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Exploring the path to common prosperity through innovative rural cultural industries: A case study of Chang'an Banquet Ball Culture

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Abstract

Traditional culture is the "soul" of rural areas, and promoting the excellent traditions of the Chinese nation is a crucial aspect of China's rural revitalization. To support rural revitalization and achieve common prosperity, this study employs questionnaire surveys, interviews, and observational methods, using the traditional culture of Chang'an Banquet Ball in Haining, China, as a case study. It clarifies the current development status of Chang'an Banquet Ball culture and highlights the prominent issues that hinder its effectiveness in aiding rural revitalization, such as weak foundational forces for inheritance and utilization, a generational gap, and a complex broader environment. In response, our research team focuses on overcoming the current bottlenecks of Chang'an Banquet Ball culture, with an emphasis on creating a unique rural brand and constructing a Chinese-style rural development model. This study provides feasible reference pathways for empowering rural revitalization through traditional culture.

Keywords: Chang'an Banquet Ball Culture; Common Prosperity; Cultural Industry; Innovative Development

1. Introduction

In recent years, the concept of rural revitalization has gradually been translated from theory into practice. Under the backdrop of common prosperity, leading regional economic development with traditional cultural revitalization has become a new direction in exploring rural revitalization. This study focuses on deeply excavating the potential value embedded in the excellent traditional culture of Haining—specifically, the "Chang'an Banquet Ball Culture"—to empower rural revitalization and achieve common prosperity. As a traditional local delicacy, the craftsmanship of Chang'an Banquet Ball was included in the fourth batch of Jiaxing City's intangible cultural heritage list in 2014 [1]. Although the banquet ball is a distinct local specialty in Chang'an Town, it is less known outside the region. Enhancing the visibility of the banquet ball will not only aid in the cultural heritage's preservation but also significantly benefit the reputation of Chang'an Town in Haining and drive local economic development.

This study examines the Chang'an Banquet Ball culture as its primary research object, fully exploring its economic value to empower industrial rejuvenation and stimulate regional economic development. Furthermore, it highlights the indispensable roles of the internet, government, and residents in the inheritance and utilization of traditional culture, aiming to establish a unique economic system in Chang'an. This provides feasible solutions for empowering rural revitalization through traditional culture towards achieving common prosperity.

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2. Current Status of Traditional Culture from the Perspective of Common Prosperity

2.1. Current Status of Traditional Culture in China

Chinese traditional culture, with its profound heritage accumulated over five millennia, stands out in the history of world culture due to its rich content, diverse forms, and deep connotations. However, in recent years, China's native culture has faced significant challenges due to the encroachment of industrial civilization and the influx of foreign cultures. Local excellent culture has been marginalized, constrained by insufficient promotion, conservative thinking, and low utilization levels, thus failing to fully exert its potential in rural revitalization.

The Chinese government has increasingly emphasized the importance of traditional culture as a crucial element of rural revitalization. Notable policies include the "Plan for the Revitalization of Chinese Traditional Crafts" jointly issued by the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, and Ministry of Finance in 2017, and the 2018 notice by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism on vigorously revitalizing traditional crafts to aid precise poverty alleviation workshops [2]. These policies focus on uncovering the potential value of traditional culture in revitalizing rural economies, achieving precise poverty alleviation, and enhancing village vitality. Traditional culture, as an embodiment of local geography, society, and humanity, endows rural areas with new economic sources and sustainable development momentum.

2.2. Current Status of Chang'an Banquet Ball Culture

To gain a deeper and more detailed understanding of the state of traditional culture, this study takes Chang'an Banquet Ball culture as a case study. By surveying tourists, residents, and staff from different perspectives, a total of 500 questionnaires were distributed, with 473 responses and 459 valid questionnaires collected.

