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The evolution of identities among Yunnan folk pottery practitioners and its impact—from the perspective of intangible cultural heritage protection and cultural creative industry development

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Abstract

Yunnan folk pottery reflects rich local traditions, with practitioners shifting from traditional artisans to diverse modern roles such as designers, artists, entrepreneurs, and educators. Based on surveys and fieldwork, this study explores how identity transformation influences craft transmission, product innovation, market adaptability, and policy support. Findings show that policy, market trends, technology, and education are key drivers of this evolution. Different practitioner types play distinct roles in sustaining and transforming the pottery sector. The study also highlights ongoing challenges in balancing modernization with cultural preservation and proposes strategies for integrated development.

Keywords: Craftsmanship Inheritance, Cultural Creative Industry, Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection, Practitioner Identity, Yunnan Folk Pottery.

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Identity Transformation of Yunnan Folk Pottery Practitioners: A Dual Drive of ICH Protection and Market Transition

Yunnan folk pottery is an important component of China's intangible cultural heritage, carrying rich ethnic cultural traditions and exquisite craftsmanship. Over the long course of history, various regions in Yunnan have gradually formed pottery systems with distinct local characteristics, such as Nixi Black Pottery from Shangri-La, Jianshui Purple Pottery, and Huaning Glazed Pottery. These pottery traditions are not only essential material carriers in the daily lives of residents but also play an irreplaceable role in cultural activities such as folk customs and social interactions. At the same time, the producers of pottery within the group of practitioners have continuously undergone identity transformations along with the evolution of social economy and cultural forms. From the traditional family-based craftsmen and master-apprentice inheritance system, a more diversified professional identity and industry structure have gradually developed.

In the mid-to-late 20th century, influenced by the modern industrial production system and changes in the market economy, Yunnan folk pottery gradually lost its original survival foundation, and some traditional pottery productions fell into decline. The singularity of practitioners' identities made this industry particularly vulnerable to external shocks. Many family-based pottery workshops were forced to close, and the number of traditional craftsmen drastically decreased, leading to severe challenges in the inheritance of pottery craftsmanship. Entering the 21st century, the global effort to protect intangible cultural heritage gained full momentum, and improvements in policy environments provided an opportunity for the revitalization of Yunnan folk pottery.

In October 2003, the 32nd General Conference of UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, explicitly stating that intangible cultural heritage not only includes craftsmanship but also involves language, oral traditions, rituals, and folk knowledge. In August 2004, the Chinese government ratified and officially approved the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, becoming the sixth country to join the convention [1, 2]. In 2011, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Intangible Cultural Heritage was promulgated and implemented [3] marking the entry of intangible cultural heritage protection into a new stage of legal safeguarding, this law further clarifies the legal framework for intangible cultural heritage protection, providing an institutional guarantee for the inheritance and innovation of traditional crafts such as Yunnan folk pottery. The law not only emphasizes the cultural value of intangible cultural heritage but also proposes strategies for its creative transformation and innovative development, enabling intangible cultural heritage to regain vitality in modern society.

With the strong support of national policies, Yunnan folk pottery has gradually been incorporated into the intangible cultural heritage protection system. Some pottery categories have been revitalized through government-led promotional campaigns, financial support, and the integration of cultural and creative industries guided by market demand. At the same time, the practitioner group has undergone identity expansion and restructuring in this process, gradually breaking through the traditional model centered on craftsmen and forming a diversified professional system that includes intangible cultural heritage inheritors, ceramic artists, cultural and creative designers, business operators, and higher education researchers. This change has not only enriched the professional structure of the pottery industry but has also continuously reshaped the roles of practitioners in the socioeconomic system.

In 2014, the Opinions of the State Council on Promoting the Integration of Cultural Creativity, Design Services, and Related Industries were released, emphasizing "the combination of protection and inheritance with innovative development, promoting the development and production of artistic derivative products and artistic licensed products, and accelerating the integration of arts and crafts products and traditional handicrafts with modern technology and contemporary elements "[4]." This policy further promoted the modernization process of traditional craftsmanship, providing policy support for the industrialization of Yunnan folk pottery. Influenced by this policy, the production model of Yunnan pottery has gradually transitioned from a single traditional pottery-making model to market-oriented, brand-driven, and artistic development directions, giving rise to new development models such as cultural tourism ceramics, high-end customized pottery, and cross-disciplinary design collaborations. This change has not only attracted more attention from young people, artists, designers, and entrepreneurs but has also facilitated a more refined and diversified professional division of labor in the Yunnan pottery industry. The identities of practitioners are no longer limited to traditional craftsmen but are increasingly integrated into the modern market system, playing roles in brand development, artistic innovation, and cultural promotion. The interaction model between traditional craftsmen, modern designers, and market operators is forming a new industry ecosystem, bringing new vitality to Yunnan Folk Pottery in the contemporary era.

