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The face of change: cultural continuity and innovation in digital China

Annotation. *The process of digitizing the economy in contemporary China and its impact on various aspects of its economic, cultural, and social development are explored in this study. China's active efforts in the field of digital technologies are aimed at expanding international cooperation. Additionally, the unique interplay of ancient traditions and modern innovations in China is examined, manifested through cultural continuity expressed in artifacts and language.*

Keywords: China; digital economy; economic growth; global economic challenges; cultural industry; innovative technologies; cultural development; digital transformation.

Лицо перемен:
культурная непрерывность
и инновации в цифровом Китае

Аннотация. *Исследуется процесс цифровизации экономики в современном Китае и его влияние на разные аспекты его экономического, культурного и социального развития. Активные усилия Китая в сфере цифровых технологий направлены на расширение международного сотрудничества. Кроме того, рассматривается уникальное взаимодействие древних традиций и современных инноваций в Китае, проявляющееся через культурную преемственность, артефакты и язык.*

Ключевые слова: *Китай; цифровая экономика; экономический рост; глобальные экономические вызовы; культурная индустрия; инновационные технологии; культурное развитие; цифровая трансформация.*

China is currently undergoing a significant transition towards a digital economy, which is manifesting itself in various aspects of its economic and social development. This paper will show a detailed overview of the key elements of this transition and its prospects.

According to data from the World Bank, China's economic growth is forecast to reach 5.2 % in 2023, with expectations of a subsequent slowdown to 4.5 % in 2024. This economic outlook not only reflects domestic structural changes but also takes into account the various global economic challenges that China is navigating [18].

Nowadays, the digital economy is playing a pivotal role in reshaping and revolutionizing the approaches employed in the development of the cultural industry within China. In 2023, during the Beijing Cultural Forum, a landmark event in cultural discourse brought the profound impact of innovative technologies on the trajectory of cultural development into the spotlight. Esteemed experts and thought leaders converged to deliberate on this subject, highlighting the inexorable march of the digital economy as a new and potent driving force behind the quest for high-quality advancements within the cultural industry [8].

One of the most striking observations made by these experts was the acceleration of innovations across multiple facets of the cultural industry. These innovations are not merely confined to the superficial aspects but extend deep into the core, encompassing critical elements such as content creation and the transformation of presentation formats

for cultural products. This transformative shift signifies a paradigmatic departure from traditional modes of operation, ushering in a dynamic era of creative exploration and digital integration [8].

In 2023, the number of internet users in China witnessed a notable increase, adding up to 19 million new users, representing a growth rate of 1.9 %. This brought the total number of users on social media platforms to a staggering 1.03 billion. Such an expansive growth in digital reach serves as a clear indicator of the substantial strengthening of the country's digital infrastructure [7].

The average mobile internet speed in 2023 in China has reached an impressive 109.40 Mbps, while the fixed internet speed has surged to 214.58 Mbps. These statistics display a remarkable increase when compared to previous years, underscoring China's commitment to advancing its digital connectivity and technology [7].

China's digital economy offers significant opportunities for foreign companies due to the scale and speed of commercialization of digital technologies. The country is aggressively rolling out its digital currency, known as E-CNY, which marks the first government-backed digital payment system project. This initiative plays a key role in the long-term development of China's digital economy. China is actively seeking to deepen international cooperation in the field of digital technologies, including participation in international agreements such as the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA) [3].

The scale of China's digital cultural industry growth is demonstrated by the staggering figure of 1.8 trillion Yuan, representing a significant share of 51.4 % of the entire cultural industry. This statistic underscores the undeniable ascendancy of the digital economy within the realm of culture, as it continues to exert an increasingly profound influence on the shaping and evolution of cultural expression in China [8].

Beyond the economic implications, China's proactive stance extends towards the preservation of its rich cultural heritage. A prime example of this commitment can be found in the ambitious Dunhuang Mogao project. This undertaking is not merely an attempt at preservation but a digital renaissance of monumental proportions. The project's objective is to create meticulously detailed digital reproductions of the enigmatic cave temples, a UNESCO World Heritage site, in Dunhuang. These digital replicas, imbued with immersive qualities, enable virtual visitors from around the globe to embark on a remarkable journey of exploration and appreciation [4].

The Dunhuang Mogao project transcends mere digitization, offering an engaging and educational experience that brings ancient cultural treasures to life in the digital realm. This visionary initiative has captured

the imagination of a global audience, amassing an impressive 15.6 million views worldwide. It stands as a testament to the power of digital technologies in preserving and propagating cultural heritage, transcending geographical and temporal boundaries [4].

In China, the first standard in the field of digital preservation of intangible cultural heritage has been approved [14]. This standard aims to provide guidance and standardization for the collection and cataloging of digital resources across various categories of representative projects related to intangible cultural heritage [5].