2.2.1. Weak Foundation for the Inheritance and Utilization of Banquet Ball Culture

The general populace is the main body of cultural creation, dissemination, and survival. The key to Chinese-style rural revitalization is the revival of local excellent culture, using cultural revitalization to drive economic revitalization and gradually stimulate the deeper vitality of villages, ultimately achieving comprehensive rural revitalization. Cultural revitalization can be seen as the living soul of rural revitalization, relying on both top-down management and bottom-up participation, with both being indispensable.

The survey results indicated that while the awareness rate of Banquet Ball culture among residents was nearly 100%, it was only 13.79% among tourists. This data suggests that although Banquet Ball culture is well inherited in its local origin, the main forces for its inheritance and utilization remain weak. For Banquet Ball culture to play its due role in rural revitalization, it must move beyond its local confines and become a widely recognized cultural form. Enhancing its visibility is a crucial challenge in the revitalization of Banquet Ball culture.

2.2.2. Lack of Core Forces in the Inheritance and Utilization of Banquet Ball Culture

The vitality of traditional culture arises from the collaborative participation of diverse subjects and the coordinated leadership of core forces. The development status of cultural inheritance talent is a crucial indicator of local cultural revitalization.

Regarding Banquet Ball culture-related talent, the most prominent issue is the gap in cultural inheritors. Historical factors such as the imbalance between urban and rural development have led to a significant outflow of the most productive and creative groups from rural areas, deepening rural hollowing. Elderly individuals have become the mainstay of rural populations and culture [3] [4]. Although they are passionate about Banquet Ball culture, their generally low cultural literacy limits their ability to explore its deeper value. Furthermore, their vague cultural innovation awareness, lack of promotional methods, and single sales models prevent Banquet Ball from opening new markets, significantly weakening its effectiveness.

2.2.3. Complex Environment for the Inheritance and Utilization of Banquet Ball Culture

In recent years, local internet celebrity culture has flourished and quickly permeated various aspects of public life. However, the result is often impulsive consumption followed by a prolonged period of fatigue and incorrect perceptions of traditional culture. In the long term, this negatively impacts the development of traditional culture. Field research reveals that the quality of Banquet Ball varies widely, with many businesses capitalizing on consumer trends for internet celebrity products by simplifying essential production processes, which harms the cultural integrity of Banquet Ball.

2.2.4. Objective Constraints on the Development of Banquet Ball Culture

Field investigations show that the only known Banquet Ball production workshop in Chang'an Town is the Lechu Banquet Ball Food Factory, which is small in scale and primarily manual. This limits its ability to support large-scale industrial production and has minimal impact on rural revitalization. Discussions with the factory owner and statistical data reveal that the production process of Banquet Ball is intricate, lacking an industrial chain, and many young people are more inclined to engage with and create new things. This highlights important issues to consider and implement for better cultural inheritance, attracting labor back to rural areas, and promoting common prosperity to drive rural revitalization.

3. Results and discussion

Excellent traditional culture originates and thrives in rural areas, forming a symbiotic relationship with rural communities. The process of rural revitalization is dynamic, impacting both cultural and economic spheres. Traditional culture provides rural areas with new economic sources and continuous developmental momentum, while the revitalization of rural economies through traditional culture offers a stable environment and opportunities for cultural growth. This mutual reinforcement propels China's rural areas toward common prosperity.

3.1. Diversification of Agents for Inheritance and Utilization of Banquet Ball Culture

3.1.1. Establishing an "Internet + Banquet Ball Culture" Promotion Model

In an era of rapid information dissemination, the internet plays an increasingly crucial role in driving industry development and stimulating economic vitality. Effectively utilizing the internet to construct a diversified promotion model for Banquet Ball culture is significantly more efficient than traditional offline methods.

Currently, some Banquet Ball businesses in Chang'an Town leverage platforms like TikTok and Kuaishou to introduce Banquet Ball culture and its production techniques, attracting considerable attention. Developing new sales channels through the internet has become a trend. Expanding the application of social media in promoting Banquet Ball culture will increase public awareness, enhance its cultural impact, and drive the local Banquet Ball industry. Moreover, integrating existing grassroots traffic attracted by Banquet Ball culture to create a standardized, systematic platform for promotion, sales, and after-sales service will be highly beneficial for its development.

