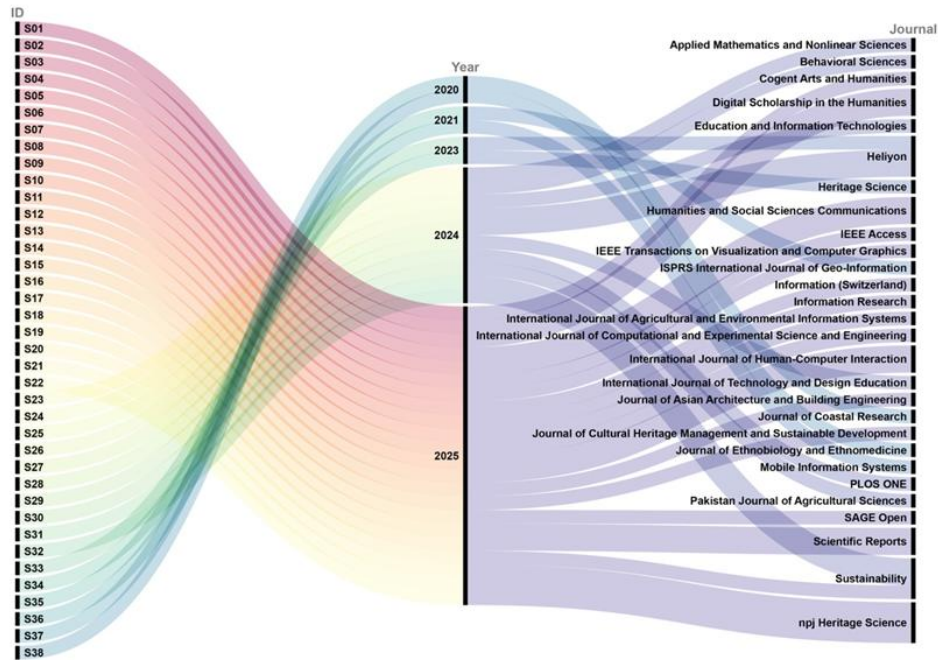


Figure 2. Sankey Diagram of selected studies' publication year and journals.

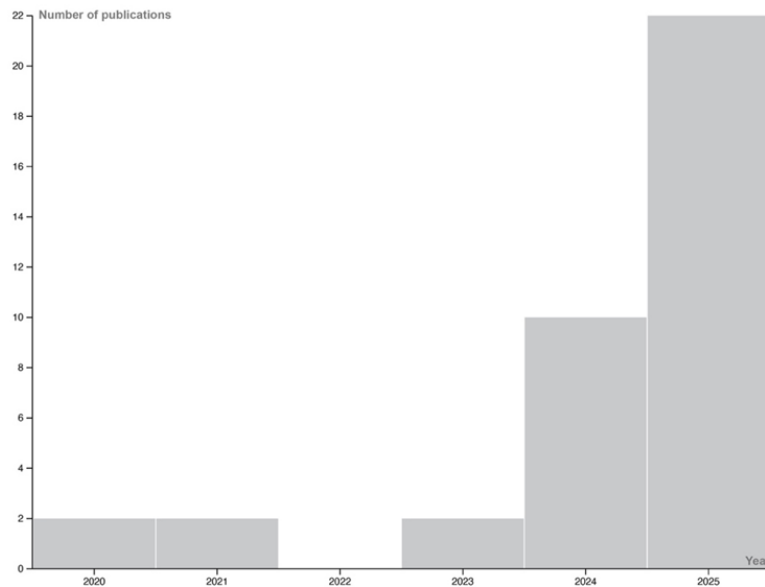


Figure 3. Annual publication trend of selected studies (2020–2025).

ICH items

Table 3 indicates a clear trend in case selection within Chinese ICH research. Many studies cover the overall ICH in China, without specifying projects or types in the title or object. The general type studies account for a large proportion, meaning a tendency to choose broad objects, there are few studies on specific types of ICH in China. Handicrafts are relatively more concentrated (S34, S30), whereas categories such as

opera and music are typically examined individually. Research on specific Chinese ICH items covers many topics, these studies are spread out, with each item usually examined on its own and rarely appearing in more than one study.