However, despite these advancements, Yunnan folk pottery still faces numerous challenges, such as increasingly fierce market competition, insufficient attractiveness of the industry to new entrants, a lack of innovation capabilities, and an underdeveloped mechanism for skill inheritance. Although the evolution of practitioners' identities has brought more opportunities, it has also exposed issues such as industry chain fragmentation, declining cultural identity, and unclear career development pathways during the overall transformation of the industry. Finding a suitable revitalization path for Yunnan pottery during these opportunities and challenges requires not only practical exploration but also broader attention and in-depth academic research.

A systematic study of the process of identity transformation among Yunnan folk pottery practitioners, an analysis of occupational patterns, and an exploration of the mechanisms through which the environment and product market shape the identities of practitioners will not only help to gain a deeper understanding of how traditional craftsmanship survives and develops in modern society but will also provide important academic support for future intangible cultural heritage policy-making, industrial development planning, and related talent cultivation.

1.2. The Evolution of Practitioners' Identities and Academic Examination

The identities of Yunnan folk pottery practitioners have not remained static but have undergone dynamic evolution at different historical stages. Traditional handmade pottery has long relied on family inheritance and the master-apprentice system, forming a stable occupational group within local society. However, in the mid-to-late 20th century, influenced by modern industrial manufacturing, changes in market demand, and shifts in lifestyle, the foundation of folk pottery was shaken by the evolution of modern material culture and aesthetic consumption [5]. Following the reform and opening-up, traditional handicrafts did not disappear; instead, they experienced a vigorous revival, spreading from rural areas to urban centers. The resurgence of traditional workshops is not a mere return to the past; rather, people are actively creating tradition rather than simply imitating it, leading to the reconstruction and regeneration of tradition in modern society [6]. The rise and decline of Yunnan folk pottery not only reflect the internal and external development patterns of the craft but also illustrate the transformations within its practitioner community. The Yunnan pottery industry has entered a period of identity adjustment. Practitioners are no longer limited to family workshops and handicraft production but have gradually diversified into market-driven individual entrepreneurs, artistic ceramicists, and cultural and creative designers integrated with the modern cultural industry. At the same time, the government-led Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) protection system has changed the way pottery practitioners' identities are recognized. Some skilled artisans have been granted official titles such as "Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritor" or "Master of Arts and Crafts," diversifying their social roles. This shift has not only affected the organizational structure of the Yunnan pottery industry but has also reshaped the professional identity of practitioners across generations.

The evolution of pottery practitioners' identities has been influenced by multiple intersecting factors, primarily including policy support, market demand, technological transformation, and cultural identity. At the policy level, national and local governments have introduced a series of cultural protection and industry development policies to encourage the revitalization of traditional handicrafts. These policies have provided some pottery artisans with new career opportunities through ICH certification, craft promotion, and training programs. At the market level, the transformation of contemporary consumer values has driven the pottery industry toward branding and customization, fostering new business models such as cross-disciplinary collaborations and digital marketing. These changes have attracted more young practitioners into the field. In terms of technological innovation, advancements have accelerated changes in pottery production and distribution methods, and shifts in market demand have altered traditional pottery-making processes, thereby changing the professional skill requirements for practitioners. Faced with these challenges and opportunities, pottery practitioners are showing a trend of identity differentiation. Different types of practitioners are seeking their own survival paths within the context of market competition and cultural heritage transmission.

At present, academic research on the evolution of pottery practitioners' identities still has certain limitations. Existing studies mostly focus on technical craftsmanship in isolated cases or emphasize the cultural value of traditional crafts, while relatively little attention has been paid to the dynamic evolution of identity structures within the pottery industry, the logic of occupational differentiation, and the interaction between practitioners, the environment, and product markets. Especially in the context of the development of cultural and creative industries, the identities of pottery practitioners are no longer limited to the single role of craft inheritance but now encompass multiple dimensions, including creativity, marketing, education, and academic research. This paper pays particular attention to the roles of different types of practitioners in the inheritance, innovation, and industrialization of pottery, exploring the mechanisms of identity transformation and its impact on the sustainable development of Yunnan folk pottery, thereby providing empirical and theoretical support for policy formulation, industry planning, and talent cultivation.