3.1.2. Increasing Government Support and Building a Banquet Ball Culture Demonstration Town

As a unique traditional dish of Chang'an Town, Banquet Ball's production technique is listed as intangible cultural heritage. However, to harness its potential in rural revitalization, more than the efforts of businesses and a recognized title are needed; societal support is crucial. The government, with its local credibility and influence, plays an indispensable role in promoting local culture. Although Chang'an Town's economic development is stable and community infrastructure is improving, investment in Banquet Ball culture protection is insufficient.

To lead in promotion, the government must first improve mechanisms for protecting and inheriting Banquet Ball culture, providing strong support for cultural inheritors. In terms of cultural infrastructure, establishing a Banquet Ball culture museum to thoroughly introduce its history and cultural significance is essential. Additionally, organizing Banquet Ball cultural festivals or related forums for tourists and enthusiasts can help spread awareness. Understanding and recognizing Banquet Ball culture will rejuvenate the industry and integrate it deeply with the local economy.

3.2. Promotion of New Value Creation and Cultivation of Inheritance Talent for Banquet Ball Culture

3.2.1. Enhancing Cultural Confidence among Local Residents

Cultural confidence is crucial in the process of cultural transmission. With over a century of history, Banquet Ball is a distinctive delicacy of Chang'an Town, whose seasonal ingredients highlight its regional uniqueness. Residents play a significant role in its inheritance and utilization. However, many residents are indifferent to its presence. Therefore, awakening and enhancing their cultural confidence is vital.

Firstly, regularly organizing forums and lectures on the mutual reinforcement of Banquet Ball cultural protection and economic development can lay a cognitive foundation for the integration of culture and industry, guiding the public to recognize its cultural and economic value. Secondly, enhancing residents' sense of identity and pride in Banquet Ball culture is essential. Traditional cultural transmission relies heavily on residents as core practitioners. Hosting traditional food-making activities can provide platforms for hands-on experience, while integrating technology to create immersive cultural experiences through animations can foster pride and a sense of ownership among residents [5] [6].

3.2.2. Realizing the Re-Creation of Banquet Ball Value

With the rapid development of the era, the encroachment of industrial civilization and foreign cultures have placed China's excellent traditional culture in a precarious position. Finding new pathways for the inheritance and development of Banquet Ball culture and realizing its value re-creation is a critical challenge in revitalizing rural areas through traditional culture. Compared to the prevalent fast-food culture, Banquet Ball is complex and time-consuming to prepare. However, combining it with technology to innovate without altering essential processes can transform it into a "ready-to-eat" dish, preserving its taste and health benefits while significantly reducing delivery time.

For example, replacing the traditional hand-minced fish paste with machine processing saves time and effort while increasing convenience. The rising trend of the "lazy economy" and the increasing proportion of young and elderly people living alone connect "ready-to-eat" dishes with rural revitalization. Transforming Banquet Ball into a convenient dish and innovating its flavor and presentation—such as introducing ham or shrimp versions—enhances its appeal and marketability, garnering positive feedback from consumers. This innovation will convert its cultural value into social value, promoting local economic development.

3.2.3. Cultivating Talent for Banquet Ball Inheritance

Cultural inheritance relies on people as carriers, and any form of culture ultimately depends on the role of inheritors in industry development [7]. As an intangible cultural heritage, Banquet Ball production requires specialized skills. To ensure its effective transmission and continued development, it is essential to cultivate a new generation of inheritors with both the traditional craftsmanship and innovative abilities.

Most current inheritors in Chang'an Town are older artisans, with few younger talents involved. Therefore, it is necessary to attract fresh blood into the field. Talent cultivation should focus on both existing and latent talents. Existing talents generally include descendants, relatives, and enthusiasts of Banquet Ball culture, who can quickly engage in inheritance activities through guidance. Latent talents, typically students interested in traditional culture but without clear career goals, can be nurtured through educational initiatives.