Table 3. Intangible cultural heritage item/category.

ICH type	ICH item/category	References (IDs)	
General ICH	ICH	S2, S4, S9, S14, S15, S16, S27, S31, S32, S36	
ICH Category	Handicraft ICH	S34, S30	
	Marine History and Marine ICH	S38	
	Musical ICH	S22	
	Liaocheng Canal's ICH	S6	
	Sanlin Town Multiple ICH items	S26	
	Traditional Chinese Opera	S18	
	Traditional Chinese Paper-cut	S25	
	Traditional Chinese Drama	S24	
	Chinese Pottery	S11	
	Specific ICH Item	Zen Culture	S19
		Bai Shou Dance	S8
		Beijing Swallow Kite	S1
		Cantonese Porcelain	S28
Chinese Porcelain Inlay		S17	
Hainan Danjia Salty Water Songs		S12	
Lipu Yi Costume		S20	
Luanzhou Shadow Play		S29	
Masao Facial Makeup		S10	
Mazu Belief		S23	
Miao Embroidery		S3	
Nanyin Traditional Music		S7	
Peking Opera Costumes		S13	
Sansui Bamboo Weaving		S37	
Su Embroidery		S5	
Taijiquan		S35	
Yangliuqing New Year Prints		S33	
Zhangpu Paper-cut	S21		

Places of origin for ICH item

The analysis of the regional information of on Chinese ICH projects in *Table 4* shows certain trends. Many studies generally discuss Chinese ICH without targeting specific regions. Among the studies that clearly specify regions, the case distributions have the characteristic of regional concentration, mainly concentrated in the southeast coastal areas, followed by the southwest and south China regions, and also including the north China region. In the local samples, Fujian is cited the most times, Sichuan 3 times, followed by Beijing, Shaanxi, Guangdong and Guizhou, each of these regions is cited twice, and other provinces or cities are cited once.

Table 4. Regions of intangible culture heritage item (China).

Province	City/area	References (IDs)
-	-	S2, S9, S11, S14, S15, S18, S19, S22, S25, S27, S31, S34, S35, S36, S38
Fujian Province	Putian, Xiuyu District, Meizhou Island	S23
	Zhangpu	S21
	-	S17
	Quanzhou	S4
Sichuan Province	Quanzhou, Xiamen and Zhangzhou	S7
	Chongqing City	S24
	Chengdu	S30
Beijing	Panzhuhua, Renhe District	S20
	Beijing	S1, S13
Shaanxi Province	Baoji	S10
	-	S16
Guangdong Province	-	S17
	-	S28
Guizhou Province	-	S3

	Sansui County	S37
Hainan Province	Coastal Areas of Hainan (South China Sea)	S12
Hebei Province	Tangshan (Luanzhou)	S29
Hunan Province	Xiangxi Tujia and Miao Autonomous Prefecture	S8
Shandong Province	Liaocheng Section of the Grand Canal	S6
Shanghai	Shanghai, Pudong New Area, Sanlin Town	S26
Jiangsu Province	Suzhou	S5
Tianjin	Tianjin	S33
Zhejiang Province	Wenzhou City	S32