2. Research Methods and Data Sources

2.1. Research Methods

To study the evolution of the identities of Yunnan folk pottery practitioners, this paper adopts a combination of qualitative research and quantitative analysis, integrating phenomenological and ethnographic research methods to obtain a more comprehensive academic perspective. Through field investigations and questionnaire surveys, this study systematically examines the occupational transition paths of Yunnan pottery practitioners and explores the mechanisms by which these transitions influence the inheritance and development of Yunnan folk pottery.

2.2. Data Sources

This study primarily employs a questionnaire survey as the main data collection tool, aiming to understand the overall trends and patterns of the Yunnan folk pottery industry from a macro perspective. The core objectives include identifying the occupational backgrounds and demographic composition of Yunnan folk pottery practitioners, analyzing the impact of technological changes on pottery production and product marketization, and assessing the effects of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) protection measures and cultural creative entrepreneurship development on the inheritance of craftsmanship among practitioners.

The questionnaire was designed and implemented based on four core dimensions:

- a. Practitioner Identity Background: This dimension collects information on identity, age, educational background, and ethnicity of the practitioners.
- b. Industry and Product Market Conditions: This section gathers data on types of pottery, production scale, and sales channels to analyze the industry's structure and product market trends.
- c. Technological Influence on Pottery Craftsmanship: This part surveys key aspects of the pottery-making process, including shaping, decoration, firing, and raw materials, to examine the impact of modern technology on pottery

craftsmanship.

d. Policy Influence on Practitioners' Engagement in Pottery: This section gathers information on the effects of ICH protection and cultural creative industry development policies on practitioners' involvement in pottery.

The questionnaire was distributed and collected via the Wenjuanxing (Questionnaire Star) platform. To ensure the anonymity and representativeness of respondents, the questionnaire link was specifically distributed through industry associations and social media groups related to pottery practitioners.

3. Data Results and Analysis

The reliability of the questionnaire data in this study was analyzed using SPSSAU, and the results are shown in Table 1. The reliability coefficient was 0.733, which is greater than 0.7, indicating that the quality of the research data is very good. Since the reliability coefficient exceeds 0.7, it can be concluded that the data quality is high and suitable for further analysis.

Reliability analysis is used to assess the accuracy and consistency of responses in quantitative research data, especially in attitude scale questions. The Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient is analyzed as follows: If $\alpha > 0.8$, the reliability is considered high. If α is between 0.7 and 0.8, the reliability is good. If α is between 0.6 and 0.7, the reliability is acceptable. If $\alpha < 0.6$, the reliability is poor [7-9].

Table 1.

Simplified format for confidence analysis.

Confidence analysis - simplified format		
Item Count	Sample Size	Cronbach α coefficient
58	103	0.733

3.1. Evolution of Practitioners' Identities: Educational Advancement and Occupational Diversification

Using SPSSAU, a frequency analysis of the identities of 103 valid questionnaire respondents was conducted to examine the identity distribution of Yunnan pottery practitioners. The identities of practitioners were categorized into five dimensions: Pra1 – Pra5 (Identity, Age, Gender, Education Level, and Ethnicity), and the statistical results from the questionnaire classification of practitioners' identities are presented as follows:

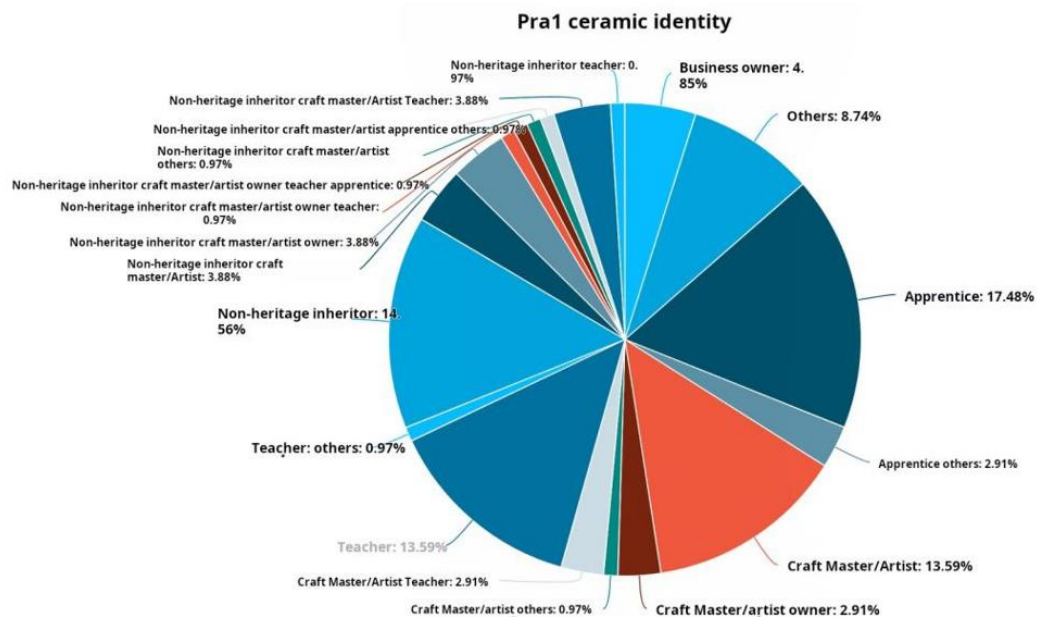


Figure 1.

Pie chart of practitioner status.

From the perspective of identity composition, apprentices (17.48%), intangible cultural heritage (ICH) inheritors (14.56%), masters/artists (13.59%), and teachers (13.59%) account for the majority (see Figure 1). A relatively high proportion of practitioners hold multiple identities, with some simultaneously serving as ICH inheritors, Master of Arts and Crafts, business owners, and teachers (11.64%), reflecting the diversified development paths of the Yunnan pottery industry. On the one hand, some university faculty members have entered the field of Yunnan folk pottery, engaging in teaching, research, artistic creation, and promotion, thereby facilitating the integration of pottery into academia and modernization. On the other hand, market-oriented exploration remains relatively limited. Although some practitioners have attempted commercial operations, the proportion of business owners is only 4.85%, indicating that Yunnan folk pottery is still in the early stages of market exploration under new policies and social contexts. The industry has not yet achieved full commercialization and large-scale development, nor may it simply be unsuitable for large-scale expansion.

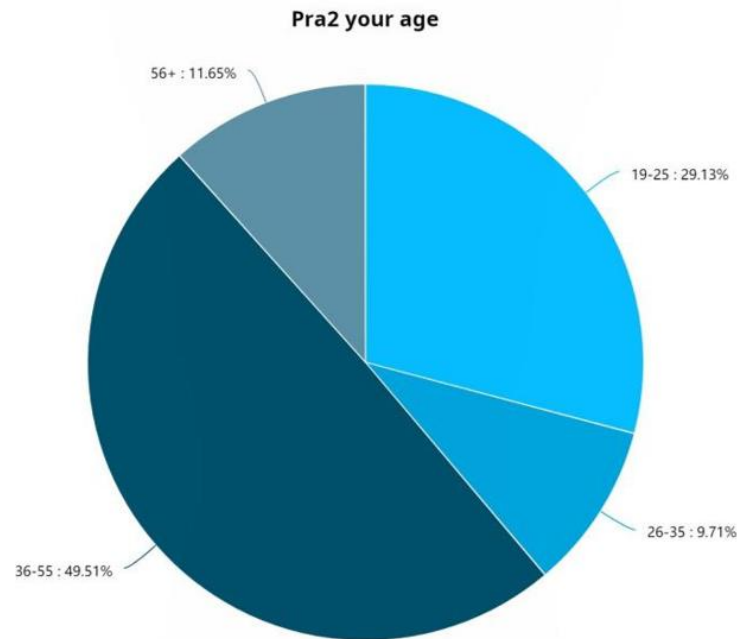


Figure 2.
Pie chart of the age of practitioners.