For example, since 2011, the Hunan Province Puppet and Shadow Art Protection and Inheritance Center has established "Hunan Shadow Puppet Inheritance Bases" in schools like Hongxing Primary School and Hunan Provincial Department of Culture Art Kindergarten, fostering children's interest in shadow puppetry through hands-on activities [8]. Similarly, conducting cultural lectures and Banquet Ball promotion in schools can stimulate latent talent's proactive involvement in cultural inheritance. Additionally, the government can provide job security for those engaged in intangible cultural heritage transmission, attracting more latent talents.

Drawing from successful international examples, such as the Indonesian Solo Art Institute's emphasis on wayang puppetry and government-funded scholarships for young people pursuing related careers, China can encourage talent development through similar initiatives. Infusing new energy into cultural transmission not only alleviates inheritance challenges but also brings new hope to Banquet Ball culture, opening new pathways for local economic development.

3.2.4. Fostering Innovation and Entrepreneurship

To fully harness the potential of Banquet Ball culture in promoting rural revitalization, it is essential to foster innovation and entrepreneurship among residents. Encouraging local entrepreneurs to explore new business models that integrate Banquet Ball culture with tourism, hospitality, and e-commerce can stimulate economic growth and create employment opportunities.

Supporting start-ups and small businesses that focus on Banquet Ball culture through financial incentives, training programs, and mentorship can drive innovation in product development and marketing strategies. Collaborative efforts between local businesses, educational institutions, and government agencies can lead to the establishment of Banquet Ball cultural hubs and innovation centers, where new ideas can be tested and scaled.

In summary, the effective promotion and utilization of Banquet Ball culture require a multi-faceted approach involving the diversification of inheritance agents, increased government support, enhancement of local cultural confidence, realization of new cultural values, cultivation of transmission talent, and fostering of innovation and entrepreneurship. These efforts collectively contribute to the sustainable development of rural areas, driving economic growth and cultural preservation in tandem.

4. Benefits of Empowering Rural Revitalization through Traditional Culture

4.1. Benefits of Common Prosperity

Achieving common prosperity is fundamental to socialism and a shared aspiration of the people. Rural revitalization is essential to this goal. By leveraging excellent traditional culture, new avenues for rural revitalization can be explored. Enhancing traditional culture while establishing an equitable distribution system is crucial for uncovering pathways to rural development. The specific benefits include:

4.1.1. Increasing Visibility of Rural Culture and Promoting Local Economic Growth

Cultural promotion is the cornerstone of rural revitalization. Vigorous promotion of traditional culture, such as Banquet Ball culture, enhances its social visibility and influence, expanding its audience. This not only highlights local cultural characteristics but also attracts residents and tourists, leading to economic and reputational benefits.

4.1.2. Supporting the Development of Rural Cultural Industries

Rural cultural industries are pivotal for the practical application of rural revitalization, providing continuous motivation for rural development and promoting sustained economic growth. The rich local flavor of Chang'an's Banquet Ball culture is integral to developing rural cultural industries. Integrating Banquet Ball culture with cultural industries and linking its preservation and transmission to cultural productivity exploits the real-world value of traditional culture. This approach deeply explores the inner meanings of rural cultural resources, refines emerging cultural and creative industry models, and builds classic rural cultural brands. Such strategies attract more social investment into rural cultural industries, safeguarding economic revitalization.

4.2. Benefits to Rural Development

4.2.1. Enhancing Community Spirit and Creating a Vibrant Rural Life

Currently, residents of Chang'an Town face high work and life pressures, lacking the means to actively drive local economic development. This hampers cultural industry development. Promoting Banquet Ball culture helps residents recognize their roles as community leaders, fostering a proactive attitude towards cultural transmission and development, and enhancing community spirit.