ICH promotion directions

The promotion direction emphasizes the final application context in which the promotion will take place, used to determine the type of activity in which the Chinese ICH content is placed and through what specific context it contacts the audience. Based on the summary of selected studies (Table 5), the promotion direction can be summarized into the following six application context. First, education. This promotion direction focuses on introducing Chinese ICH into education to learn skills and impart and learn within the same institution. Several scenarios were discovered. The first scenario revolves around school/college courses, incorporating ICH into the curriculum structure and classroom activities (S6, S17, S18, S25, S28). The second scenario focuses on practical teaching, placing ICH in studios, handicraft classes/training environments, and learning through making/practice/training (S1, S17, S18, S25, S28). The third scenario expands the learning scenario to the digital environment, using online courses, digital resources or mobile learning platforms to carry out educational activities (S4, S11, S35). Some studies combine curriculum organization with experiential learning, S1 integrates classroom teaching with experiential activities, and the teaching process and interactive experience jointly shape the learning experience. Second, culture and tourism. This promotion direction needs to incorporate Chinese ICH into the tourism space and itinerary to promote tourism, travel, and destination experience. At this time, Chinese ICH is presented through experience connections, route constructions, or project activities during travel. The main differences among various studies lie in different organizational focuses. Some studies first focus on destination on-site experience, and at this time, Chinese ICH is mainly displayed as destination experience environment, visit and interactive experience (S7, S20, S32). Others focus on routes and itineraries, placing Chinese ICH within the cultural tourism route or theme itinerary structure, forming continuous experience nodes (S23, S27). Additional research uses events and performances as platforms to display Chinese ICH, integrating with tourism performances, festivals or project operations (S8, S24). S36 shows a business method increasing destination experience and route organization, creating a multi-scenario integrated promotion mode.

Table 5. Classification of intangible cultural heritage promotion directions.

Category	Count	Share	Reference (IDs)
Education	10	26%	S1, S4, S6, S11, S17, S18, S25, S26, S28, S35
Culture and Tourism	8	21%	S7, S8, S20, S23, S24, S27, S32, S36
Cultural Creative Products and Consumption	10	26%	S2, S3, S5, S10, S21, S29, S31, S33, S34, S37
Public Culture and Social Participation	6	16%	S9, S12, S14, S15, S16, S22
Museum and Exhibition	3	8%	S13, S19, S38
Inheritance and Governance Industrialization	1	3%	S30

Third, cultural creative products and consumption. This promotion direction focuses on market transformation, integrates Chinese ICH into the consumption system, and promotes it through product development, brand communication and channel operation.

Product development is a common starting point. Research shows that traditional cultural elements can enhance market recognition and functional products (S5, S10, S21, S33, S34). Brand communication focuses on co-branding and marketing communication, and integrates Chinese traditional cultural elements into brand storytelling and promotion activities (S2, S29, S37). In terms of channels, retail and e-commerce systems need to be considered. The key is to use online and offline sales channels to integrate Chinese ICH contents with international attributes into daily consumption (S3, S31, S33, S37). In addition, experiential consumption is often mentioned. Some research attempts to put Chinese traditional cultural elements into experience activities in public spaces, so that they can enter the consumption situation as experience content (S34, S37). Fourth, public culture and social participation. This promotion direction focuses on the relevant contents of the public cultural system and the social participation structure. Incorporate Chinese ICH into public life and daily interactions. Public cultural institutions often act as initiators. S9 and S16 elaborate on how public projects such as cultural centers are promoted through service systems and activities. Research related to communities explores the situation of residents' participation and local relationships. S14 and S15 interrelate Chinese ICH with community cultural development, residents' participation, and local social networks. Festivals and public activities provide opportunities for concentrated and prominent display. S12 and S22 analyze how Chinese ICH makes more people come into contact with and participate in it by means of festivals or public cultural activities.

Fifth, museum and exhibition. This promotion direction focuses on the exhibition system, where Chinese ICH is presented to the public as display objects in museums or exhibition halls. Research on museum is relatively direct, S13 situating Chinese ICH presentations within the museum or gallery context and examining how these displays facilitate audience engagement. More research highlights the role of curatorial narratives and educational activities in understanding Chinese ICH, and S19 regards them as the key to enhancing public communication. There are exhibitions driven by thematic threads, and S38 integrates Chinese ICH into the context of the exhibition according to a broader cultural theme.