The inheritance and revitalization of Yunnan folk pottery rely on the composition and development trends of the practitioner community, which serves as the labor force in production. The identity, age structure, and educational background of practitioners are crucial in driving both labor objects (products) and labor tools (technology), forming the foundation of their comprehensive professional competencies. Survey data indicates that the majority of practitioners are aged 36-55 years (49.51%), followed by 19-25 years (29.13%), while the proportions of 26-35 years (9.71%) and 56 years and above (11.65%) are relatively lower (see Figure 2). This suggests that Yunnan folk pottery is still predominantly created by experienced middle-aged artisans and inheritors, with a relatively low proportion of younger entrants into the industry.

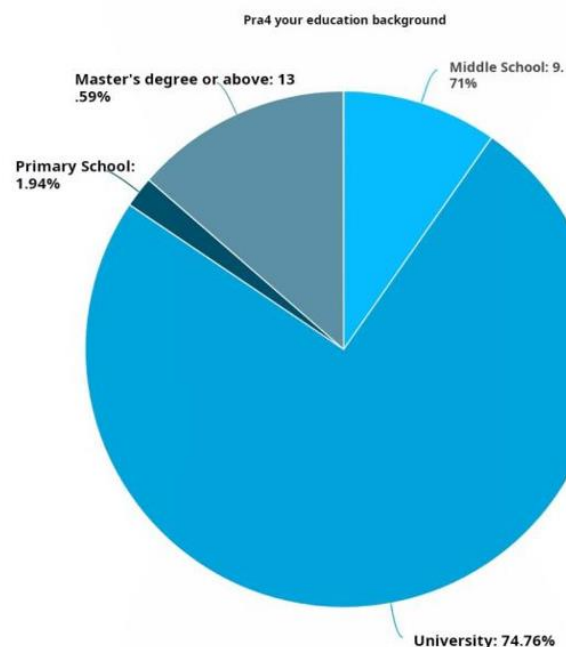


Figure 3.
Pie chart of practitioners' education.

It is worth noting that the overall educational level of practitioners is relatively high, with bachelor's degree holders accounting for 76.76% and master's degree holders making up 13.59%, bringing the total proportion of practitioners with a bachelor's degree or higher to over 90% (see Figure 3). This indicates that although Yunnan folk pottery still centers around traditional craftsmanship, the educational background of practitioners has undergone a significant shift. The increase in highly educated artisans suggests that the industry is gradually expanding towards interdisciplinary integration,

the cultural and creative industries, and art education, rather than being solely limited to the inheritance of traditional handicraft skills.

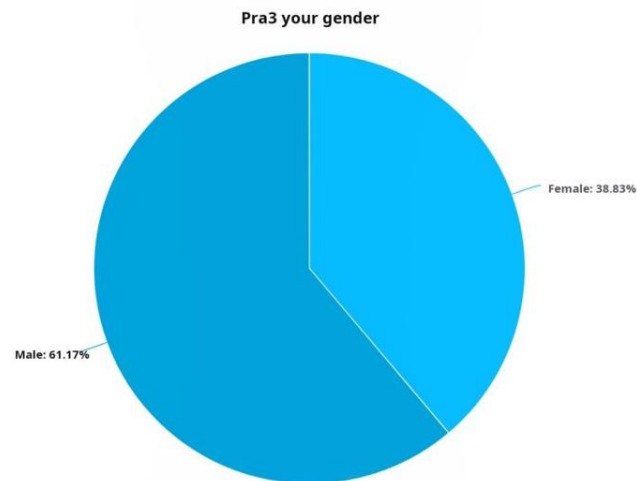


Figure 4.
Pie chart of gender of practitioners.

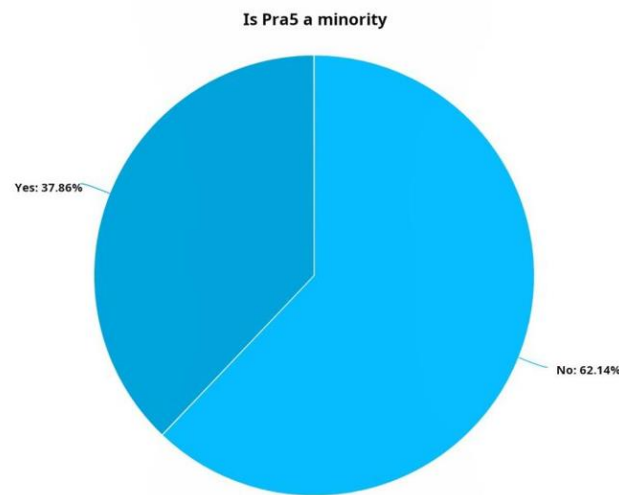


Figure 5.
Practitioner Ethnicity Pie Chart.