4.2.2. Cultivating and Developing Traditional Cultural Talents

Rural revitalization fundamentally relies on people. A large pool of excellent talent is essential for the effective inheritance, protection, promotion, and revitalization of traditional culture. By promoting China's traditional culture, opportunities arise to foster a sense of ownership among Chang'an Town residents. This facilitates the integration of traditional culture with the market and the discovery of creative talents within traditional culture. Identifying and nurturing these talents helps establish a consciousness of promoting excellent culture, encouraging active participation in cultural development. This also motivates capable, thoughtful, ambitious, and culturally aware young people to learn and promote traditional culture, leveraging it for innovation and entrepreneurship, and contributing to their hometown's cultural development.

4.2.3. Enriching People's Lives and Increasing Happiness

In recent years, as aspirations for a better life have grown, there has been a tendency to prioritize economic benefits, often at the expense of cultural enrichment. Under the perspective of common prosperity, the benefits of traditional culture are amplified, offering daily pleasures and enriching people's lives. Enjoying delicacies and engaging with cultural materials fills leisure time with vibrant rural cultural content, providing spiritual satisfaction and improving quality of life.

4.2.4. Promoting Traditional Culture and Enhancing Rural Civility

Due to limited media coverage and low influence, Banquet Ball culture in Chang'an has not achieved widespread development. The goal of common prosperity strongly promotes the self-renewal of traditional culture, combining it with the internet to expand cultural dissemination and influence, thereby promoting civilized rural development. As people learn about traditional culture, they also experience its unique charm, improving their cultural literacy and enhancing rural civility.

4.2.5. Increasing Employment Opportunities and Maximizing Talent Utilization

The continuous promotion of traditional culture helps to form regional cultural brands, driving local employment. Harnessing the positive impact of traditional culture and utilizing the innovative guidance of talent can align modern cultural industry development with contemporary consumer demands. This ensures that traditional rural culture continuously injects economic vitality into rural cultural revitalization.

5. Conclusion

China is currently in the critical final stage of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects. Although significant progress has been made in rural construction, development remains unbalanced and inadequate. This study explores how traditional cultural resources can be transformed into economic benefits to support comprehensive rural revitalization, thereby promoting balanced urban-rural development. Traditional culture, as an intangible asset of rural areas, plays a vital role in coupling with rural cultural revitalization. Enhancing residents' recognition of their cultural heritage and fostering innovative development are essential steps. By exploring the potential of traditional culture and overcoming inhibiting factors, genuine cultural revitalization can be achieved. Drawing from successful domestic and international examples of rural cultural revitalization, this study seeks to identify an optimal path for development that aligns with local realities.

Traditional culture can provide new economic opportunities and sustainable growth for rural areas. Concurrently, the economic revitalization of rural areas offers a stable foundation and modern development opportunities for traditional culture, creating a synergistic relationship that drives rural areas toward common prosperity.

Despite the comprehensive analysis presented in this study, several limitations need to be addressed. The survey data collected lacked flexibility and efficiency, primarily because the questionnaires were designed with predetermined answers and options. This approach restricted respondents, resulting in passive and constrained feedback. Many respondents struggled to find options that accurately reflected their views, and the prevalence of multiple-choice questions limited the richness of the information gathered. Complex issues require detailed responses, and the current survey design may have overlooked nuanced and in-depth information, necessitating additional effort in later data analysis and conclusion formation.

Furthermore, most survey respondents were long-term residents, familiar with Banquet Ball culture and its production techniques. The remote location of Chang'an Town meant there was a lack of tourist perspectives, leading to a potential bias in the conclusions and difficulty in assessing the future market competitiveness of Banquet Ball culture. Additionally, as survey activities increased, some respondents exhibited reluctance or disengagement due to the length and perceived tedium of the questionnaires. The commercialized environment and fast-paced modern life further reduced participation willingness. Finding more engaging methods to boost respondent enthusiasm remains a challenge for the research team.

In conclusion, leveraging traditional culture to empower rural revitalization provides a promising pathway for achieving common prosperity. The integration of cultural and economic development fosters a mutually beneficial relationship, driving sustained growth and development in rural areas. However, future research should address the identified limitations to enhance data collection methods and broaden the scope of perspectives included in the analysis.

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