ICH promotion implementation pathway

The promotion implementation pathway focuses on the mode of implementation and the primary medium supporting the promotion. It is used to identify the vehicle through which Chinese ICH content is structured and delivered to the audience. Based on the summary of the selected studies, the promotion implementation pathway can be categorized as follows. First, digital platform pathway. This pathway had the highest proportion in the selected studies (68%), indicating that current research on the promotion of Chinese ICH most often uses digital platforms as the main carrier. Social media is the most common method, S9 expounds the communication and interaction in the content release or viewing of Douyin. S22 focuses on TikTok, analyzing how challenges, effects, recommendations, and UGC make the visibility of Chinese ICH higher. S8 compares TikTok with domestic platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and WeChat from the perspective of cross-platform communication, emphasizing that most communication is in the network environment. The research on Chinese platforms is also detailed and definite. S5 takes Su embroidery as an example, determining WeChat, Douyin, and Xiaohongshu as the main communication places, and there are short videos and live broadcasts within the same platform. S15 relates official promotion and public

participation, and also regards WeChat, Weibo, and Douyin as the main places for content distribution, interaction, and communication participation. Some studies treat platform data as observational evidence, in addition to directly communicating and analyzing the platform. S27 relies on Bilibili user comments and interactive behaviors to analyze the presentation of Chinese ICH discourse through textual and interactive traces. S26 expands the scope to immersive digital platforms by employing a VR platform to organize recording, presentation, and viewing experiences. Among digital platform pathways, social media platforms most frequently exemplify current research practices, followed by VR platforms and other digital presentation forms.

Second, offline organized pathway. This pathway relies on offline activities (workshops, festivals, lectures, experience camps, reading sharing sessions) and combines on-site interactions. S28 carries out the promotion of Chinese ICH, uses the organizational form of educational and practical offline activities, and participants complete learning and practice in the designed teams and scenarios. S23 takes tourism and local activities as the main carriers, focusing on attracting audience interactions through festivals, performances, and on-site experiences at the activity locations. S31 first considers offline development and interview arrangements, and promotes the promotion with the help of lectures, on-site activities, and experience operations, allowing the public to participate in a specific offline environment. Third, spatial carrier pathway. This path makes space the main medium for display experience, and it is disseminated and understood through spatial organization structures such as museums, exhibitions, cultural corridors, themes, and destination spaces. S7 carries out experiences through the arrangement of theme museums, parks, and destination spaces, allowing Chinese ICH to be appreciated and participated in. S19 takes exhibition design and planning as the core, exploring how Chinese ICH are presented and interpreted in exhibitions that use spatial display as the main promotion means.

The 38 selected studies are distributed across multiple disciplinary journals, covering human-computer interaction, heritage and cultural studies, sustainable development, information systems, and geographic information. This distribution suggests that Chinese ICH promotion research tends to enter different disciplinary contexts depending on the object and media form of the study of Chinese ICH, and to advance in a cross disciplinary manner, and that the theme of Chinese ICH promotion can be developed across multiple disciplinary contexts. The presentation of information on the place of belonging of Chinese ICH is not consistent. Many studies directly treated Chinese ICH as an object, and the provincial and municipal levels were underdeveloped. Studies that state the place of affiliation are more commonly found on the southeast coast, with South China and Southwest China appearing more frequently, and North China appearing more sporadically. Beijing, Shaanxi, Guangdong, and Guizhou are mentioned relatively more often, and urban nodes such as Quanzhou, Chengdu, Chongqing, and Shanghai also appear several times. This distribution is related to regional differences in digitalization and information conditions. There are regional differences in digital infrastructure and the use of digital services that affect access to project records, dissemination materials, and traceable data, and thus the regions in which cases and data appear more frequently (Au, 2024; Pick et al., 2024).

The promotion direction can be categorized into six application contexts: education, cultural tourism, cultural creation and consumption, public culture and social participation, museums and exhibitions, and heritage governance and industrialization. The difference does not lie in whether promotion is emphasized, but in the kinds of

activities in which it is organized. Education research is mostly centered on curriculum learning and skills training; cultural tourism research focuses on destination experiences and tourism projects; cultural creation and consumption research focuses on product development and market entry; public culture research emphasizes public services and social participation; museum and exhibition research focuses on display and interpretation activities; and governance and industrialization research discusses institutional arrangements, collaboration, and long term investment. The selected studies focus more on the contexts of education, cultural tourism, exhibitions, public culture, and consumption, which are relatively stable in terms of the forms of activities, making it easier for the studies to clearly document the promotion process and to compare across different studies. Similar reviews have highlighted a focus on cultural tourism and interpretation studies, where discussions tend to revolve around tourism development and tourist behavior, as well as the organization and effects of interpretation and exhibition activities (Qiu et al., 2022; Nowacki, 2021).