From Figure 4 and Figure 5, male practitioners account for 61.17%, while female practitioners account for 38.83%. In terms of ethnicity, Han practitioners make up 62.14%, while ethnic minority practitioners constitute 37.86%. Relatively speaking, the proportion of female and ethnic minority practitioners in Yunnan folk pottery is higher, which aligns with the regional characteristics and diverse ethnic cultural traits of Yunnan's folk crafts.

Yunnan folk pottery practitioners exhibit a diversified development trend in terms of age structure, educational background, and professional identity. Although the industry is still dominated by experienced artisans, the increasing participation of highly educated individuals, the deep involvement of academic institutions, and emerging market-driven efforts are pushing Yunnan folk pottery into a new phase of revitalization.

Traditional craftsmanship is gradually being integrated into educational systems, shifting the inheritance of skills from a private master-apprentice model to a broader knowledge-sharing model. However, how to maintain the core value of craftsmanship while enhancing market competitiveness and attracting more young people into the industry remains an urgent issue that needs to be addressed.

3.2. The Influence of Practitioner Identity: Changes in Craftsmanship, Products, and Inheritance Models

The questionnaire was categorized into four main sections: practitioner identity, product status, technology use, and policy & inheritance support, covering a total of 24 influencing factors. Practitioner identity includes five influencing factors: identity, gender, age, education level, and ethnicity. Product status comprises eight influencing factors. Policy & inheritance support encompasses seven influencing factors. Technology use involves four influencing factors. Using SPSSAU, a chi-square (cross-tab) analysis was conducted on 103 valid questionnaires, examining the five influencing factors of practitioner identity across 95 statistical comparisons. The chi-square analysis is used to study the differences and mutual influence between X (categorical variable) and Y (categorical variable) by determining whether there is a significant correlation ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$ or 0.01). If a significant correlation is found, the specific differences can be analyzed

by comparing percentages. The results can then be summarized to interpret their impact relationships [7-9]. Among the 95 cross-analysis items, 24 factors had p-values < 0.05 or 0.01, indicating a significant relationship between practitioner identity and technology application, product innovation, policy support, and inheritance models ($P < 0.05$ or 0.01). The following sections analyze the impact of different practitioner identities on technology, products, policies, and inheritance..

3.2.1. The Influence of Practitioner Identity on Technology and Products

Different practitioner identities have a significant impact on the use of technology and product innovation. The data results indicate that traditional craft practitioners, such as ICH inheritors and master artisans, tend to adhere to traditional handmade techniques, maintaining conventional production methods and emphasizing the continuity of craftsmanship and cultural heritage. In contrast, younger apprentices, teachers, and artists are more inclined to adopt modern or diverse craft techniques to increase design flexibility and improve production efficiency. This trend suggests that as the identities of practitioners change, particularly with the influx of highly educated individuals, the production methods of Yunnan folk pottery are undergoing a technological transformation and upgrade.

Practitioner identity also influences the direction of product innovation. Those utilizing modern craftsmanship are more likely to develop new products, such as cultural and creative ceramics incorporating modern design concepts, cross-disciplinary collaboration series, and customized products. These products are more adaptable to the market and can attract a broader consumer base. In contrast, masters and inheritors who focus on traditional craftsmanship tend to produce relatively stable product types, mainly improving upon traditional shapes and cultural symbols. Their consumer groups are primarily collectors and the cultural tourism market. Thus, a practitioner's identity not only determines the choice of technology but also directly influences product market positioning and innovation models.

3.2.2. The Impact of Practitioner Technology Application on Product Market Adaptability and Innovation

The application of technology by practitioners largely determines the market adaptability and innovation potential of their products. The research data shows that practitioners using modern technology are more inclined to enhance product functionality and market competitiveness through new design concepts, new materials, and new processes. On the other hand, traditional craft practitioners emphasize the uniqueness of craftsmanship, improving firing techniques and refining material formulations to enhance product quality. However, their market adaptability is relatively limited, mainly relying on collector markets and cultural preservation projects. There is a significant correlation between product sales models and technology applications.