According to a study by Jing Daily, it has been revealed that China's youth, including Generation Z and millennials, on average allocate 42 % of their monthly income to luxury goods. They tend to favor European brands but also support local brands. However, as the economy grows, there has been a decline in interest in traditional culture. Nevertheless, following the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a resurgence of interest in national heritage [1].

China is actively pursuing the further development of cultural prosperity by harmonizing traditional values with modern technological achievements. This approach encompasses both the preservation of its unique cultural heritage and its adaptation to contemporary realities.

China's cultural heritage, spanning over 5000 years, represents a remarkable fusion of tradition and modernity. President of China, Xi Jinping, has emphasized the significance of creating a new culture for modern times that reflects the nation's enduring cultural legacy. Chinese civilization is distinguished by its evolution while maintaining continuity, including the influence and contributions of other cultures, which contribute to global cultural exchange and diversity [12].

Chinese civilization has made a significant contribution to global culture, encompassing technology, art, science, and philosophy. One notable example is the dissemination of papermaking technology, which revolutionized the spread of knowledge and communication, akin to the modern Internet.

China's rich history and culture are enriched by its intangible cultural heritage, which plays a pivotal role in preserving its cultural uniqueness. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognizes this by including 43 Chinese elements in the list of intangible cultural heritage, establishing China as a leader in this field. This heritage comprises traditions, rituals, music, and art that are passed down from generation to generation [1].

China's cultural continuity through artifacts and language exemplifies a unique fusion of ancient traditions and modern innovations. The continuous development and adaptation of culture to contemporary

conditions while preserving its roots and uniqueness make Chinese civilization one of the most dynamic and influential in the world.

Traditional Chinese culture plays a pivotal role in its modernization process. In contemporary China, there is a distinctive blend of ancient traditions and innovations, particularly in the realms of economics and social development. For instance, the concept of collectivism is clearly evident in Chinese families, where family members make sacrifices for the common good, reflecting traditional cultural values [17].

China is actively engaged in the modernization of its culture and spiritual civilization while preserving traditional values. The country's commitment to diversity and harmony in its cultural policies contributes to the strengthening of citizens' spiritual development and the nurturing of talent, which is essential for both cultural and economic modernization [6].

Cultural development is closely intertwined with China's economic achievements. In 2020, the value added in the cultural industry amounted to 4.5 trillion yuan, accounting for 4.43 % of the country's GDP. Improvements in infrastructure and the development of museums and libraries also play a significant role in promoting cultural progress [13].

Modern Chinese civilization, rooted in traditional culture and Marxism, contributes to the innovative development of its rich cultural heritage. China actively studies and adapts lessons from global practices in politics, economics, culture, and ecology, while also offering its own solutions to enhance global governance [9].

The interplay between traditional culture and the modernization process in China creates a unique development model that combines reverence for traditions with a drive for innovation. This symbiosis of cultural values and modern technologies fosters the formation of a society that values both material and spiritual development.

Traditional Chinese culture plays a vital role in shaping contemporary Chinese society. Despite the rapid pace of modernization and globalization, China places great importance on the preservation and advancement of its cultural heritage [16].

President Xi Jinping of China has emphasized that the promotion of the Chinese modernization model is impossible without a deep understanding of and respect for the country's traditional culture. Such modernization embodies unique Chinese characteristics that reflect the nation's rich history and culture [1].

Cultural confidence in traditional values is essential for shaping public consciousness in China. Xi Jinping places significant emphasis on taking pride in China's great cultural heritage and supports the idea of socialist values, which share much in common with traditional Chinese culture [10].

Modern Chinese civilization, based on traditional culture and Marxism, contributes to the development of a unique form of Chinese socialism. The integration of Marxism and traditional Chinese culture is a crucial factor in China's successful path to modernization [18].

China's unique transformation path is having an impact on the world stage. Successful modernization, covering 18 % of the world's population, represents an achievement in human history [15].

Having analyzed various aspects of the interaction between traditional culture and digital innovation in modern Chinese society, we can conclude that China demonstrates a unique ability to combine deeply rooted cultural traditions with advanced technologies. This combination highlights reverence for the past while striving for the future, which is key to understanding contemporary China. The digital economy makes a significant contribution to the socio-economic development of the country. Digitalization opens up new opportunities for the dissemination and preservation of cultural heritage and contributes to China's global influence. Despite the processes of globalization, China retains its cultural identity. This cultural characteristic plays a central role in the formation of national identity and social cohesion. It is clear that China's future will continue to evolve at the intersection of its rich cultural past and its pursuit of technological advancement. This balance between respecting tradition and embracing innovation will determine the way forward. These findings highlight the importance of respecting cultural roots and the ability to adapt to a changing world for China, which continues to play a significant role in the global culture and economy.

In summary, the article underscores that modern China is a unique example of how a country can thrive by preserving its traditions while simultaneously embracing the innovations of the digital era. It highlights the profound interaction between history, culture, and innovation, shaping contemporary Chinese society and its influence on the world.

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