This focus is also consistent with the structure of Chinese ICH conservation. Education, public awareness, and capacity building have long been emphasized at the international level, and related research has been incorporated into curricula, exhibitions, and public cultural programs, making it easier to develop descriptive and comparable promotional practices (Tan et al., 2025). Governance and industrialization of heritage are more dependent on institutional operation and management materials, and discussions often turn to policy implementation, inventory systems and governance arrangements. International studies have also noted that the field is more complex at the implementation level and that empirical descriptions are not presented in the same way as in the previous context (Lázaro Ortiz and Jiménez de Madariaga, 2022). The studies reviewed mainly identify three main pathways for promotion. Many focuses on the Digital Platform Pathway, which involves sharing content, encouraging participation, and redistributing information. These platforms keep ongoing records of text, images, and interactions, making it easier for researchers to track how information spreads and how people respond. The visibility and interactivity of heritage content on social media help explain why some content gets attention while other content is overlooked (Bonacchi et al., 2023). Offline Organized Pathways are also common, including workshops, lectures, festivals, and camps that encourage full participation and offer a structured learning experience. The Spatial Carrier Pathway centers on physical spaces such as museums, exhibition halls, and themed areas, as well as workshops held there. This approach highlights the importance of being present and using interpretive systems to help people understand and remember the place.

Conclusion

This study uses PRISMA to screen and review the English journal studies on the promotion research of Chinese ICH between 2020 and 2025. For research questions 1 to 3, the relevant publication information, Chinese ICH items, places of origin, promotion directions, implementation methods, and enhancement strategies are summarized and compared. The main contribution is to provide a method to organize, redefine, and classify the concepts in the promotion of Chinese ICH, so that the research of different disciplines and scenarios can be compared and summarized under a common framework. This method is based on the systematic review process and reduces the bias of topic classification. Through the organization and analysis of the selected studies, this

SLR has summarized the characteristics of the promotion of Chinese ICH: The promotion of Chinese ICH is not limited to a single scene or a single method, but is composed of the activity scene, the carrier and the enhancement measures. Digital platforms have repeatedly appeared in various types of research, serving both as a medium of dissemination and being used to explain issues such as interaction, visibility, and continuous diffusion. Social media is not regarded as an independent direction to replace education, tourism and culture, exhibitions, or public culture, but rather more like a common dissemination environment, frequently embedded in the different implementation pathways and enhancement strategies.

The conclusion of this study is still influenced by certain conditions. The selected studies mainly consist of English journals indexed by Web of Science and Scopus. This sampling method helps to ensure retrievability and academic standardization, but it may also overlook the more abundant policy practices, local project experiences, and platform operation contents in the Chinese context. The classification of this study is affected by the completeness of the studies. Some studies have brief descriptions of the localities or implementation details, so this study adopted a more generalized coding method when conducting the comparison. Further research can collect more comprehensive and extensive studies on the promotion of Chinese ICH and conduct more detailed and in-depth classification and comparison of the content. The Chinese literature database is worthy of being systematically included, and the same set of search and screening procedures should be used. This can supplement the research and practical materials in China, allowing the samples to cover more comprehensively. Deeply explore research related to digital platforms, especially social media promotion method. This should not only focus on the application of the platform, but also break down the platform ecosystem, content form and interaction mode to analyze and clarify which practices are more likely to create continuous reach and participation. Comparative studies of Chinese ICH research across different regions are also recommended to clarify specific regional differences in promotion strategies.

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involved with any parties in this research study.

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