Traditional craft practitioners primarily rely on offline sales channels, such as traditional markets, kilns, craft stores, exhibitions, and custom orders. Modern craft practitioners prefer online sales, social media promotion, and even live-streaming on short-video platforms. Younger apprentices and artist groups are particularly adept at using e-commerce and social media to expand their market reach. Practitioners adopting a comprehensive sales model (integrating e-commerce, offline exhibitions, and customized orders) tend to have greater market adaptability and higher sales growth trends. This demonstrates that technology application not only influences the forms of product innovation but also largely determines their commercialization pathways.

3.2.3. The Impact of Policy Support on Practitioners' Technology Use and Product Development

Policy support plays a crucial role in regulating practitioners' technology use and product market pathways. The statistical data indicate that different types of practitioners experience varying levels of access to policy support. ICH inheritors, master artisans, and artists are more likely to receive government funding for cultural preservation. Entrepreneurs, apprentices, and artists face greater difficulties in obtaining funding.

Policy support also has a profound impact on product market models. Practitioners who receive government support often rely on government-established cultural heritage bases, tourism and educational experience bases, cultural centers, and exhibitions rather than expanding sales through market-driven methods. This reliance results in lower market competitiveness for certain traditional crafts, as they depend on cultural projects or ICH protection organizations for survival.

Thus, while policy support helps preserve ICH skills, it may also, to some extent, limit the market-driven innovation of traditional crafts.

The practitioner structure of Yunnan folk pottery is undergoing adjustments, and the influx of highly educated practitioners presents new development opportunities for the industry. This shift enhances craftsmanship research, market expansion, and cross-disciplinary collaborations. However, skill transmission still primarily follows the traditional master-apprentice model. Although academic institutions and training programs have partially integrated into the field, they have not yet established a complete alternative system. The transmission of traditional craftsmanship still heavily relies on individual experience accumulation.

3.2.4. The Evolution of Inheritance Models

The development of practitioners, technology, and product markets collectively influences the inheritance model of Yunnan folk pottery. Data analysis results indicate that the apprentice inheritance model is undergoing significant changes. The traditional master-apprentice system remains dominant among master artisans and inheritors. Practitioners with composite identities (inheritor + master artisan + entrepreneur + teacher) tend to train a higher number of apprentices.

There is a complex interactive relationship among practitioner identity, technology application, product innovation, policy support, and inheritance models: Practitioner identity determines technology choices, which in turn influence

product innovation directions. Technology development enhances product market adaptability and transforms sales models. Policy support, while promoting traditional craft protection, also impacts market-driven innovation. Inheritance models continuously adjust in response to technological advancements and market changes, showing a trend toward diversification. These interactions collectively form the core driving force behind the development of the Yunnan folk pottery industry.

Practitioner identity directly influences the choice of craft techniques and product market positioning. Traditional craft preservers prefer to maintain the integrity of traditional techniques, while market-oriented practitioners focus on market demands, design trends, and craft optimization, driving product innovation. Product market positioning also shapes technological development. The rise of high-value-added products, such as cultural and creative ceramics and artistic collectibles, encourages some practitioners to explore new production methods and decorative techniques. Technological development enhances production efficiency and lowers technical barriers, but it also affects traditional craft transmission models. Ultimately, as market demands evolve, traditional craftsmanship is progressively adjusted, forming a blend of traditional and modern approaches.

4. Conclusions

This study, based on field investigations and questionnaire data analysis, explores the evolution of the identities of Yunnan folk pottery practitioners and their impact on industry development. The research findings indicate that practitioner identity not only determines the pathways of craftsmanship inheritance but also influences the market adaptability of the pottery industry, the direction of technological innovation, and the ways in which policy support is accessed. Furthermore, the interaction between traditional and modern craftsmanship, marketization, and intangible cultural heritage (ICH) protection has shaped new developmental trends in Yunnan folk pottery that can be transcribed into five points as listed: -

4.1. Diversification of Practitioner Identities and Stratification of Career Paths

The research data show that the identity of Yunnan folk pottery practitioners has evolved from a traditionally singular family-based and master-apprentice system into a diversified professional structure, including ICH inheritors, master artisans, artistic ceramicists, cultural and creative designers, business operators, and university researchers. This identity differentiation not only reflects the pottery industry's adaptation to market changes but also highlights the multidimensional value of pottery craftsmanship within the socio-economic system. Statistical data indicate that the educational level of practitioners is generally high, with over 90% holding a bachelor's degree or higher. The participation of university faculty and researchers has introduced new development models in craftsmanship research, industry innovation, and market promotion. Notably, practitioners with multiple identities, such as those who simultaneously serve as ICH inheritors, master artisans, business owners, and educators, account for 11.64%, showcasing a trend toward interdisciplinary integration. Although market-oriented exploration remains in its early stages, this shift in identity structure has provided broader opportunities for the sustainable development of the pottery industry.

4.2. The Impact of Technological Innovation on Pottery Production Models

Practitioner identity directly influences the choice of technology and further shapes the market positioning of pottery products. Traditional craftsmanship preservers (e.g., ICH inheritors and master artisans) tend to maintain the integrity of handmade techniques. University faculty, artists, and young apprentices are more willing to adopt modern techniques to enhance the market competitiveness of pottery products. This differentiation in technological application has accelerated the modernization process of Yunnan folk pottery production.

The application of modern technology enhances market adaptability, particularly in fields such as cultural and creative pottery, artistic derivatives, and personalized customization. Practitioners who embrace modern technology gain a market advantage over traditional artisans. However, traditional craftsmanship retains significant cultural value, particularly in high-end custom pottery and cultural tourism souvenirs, where its uniqueness continues to appeal to niche consumer groups. This trend suggests that the future development of Yunnan folk pottery must find a balance between traditional and modern technologies to ensure the simultaneous advancement of craftsmanship inheritance and market expansion.

4.3. The Alignment of Practitioner Identity with Policy Support

Policy support plays a crucial role in regulating the development of Yunnan folk pottery, but different types of practitioners face varying levels of access to policy resources. ICH inheritors and master artisans are more likely to receive government funding for cultural preservation. Business owners, apprentices, and university faculty encounter more difficulties in applying for ICH-related funding.

Policy support also significantly impacts pottery market models. Practitioners who receive government support typically promote their products through cultural bases and exhibitions. Market-driven practitioners prefer social media and e-commerce platforms to expand sales. While traditional policy models have played a positive role in preserving craftsmanship, they still present limitations in fostering market-oriented innovation. Future policy adjustments should focus on:

1. Integrating more flexible, market-oriented support measures within the ICH protection framework to meet the needs of modern pottery development.
2. Promoting collaboration among the government, businesses, and universities to ensure policy support extends beyond traditional craftsmanship inheritors to include more innovative practitioners.

4.4. Adjustments in Inheritance Models and Future Development Directions

The evolution of practitioner identities, technological advancements, market trends, and policy support has led to significant adjustments in the inheritance model of Yunnan folk pottery.

The traditional master-apprentice system remains the core method of skill transmission, particularly among master artisans and ICH inheritors. However, with the involvement of higher education institutions, the inheritance model is gradually shifting toward knowledge sharing and systematic training.

Practitioners with multiple identities (e.g., university faculty who are also master artisans or business owners) are more engaged in apprentice training and adopt a more open approach, incorporating modern design education, market strategy training, and interdisciplinary learning.

This shift indicates that the future of Yunnan folk pottery inheritance will no longer be confined to traditional family-based models but will expand into broader vocational education systems and interdisciplinary collaborations.

4.5. Research Contributions and Development Recommendations

Based on data analysis, this study systematically explores the evolution of practitioner identities in Yunnan folk pottery and its impact on industry development, providing empirical support for:

- ICH protection policies
- Market-oriented pottery development
- Inheritance model innovations

To ensure the sustainable development of Yunnan folk pottery, the following optimizations are recommended:

- a. Strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration – promote the integration of pottery with digital technology, cultural and creative industries, and marketing to expand market applications.
- b. Optimize policy support mechanisms–Ensure a balanced allocation of policy resources, allowing for the parallel development of craftsmanship preservation and market innovation, avoiding over-reliance on government subsidies.
- c. Enhance industry-academia-research cooperation – Encourage collaboration between universities, research institutions, and enterprises to establish a comprehensive system for skill inheritance and market promotion.
- d. Improve talent cultivation systems – Attract more young people into the pottery industry and provide clear career development pathways to ensure the long-term sustainability of Yunnan folk pottery.

The evolution of practitioner identities in Yunnan folk pottery reflects both the industry's modernization and the complex interplay among craftsmanship inheritance, market innovation, and policy support. In the future, the key challenge for Yunnan folk pottery will be how to modernize while preserving traditional craftsmanship, making this an ongoing area of focus for the industry.

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